ICE spearheads attack on immigrants in Chicago

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At noon on Sunday, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency announced it was carrying out deportations, so-called "targeted operations," in the city of Chicago. Reports indicate 270 people are being targeted for immediate arrest, after a week of heightened anxiety over threats made by incoming Trump administration officials for a widespread sweep of immigrants in Chicago. The metro area is home to more than 400,000 immigrant households.

The ICE agency statement indicated it is partnering with the FBI, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, Drug Enforcement Administration, Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Marshals Service after a directive was issued by Department of Homeland Security acting head Benjamine Huffman to bring in additional federal agencies. The Trump administration's plans for deportations also include deputizing local police officers and members of the National Guard, "voluntarily contributed by Republican-run states," according to the *New York Times*.

Chicago, like the other large US urban centers, is a sanctuary city, with a Welcoming City Ordinance, part of which prevents Chicago police from sharing information with federal immigration authorities or assisting them.

In the week since taking office, the Trump administration has issued expansive executive orders that restrict immigration to the US, expand immigration agency powers and attempt to ban birthright citizenship. Trump has also threatened sanctuary jurisdictions.

ICE has reportedly set a quota of 75 arrests per day for each of its 25 field offices, which would come to nearly 2,000 arrests daily nationwide and nearly 700,000 this year. It is carrying out the initial phase of its operations under the guise of arresting criminals and "potential" threats to public safety and national security.

After threatening last month to make Chicago the first target of the Trump administration's sweeping deportation policy, Trump "border czar" Homan was in Chicago to oversee the operations on Sunday, along with acting Attorney General Emil Bove.

The number of arrests made Sunday has not been made public, but reports indicate that arrests were made in neighborhoods on the north side of the city.

Absurdly, talk show host Phil McGraw, known on television as "Dr. Phil," is reporting as "embedded media" with the ICE raid teams and interviewed Homan in Chicago for his media channel. His sycophantic attempts to present the deportations as modest and reasonable law-and-order measures only add to the nightmarish scene unfolding across the city and the country.

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, a billionaire Democrat, expressed his support for the ICE's Chicago operations Sunday but said he had concerns about the means used. He told CNN Sunday, "When we're talking about violent criminals who have been convicted and are undocumented, we don't want them in our state. We want them out of the country. We hope they get deported, and if that's who they're picking up, we're all for it."

Speaking like a militarist who supports an aggressive war but tut-tuts over the "collateral damage" among innocent civilians, Pritzker complained,"They're also going after people who are law-abiding, who are holding down jobs, who have families here, who may have been here for a decade or two decades. Why are we going after them? These are not people who are causing problems in our country. ... We need to secure our border."

Pritzker continued, referring to the Trump administration, "We're gonna follow the law. We expect them to do the same. I'm very afraid they are not going to follow the law."

The expectation among leading Democrats is that ICE will indeed target immigrants more broadly and that they will do

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nothing to stop this atrocity. The two Democratic senators from Illinois, Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, issued a joint statement on the raids Sunday night, emphasizing that the raids must only focus on those "who pose a danger to our country."

They wrote, "We can all agree that we must remove any dangerous individuals from our country who are here illegally. But the mass deportation actions being undertaken by President Trump's administration go far beyond those important goals."

The senators pledged their offices' help for people "improperly caught up in these raids" by providing caseworkers.

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson put out a statement confirming Chicago police were not involved in the arrests.

The response from within the Illinois Republican Party in the state has been rabid. In an affront to the state's sanctuary law prohibiting the targeting of immigrants, state Sen. Terri Bryant (Murphysboro) encouraged Illinois prison employees to send her information on imprisoned undocumented immigrants, promising to pass their names on to federal immigration authorities. She wrote on X: "If you are IDOC [Illinois Department of Corrections] staff who wants ICE to know of an illegal immigrant in IDOC call or message me. I won't rat you out. I will notify ICE."

Earlier this week, DHS agents, who later were identified as from the Secret Service and not ICE, attempted to enter a Chicago elementary school looking for an 11-year-old child who had allegedly posted an anti-Trump video on social media. No further details have since been released. Federal agents are not permitted to access Chicago Public Schools buildings and the agents were turned away, but the anxieties over raids across the city only intensified.

The response from parents and teachers to both the planned raids and the targeting of an 11-year-old by the Secret Service has been outrage and also determination.

One Chicago teacher said, "I have students whose parents received deportation letters this week. Some kids are being separated from a parent. How is a kid supposed to learn if that's the only thing on their mind?"

After DHS attempted to gain access to the elementary school, teachers at some schools with large numbers of immigrant families were quickly able to organize indoor afterschool pickup to ensure students were placed directly into the care of a parent or guardian, and did not risk traveling home alone during an active threat of deportation.

The number of American-born children living with an undocumented immigrant parent is currently estimated at a staggering 4.4 million. According to Trump and Homan, these children, US citizens, could well be deported along with their parents in the name of avoiding "family separation."

A far-right faction of Democrats on the Chicago city council is giving full-throated support to Trump's deportation policy. Aldermen Ray Lopez and Silvana Tabares recently put forth a measure in the city council that would have reversed the part of the Welcoming City ordinance that prohibits Chicago police officers from cooperating with federal immigration agents. It was defeated 39-11.

Chicago's immigration court has more than 250,000 pending cases, according to an analysis from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University, with about 40 percent of those cases coming from Latin American nationals, many from Venezuela and Mexico.

As part of a naked attempt to precipitate a political crisis, the fascist Governor of Texas Greg Abbott bussed tens of thousands of asylum seekers, many from Venezuela, into Chicago, New York City and Denver, Colorado, from August 2022 into early 2024. Many remain in the city under extremely difficult circumstances that include no work permits and no formal source of income. Families from Venezuela report struggling to secure basic needs like rent and food and express their shock at the conditions of life in the US.

The Democratic Party bears political responsibility for Trump's return to power. The pro-war and pro-corporate policies of the Biden-Harris administration resulted in the cratering of popular support for the Democratic Party, thus handing the fascist former president a second term to carry out his policies of police state attacks on immigrants and the destruction of constitutional rights for the entire working class.

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