Trump floats deporting US citizens with criminal backgrounds

Tom Carter
28 January 2025

On Monday, US President Donald Trump announced that he intends to assert the power to deport any person from the country, including US citizens.

This announcement confirms that the attack on birthright citizenship—or the constitutional guarantee of irrevocable and equal rights to every person born within the country's borders—is an attack on the rights of the entire population, immigrant and native-born alike. It is a measure consciously aimed at paving the way for the police-state repression of all opposition to Trump's regime and the interests of the financial oligarchy it represents.

Trump made the announcement during a dinner for House Republicans hosted at his luxury golf resort in Doral, Florida. In his remarks, he introduced this new policy as the immediate next step in the massive military-style raids targeting immigrants that are already underway.

He claimed that his new administration was already "tracking down the illegal alien criminals," and he boasted about "throwing them the hell out of our country" with "no apologies." Trump indicated that the next phase of this campaign of repression would target "violent repeat offenders" who are US citizens.

"I don't want these violent repeat offenders in our country any more than I want illegal aliens from other countries who misbehave," he said. "They're repeat offenders by many numbers. I want them out of our country. I also will be seeking permission to do so," he said.

"We're going to get approval ... to get them the hell out of our country," he declared. "Let's see how they like it."

Trump's assertion of the power to deport US citizens was cloaked in the form of a measure targeting those citizens, who allegedly commit "murder and other heinous charges such as pushing people into subways" or "punching old ladies in the face, knocking them unconscious and stealing their purse."

His detailed comments on the subject made clear that these plans represent something more than his trademark fascistic rambling. "Let them be brought to a foreign land and maintained by others for a very small fee, as opposed to [being] maintained in our jails for massive amounts of money, including the private prison companies that charge us a fortune. Let them be brought out of our country, and let them live there for a while. Let's see how they like it," he said.

There is no precedent in US history—or procedure in the American legal system—for the deportation of citizens who were born in the US to natural-born parents. It recalls the feudal era punishment of "abjuring the realm," as well as the practice in the British Empire of sentencing people to "transportation" to the colonies.

If the president has the power to deport people who have the full rights of US citizens, then there would be nothing in principle preventing the president from imposing that punishment on more than just those he claims are "violent repeat offenders."

Indeed, Trump's comments made clear that this is precisely what he and his fascistic gang of advisers have in mind. "We're going to get approval, hopefully, to get them the hell out of our country, along with others," Trump said. He did not clarify who the "others" were who would be deported "along with" the supposed repeat offenders under this policy.

Trump is already in the process of establishing internment camps by presidential decree. The series of executive orders he issued during the first week of his presidency were modeled in part on the racist 1942 executive order by President Franklin Roosevelt that established internment camps for approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry. Roosevelt's Order 9066, like Trump's orders, authorized the mass detention of "aliens" within the country on the grounds of "national security."

In vague, sweeping language, Trump's order titled "Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists" targets all non-citizens abroad and "already present in the United States" who "bear hostile attitudes toward its citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles" and "advocate for … threats to our national security."

© World Socialist Web Site

Given how the words “government,” “institutions,” “principles” and “threats” would be defined by Trump, this could be interpreted to effectively criminalize all criticism of Trump whatsoever.

His order further demands “any action necessary” to “protect” the country from those who call for “the overthrow or replacement of the culture on which our constitutional Republic stands, or who provide aid, advocacy, or support for” anyone who Trump designates as “foreign terrorists.”

The reference to “replacement” is a nod to the “Great Replacement Theory.” According to this racist mythology, non-white, non-Christian immigrants are being admitted into the country in such numbers as to overwhelm and “replace” white Christians in a “white genocide.”

Last month, Trump’s new “border czar” Tom Homan demanded “at least 100,000 beds” for the network of internment camps under construction, nearly triple the previous national detention capacity.

It goes without saying that Trump’s actions are completely illegal and unconstitutional. Depriving anyone born in the US of citizenship directly violates the Fourteenth Amendment. Targeting immigrants for deportation on the basis of their political ideas violates the First Amendment, which guarantees free speech.

The threat to deport American prisoners “to a foreign land,” to jails and prisons that would be “maintained by others” in order to save “massive amounts of money” is an evident attempt to circumvent the Eighth Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights, which prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment.”

Under US law, the Eighth Amendment has been held to protect prisoners from rape and physical abuse, as well as to guarantee them a bare minimum of food, medical care and housing conditions. If US inmates can be transported to “black sites” outside the country or to forced labor or torture camps maintained by foreign regimes, they could be effectively placed outside those minimal protections.

Trump’s announcement of the next phase of his plans for mass repression confirms warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* that the powers asserted by the president during two decades of the so-called “war on terror” would inevitably be directed against the US population itself. It also confirms the specific warning that the attack on birthright citizenship represents an attack on the fundamental democratic rights of the entire population.

His threat to deport US citizens comes one week after an inauguration ceremony in which Elon Musk, the world’s richest man and the chief financier of Trump’s campaign, gave multiple enthusiastic Hitler salutes. In the days following his inauguration, Trump declared that the policy of his administration would be to “clean” the Palestinian population out of the territory illegally occupied by Israel.

In Trump’s own words during his campaign, the central target of repression under his administration will be “communists, socialists and Marxists,” including those who were “born here.” “We don’t want them if they want to destroy our country,” he declared last summer. “So we’re going to be keeping foreign Christian-hating communists, socialists and Marxists out of America.”

“Federal law prohibits the entry of communists and totalitarians into the United States. But my question is, what are we going to do with the ones that are already here, that grew up here?” Trump said during a campaign rally in June. “I think we have to pass a new law for them.” Trump is now seeking to put these plans into effect.

While Trump’s actions are flagrantly unconstitutional and illegal, he is counting on a Supreme Court stacked with his operatives to ratify his decrees, as well as on the complicity of the Democratic Party, whose leading figures are currently groveling before Trump with pledges to work together with him on “meaningful immigration reforms.”

His second presidency represents the violent realignment of the US political system to reflect the massive growth of social inequality. This realignment will inevitably provoke mass opposition in the working class, which Trump is planning to meet with mass repression. Birthright citizenship specifically was the product of the Civil War, a revolutionary struggle to abolish slavery in which an estimated 655,000 Americans died, and cannot be so easily revoked with the stroke of a pen.

Whether Trump can be prevented from establishing a presidential dictatorship, from overthrowing basic constitutional guarantees of democratic rights and from reversing all of the gains of past struggles depends on the extent to which the working class comes forward politically to assert its own independent global interests.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site