

Trump's Operation Dictatorship

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Two months into the Trump administration, there is no longer any question that it is breaking completely with all legality. The capitalist media itself is now acknowledging that what is happening in the United States is an attempt to overthrow constitutional rule and establish a presidential dictatorship.

What has brought matters to a head is Trump's open defiance of a federal court order that required the government to halt deportations based on the invocation of the Alien Enemies Act on Saturday. In response to the ruling by Washington DC District Court Judge James Boasberg, White House officials and Trump himself have threatened to have Boasberg impeached.

The response from the fascist right has included rabid denunciations by Trump of "lunatic left" judges, demands for impeachment, voiced both by Trump and Republicans in Congress, and tacit threats of violence. A *Financial Times* columnist noted Wednesday the "recent spate of anonymous pizza deliveries to the private homes of dissenting judges—a move straight from a mafia film. 'We know where you live' is the implied message for the justices."

This takes place under conditions in which individuals, including Mahmoud Khalil, are being seized for their political views. Yesterday, law enforcement agents sought to detain Cornell University student Momodou Taal after he filed a lawsuit against Trump challenging his executive orders. Masked federal agents seized Georgetown University researcher Badar Khan Suri outside his home Monday night, employing the same fraudulent grounds used to kidnap Khalil.

The presidency has become the cockpit and planning center of a dictatorship. There is no historic precedent for such actions by an American president. Or, rather, the only precedent is the final weeks of Trump's first term, when he sought to overthrow the election in a fascistic coup. What Trump failed to complete on January 6, 2021, he is now doing.

On Wednesday, the *New York Times* published an extraordinary article under the headline, "Defiance and Threats in Deportation Case Renew Fear of Constitutional Crisis," citing the comments of a number of law professors on the significance of Trump's actions. Jamal Green, a law professor at Columbia University, is quoted as stating:

If anyone is being detained or removed based on the

administration's assertion that it can do so without judicial review or due process, the *president is asserting dictatorial power* and "constitutional crisis" doesn't capture the gravity of the situation. [Emphasis added.]

Stanford law Professor Pamela Karlan warned, "The problem with this administration is not just acute episodes, like what's happening with Judge Boasberg and the Venezuelan deportation. It's a chronic disrespect for constitutional norms and for the other branches of government." Karlan added: "'Tipping point' suggests a world in which things are fine until suddenly they're not. But we're past the first point already."

Karlan is right that the "tipping point" is an inappropriate metaphor. One is dealing more with a complete collapse of democratic rights. But the Trump administration is not merely acting with "disrespect for constitutional norms." It is a willful, criminal conspiracy to destroy them.

The *Times* adds its own commentary, stating that "the right question is not whether there is a crisis, but rather how much damage it will cause." Well, that answer can be given. The logic of Trump's actions means the illegalization of opposition. Workers will be deprived of their rights. Those who oppose the policies of the White House will be subject to persecution, arrest or worse.

Neither in the *Times* nor in the media as a whole is there any serious analysis of how the United States got to this point. The media and political establishment present Trump's actions as if they have suddenly erupted out of nowhere, the product of an individual's delusions or malice. This is false.

It is more than a quarter-century since the theft of the 2000 elections, during which the Supreme Court intervened to halt the counting of ballots and hand the presidency to George W. Bush. In advance of the court ruling, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote that the decision would reveal "how far the American ruling class is prepared to go in breaking with traditional bourgeois-democratic and constitutional norms."

The Supreme Court's decision in *Bush v. Gore*, and the absence of any resistance from the Democratic Party, established that there was no significant constituency within the corporate and political establishment for the defense of democratic rights.

Within a year of the stolen 2000 election, the Bush administration used the 9/11 attacks as a pretext to launch the “War on Terror”—a permanent state of war abroad coupled with the shredding of democratic rights at home and the establishment of a global network of torture camps centered on Guantanamo Bay. These dictatorial measures were deepened under Obama, who claimed the power to assassinate US citizens without trial.

Trump’s first term brought the crisis of American democracy to a new stage, culminating in the January 6, 2021 fascist coup attempt aimed at overturning his election defeat. The four years of the Biden administration were marked by a massive escalation of imperialist violence, including the US-NATO war against Russia and the genocide in Gaza—a colossal crime that Trump is now exploiting to justify his crackdown on domestic opposition.

Trump’s moves toward dictatorship represent the transformation of quantity into quality. What is involved is not merely a threat or tendency, but the implementation of a definite conspiracy at the highest levels of the state to establish a dictatorship.

Two interconnected processes underlie the breakdown of democratic forms of rule. First, the massive concentration of wealth in the hands of a tiny oligarchic elite is completely incompatible with democracy. The oligarchy is waging a ruthless assault on the social rights of the working class, mass layoffs, the destruction of thousands of jobs overnight, and a coordinated assault on all social programs.

The Trump administration, along with Elon Musk’s “Department of Government Efficiency,” is dismantling government agencies that provide vital social services, while preparing historic cuts to Social Security, Medicaid, and other programs. Today, Trump is expected to sign an executive order aimed at abolishing the Department of Education, having already eliminated half of its staff earlier this month.

Second, democratic rights are being dismantled to subordinate American society entirely to the needs of imperialist aggression. Facing internal crisis and long-term economic decline, the ruling class seeks to offset its domestic contradictions through military expansion on a global scale. Trump’s declarations of intent to annex Canada, Panama and Greenland echo the fascist ambitions of Hitler’s Germany, which likewise combined domestic dictatorship with imperialist conquest.

The working class must intervene immediately to stop Trump’s drive toward dictatorship! It would be the gravest political error to subordinate this struggle to the Democratic Party. In the two months since Trump’s inauguration, the Democratic Party has made clear that it will not oppose his authoritarian measures.

Immediately after Trump’s election victory, President Biden invited Trump to the White House and publicly expressed hope for the new administration’s “success.” Leading Democrats,

including Bernie Sanders, quickly pledged their willingness to “work with” Trump. References to fascism—which briefly surfaced during the election campaign—vanished entirely.

Last week, just hours before Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act, Senate Democrats provided decisive votes to ensure passage of a Republican spending bill that fully funded the Trump administration through September, directly facilitating the illegal and unconstitutional activities of the White House. As the *World Socialist Web Site* warned, this legislation amounted to an Enabling Act, modeled directly on the 1933 law that legalized Hitler’s dictatorship in Germany.

The Democratic Party gave Trump a blank check, fully aware of the consequences, because whatever its tactical differences the Democrats represent the same financial oligarchy whose interests Trump openly advances.

The fight must be taken into the working class. It is the working class that is the constituency for the defense of democratic rights, but these rights can be secured only through mass struggle. Protests and demonstrations against Trump’s drive toward dictatorship have already begun, but these must be expanded and coordinated.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers and youth to build rank-and-file committees in factories, workplaces, campuses and neighborhoods to mobilize mass resistance, including strikes and demonstrations.

The SEP fights to infuse this emerging movement with a socialist program and perspective. The struggle against dictatorship is inseparable from the struggle against the financial oligarchy and capitalism itself. The wealth of this oligarchy must be expropriated and society reorganized on the basis of social need and equality, in the US and internationally.

We call on all those who agree with this perspective to take up this fight and join the Socialist Equality Party.



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