Trump begins signing executive orders attacking immigrants and democratic rights

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20 January 2025

Donald Trump's second term began with his signing the first in a series of unprecedented executive orders aimed at restricting immigration and democratic rights. Trump signed an initial set of orders in front of a crowd of supporters chanting "USA! USA! USA!" at an arena in Washington D.C. and returned to the White House where he signed further orders. Included among those signed are a ban on birthright citizenship.

Trump presented himself as a "peacemaker" during his inaugural address, but the policies he announced amount to a declaration of war against the world's population. He denounced immigration as an "invasion" and said his executive orders were aimed at bringing about a "revolution" that will halt all immigration at the southern border, require mass detention for immigrants without criminal records and deploy the US military domestically in some form.

The president lacks the power to issue executive orders that contravene constitutional provisions like the 14th Amendment's guarantee of birthright citizenship, but that did not stop Trump. Many of the orders will be challenged in court, but the far-right-dominated Supreme Court will have the final say on their "legality."

"I will declare a national emergency at our southern border," Trump said during his inaugural speech earlier in the day, adding that "all illegal entry will immediately be halted. And we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came." The claim that there are "millions of criminal aliens" is a bald-faced lie—those without documentation have committed no criminal offense and it has been shown that immigrant workers commit substantially less crime than US citizens.

Trump also said he would designate "cartels as foreign terrorist organizations," a measure that paves the way for potential military action in Mexico and Central America and which gives federal authorities the power to criminally prosecute individuals for "material support for terrorism" if they, for example, pay extortion fees to gangs against their will. When asked last night during an impromptu oval office press gaggle whether this designation meant Trump might launch military operations in Mexico, Trump said, "it might. Stranger things have happened."

Trump also said during his inaugural speech that he would be "invoking the Alien Enemies Act of 1798," the same provision of law invoked by John Adams, as well as by presidents Wilson and Roosevelt to detain immigrants and many US citizens during the First and Second World Wars. The law gives the president the ability to detain and deport individuals without due process. Trump also indicated his operations would target major population centers, stating the administration will "use the full and immense power of federal and state law enforcement to eliminate the presence of all foreign gangs and criminal networks bringing devastating crime to US soil, including our cities and inner cities."

As he signed the first of the orders, Trump told the crowd at Capitol One Arena that they were aimed at stopping "millions" of immigrants "pouring into our country from jails, prisons, mental institutions and insane asylums. It stops as of 1 o'clock this afternoon." He told his supporters that they would be "happy reading the newspapers in the coming days" as they learn about the contents of the executive orders directed against immigrants.

As he signed the orders, the *New York Times* reported

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that Trump had ordered the firing of a number of officials in the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), the agency which oversees the immigration court system. Trump's new Acting EOIR head, Sirce Owens, is a far-right-wing judge at the Board of Immigration Appeals and former Immigrations and Customs Enforcement attorney. This move indicates Trump and his aides are preparing to speed up removal proceedings by enforcing significant restrictions on due process.

Trump also pledged to reinstate the "Remain in Mexico" policy launched in 2019 during his first term; however, it will have a vastly changed character since migrants will not be waiting for their immigration cases to be considered. Under Biden, asylum seekers were already being compelled to wait in Mexico for months for asylum hearings through the CBP One mobile app, but now such requests have been suspended indefinitely.

As yesterday's events transpired in Washington, scenes of immense suffering took place at the border crossing between El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez. Thousands of migrants waiting along the border began crying in near freezing temperatures as their CBP One afternoon appointments were immediately canceled. Nearby, lines of anti-riot police temporarily shut down the port of entry as a threat against any protests among the gathered migrants. An estimated 270,000 migrants were waiting to get an appointment through the app when it was shut down.

To an even greater extent than during his first term, Trump will rely on the collaboration of the Mexican government now led by pseudo-leftist President Claudia Sheinbaum, who has verbally denounced the return of the "Remain in Mexico" policy while remaining open to receiving deportees and those rejected at the border. Sheinbaum said Monday that she hopes to convince Trump to maintain access to CBP One applicants in southern Mexico, where they will become an extremely vulnerable source of cheap labor, especially after facing systematic extortion by gangs and security forces.

The orders will impact the lives of millions of people and will generate immense opposition in the population. Already, concerns over mass deportations led many schoolteachers and business owners to report on social media that immigrants were staying home rather than leaving for work, school or errands. The *World Socialist Web Site* will continue to report on the content of the executive orders as they are made available to the public.

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