

Republicans and Democrats respond to San Antonio immigrant deaths by pledging further crackdown on migration

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Events in the United States continue to demonstrate that the capitalist political system is so thoroughly dominated by the forces of extreme political reaction that it is impossible to address urgent social problems or protect basic democratic rights except through a revolutionary social struggle against the entire establishment.

From the deadly mass school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24 and the Supreme Court's decision last week banning abortion, to the 53 immigrant deaths from an overheated trailer in Texas on Monday, the reactionary dynamic of American capitalist politics is on display.

The Republican Party, increasingly dominated by fascists, stakes out a position of unprecedented extreme reaction. No matter their legislative minority and regardless of the unpopularity of their right-wing goals, they proceed ruthlessly, breaking democratic norms, trampling opposition and employing the language of civil war.

The Democratic Party adapts to the Republicans and offers compromise after compromise in the name of bipartisanship with their "Republican colleagues." No matter the size of their legislative majority and regardless of how popular their position may be, they are thwarted by the smallest of obstacles and their entire agenda is derailed by a single senator, an errant federal judge or by the Senate parliamentarian.

The facts that are emerging from San Antonio, Texas, are nightmarish. The immigrant death toll has now risen above 50, with the known victims coming from Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala. A worker at a nearby job site told the press that he ran to the trailer on Monday evening after hearing screams coming from the area.

San Antonio Fire Chief Charles Hood said at a press conference Monday night that the trailer contained "stacks of bodies" that were "hot to the touch." Temperatures in the area reached a high of 103 degrees Fahrenheit earlier in the day, and those immigrants who were still alive were suffering from extreme heat exhaustion and dehydration.

"We're not supposed to open up a truck and see stacks of bodies in there," Hood said. "None of us come to work imagining that."

According to reports in the Mexican and Central American press, the victims were impoverished workers and small farmers attempting to escape deep poverty and violence that has devastated the region after over a century of US imperialist exploitation and war. The immigrants were forced to enter the United States illegally because both big business parties have spent billions of dollars militarizing the border in recent decades. Their deaths are not merely a tragedy, but a great social crime against the international working class.

The Republican Party responded by demanding a vicious attack on the rights of immigrants and the further militarization of the border.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott, a fascist supporter of Trump, blamed Biden for the deaths, tweeting: "They are a result of his deadly open border policies. They show the deadly consequences of his refusal to enforce the law."

Tom Homan, former director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under Donald Trump, said: "Together with open borders, catch-and-release, and no chance of being deported, the most vulnerable people in the world will put themselves in the hands of criminal cartels to seek the promise that Biden and [DHS Secretary Alejandro] Mayorkas have made." There are increasing calls for Mayorkas to resign on the grounds that even the record level of deportations under Biden is not enough.

The Biden administration responded to these criticisms by pledging additional crackdowns on immigrants. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said yesterday that "the fact of the matter is the border is closed."

Secretary Mayorkas responded by pledging further police-military action at the border: "We will work alongside our partners to hold those responsible for this tragedy accountable and continue to take action to disrupt smuggling

networks.”

In reality, the Biden administration has continued Trump’s crackdown on immigrants, arresting more undocumented people in 2021 than Trump ever did in a single year. Biden has continued to enforce Donald Trump’s invocation of Title 42 provisions, effectively stopping immigration at the southern border under the auspices of public health. As the *New York Times* recently admitted, Biden’s immigration policies mean that “despite Mr. Biden’s campaign pledges for a changed approach to immigrants, border controls remain largely the same as they were under President Trump.”

In April 2022, the Democratic Party proved unable to overcome lower court opposition to Biden’s eventual attempt to revoke the title’s restrictions. A Trump-appointed district court judge in Texas issued a ruling requiring Title 42 remain in place, and the Biden administration accepted the ruling without a political fight while it appeals to the Supreme Court, where it will inevitably lose.

Similarly, another Trump-appointed district court judge ruled last week that it was illegal for Biden to implement any restrictions on deportation arrests based on length of time in the country or prior criminal record. On the latter decision, the *New York Times* wrote that it “renders millions of people vulnerable to deportation.”

Despite the fact that Biden is clothed in enormous power and is backed by congressional majorities, his administration has expended little to no political capital opposing the fact that two far-right, unelected lower court judges appointed by a coup plotter are forcing the implementation of Trump’s immigration policy.

The Biden administration made a further political concession to the far-right on Monday by dropping the nomination of Ed Gonzalez for ICE director. For months, Trump-backers in the Republican Senate have blocked Gonzalez’s nomination on the grounds that he criticized Trump’s attacks on immigrants. While serving as sheriff of Harris County, Texas, a position which he still holds, Gonzalez also ended a partnership with ICE.

Opposition to Gonzalez came from the far-right, but the nomination was crushed by the Democratic Party, which pulled Gonzalez’s nomination because “at least three Senate Democrats” did not support him. ICE agents constitute a bulwark within the state for Trump’s ongoing fascist plotting. Their union endorsed Trump in the 2020 election.

The Democratic Party’s fecklessness on questions involving democratic rights stands in stark contrast to their ruthlessness in prosecuting the interests of American imperialism on a world scale.

The Biden administration has conducted the war against Russia in Ukraine with an alacrity and resolve that brooks no

opposition. It doles out billions of dollars in weapons to far-right forces in the Ukrainian government without any public discussion about the potential implications of a military confrontation with Russia. It deploys thousands of soldiers to Russia’s western borders, employs recklessly belligerent language, threatens its detractors and suppresses and censors opposition domestically.

In response to every blow from the right, the Democratic Party, including figures like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, claim that the solution is voting for more Democrats. The Democratic Socialists of America asserts that the Democrats can be “pressured” from below to take a firm stand against the Republican right.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The response of the Democratic Party to the tragic crime in San Antonio makes plain that the fight for basic democratic rights can only take place through the development of a movement *against* the Democratic and Republican Parties. Efforts by groups like the DSA to work “within” the Democratic Party are efforts to trap growing social opposition and harness it behind the Democratic Party’s reactionary political aims.

The two-party system is a reactionary and anti-democratic trap. By design, it cannot be reformed from within. Third parties are banned from the ballot and ignored by the corporate media. A handful of senators from unpopulated western and midwestern states dominate the Senate. The filibuster gives a veto to the most extreme elements within the legislature. The Supreme Court issues reactionary decisions and its justices are not impeached even when implicated in Trump’s coup attempt of January 6.

The social interests of masses of working people find no expression in this rotten capitalist political setup. The interests of the international working class can only be given voice through a mass socialist movement independent of the state and capitalist parties. The protection of basic democratic rights including abortion and the rights of immigrants requires the socialist transformation of society.



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