

Trump deportation operation could target over 13 million people, including millions of “mixed-status” families

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The incoming Trump administration and the cabal of fascists and anti-immigrant fanatics that Trump has selected for top cabinet and other government posts are planning what Trump “border czar” Tom Homan has called “a mass deportation operation.”

Trump and his Vice President-elect, J.D. Vance, have floated the idea of deporting 15-20 million people, with Trump going as high as 22 million. In multiple interviews, Vance has claimed that the administration would aim to deport as many as 1 million people a year, more than double the previous high of over 435,000 deported in 2013 by then-President Barack Obama.

Last month, the American Immigration Council (AIC), a pro-immigrant organization, conducted a major study on the devastating social and economic costs of Trump’s proposed “deportation force.”

The organization noted, citing Department of Homeland Security statistics, that as of 2022 there were roughly 11 million people in the United States who lacked permanent legal status and faced the possibility of removal. This includes asylum seekers, Dreamers (immigrants brought to the US as children), refugees and those with temporary protected status, such as the roughly 12,000-15,000 Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio.

The 11 million people living and working in the United States “illegally” include roughly 5 percent of the entire civilian workforce. While there are undocumented persons in every US state, roughly half (47 percent) of the total reside in California, Texas and Florida.

A 2016 Pew Research Center survey found that

“unauthorized immigrants” accounted for 17 percent of the workforce in the US agriculture industry and 13 percent of the construction industry workforce.

That same survey found that among the business and service sectors, which includes legal services, waste management, advertising, landscaping, dry cleaning, nail salons and car washes, non-citizen immigrants comprised 22 percent of the workforce in 2014.

AIC found that if the Trump administration were to begin by targeting these immigrants for deportation, some 4 million mixed-status families (families with at least one undocumented person) could be separated. This would affect some 8.5 million US citizens, including 5.1 million US citizen children who currently live with an undocumented family member who, in many cases, is the main source of income.

In its study, the AIC noted that immigrants work across US industries, and without their labor US gross domestic product would drop between 4.2 and 6.8 percent. While not eligible for Social Security and other government social programs, in 2022 undocumented households paid \$46.8 billion in federal taxes and \$29.3 billion in state and local taxes, according to the AIC. Immigrants without legal status also contributed \$22.6 billion to Social Security and \$5.7 billion to Medicare.

The AIC made what it called a “highly conservative estimate” that it would cost “at least \$315 billion” to do a “one-time mass deportation operation” aimed at some 13.3 million people who do not have permanent legal status. It emphasized that this figure “does not take into account the long-term costs of a sustained mass deportation operation or the incalculable additional costs necessary to acquire the institutional capacity to

remove over 13 million people in a short period of time—incalculable because there is simply no reality in which such a singular operation is possible.”

The group noted that to accomplish a police operation on this scale would require “mass detention as an interim step.” And while the US has a sprawling prison-industrial complex that incarcerates roughly 1 out every 185 people in the country, the fifth highest rate in the world, that total population is some 1.9 million people. In other words, the AIC estimated that ICE detention capacity would have to create “24 times more ... detention capacity than currently exists.”

It estimated that to deport 1 million people a year, even assuming 20 percent of the population would “self-deport” under a police-state regime, the cost of maintaining the operation until completion would be just under \$1 trillion and cost roughly \$88 billion a year for over a decade.

In addition to the economic factor, there is worry among sections of the ruling class that Trump’s deportation operation will provoke a massive counter-response in the working class. There is no reason to believe that millions of people, including students and workers, will passively sit on their hands as their friends, family and co-workers are handcuffed and frog-marched out of schools, workplaces and homes to be detained and deported.

Trump’s allies are continuing the anti-immigrant agitation in the lead-up to his inauguration. On Tuesday, Texas Governor Greg Abbott posted a video on his X account showing more death buoys being deployed into the Rio Grande River to deter, injure and kill immigrants.

Abbott has been illegally deploying National Guard troops along the Rio Grande for over a year in a direct usurpation of federal authority. The Biden administration filed a court challenge early this year which was overruled by the conservative Fifth Circuit. Since then, the administration has dropped the issue as Abbott has continued to militarize the Texas-Mexico border.

Each of the buoys is a 4-foot sphere that spins independently, preventing anyone from climbing over it. In between each sphere is a metal saw blade that can easily cut human skin and cause mass trauma. The buoys are fastened together with heavy metal cables and anchored in place with concrete blocks. In order to

prevent anyone from swimming under the buoys, there is a mesh fence under the water in between the concrete blocks and metal cables.

The attacks being prepared by Trump and those currently underway by the Biden-Harris administration constitute an attack on the democratic rights of the entire international working class. The solution to capitalist inequality is not mass deportations and protectionism through tariffs, but social ownership of the productive forces and the elimination of the nation-state system through the creation of a scientifically planned and globally integrated economy.

This requires the independent mobilization of the working class against both big business parties and the capitalist system.



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