

# Border Gestapo arrest and threaten to deport well-known Colorado immigrant rights activist Jeanette Vizguerra

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On Monday, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) goons arrested and imprisoned Jeanette Vizguerra, 53, a mother of four and grandmother who has lived in the United States for 30 years. ICE agents confirmed to local news that Vizguerra was arrested in the parking lot of a Target in Aurora, Colorado, where she had been working as a cashier.

According to multiple reports and her children, Vizguerra is currently incarcerated in an ICE Aurora detention facility. In an interview with CNN, Luna Baez, one of Vizguerra's children, told the network her mother noticed unmarked vehicles following her the past few days while she was driving to and from work and on her breaks.

Baez recounted that her mother told her that ICE agents "surrounded her on all sides" of her car while she was on break. After taking her out of the car "she was put in a truck, the whole time she told me they were laughing at her."

Speaking to the *New York Times*, Jordan Garcia, an acquaintance of Vizguerra for 15 years and an immigrant-rights advocate with the American Friends Service Committee, confirmed to the paper she was arrested at Target and that agents gloated after locking her up, "We finally got you."

In a fascistic post on Wednesday, ICE Denver released a photo of Vizguerra wrapped in chains with an inciting statement that smeared Vizguerra as "a convicted criminal alien" who "will remain in ICE custody pending removal from the United States."

Following her arrest, Vizguerra's children and supporters in the community have held daily rallies and protest outside the detention facility where she is incarcerated.

Vizguerra's arrest, detention and possible deportation underscore that Trump's racist and dehumanizing attacks on immigrants have nothing to do with "public safety" but are aimed at intimidating and suppressing the democratic rights of everyone. Vizguerra is not a violent criminal, and, in fact, was named one of *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential" people in 2017 for her outspoken advocacy of immigrant rights.

She first came to the United States from Mexico in 1997 with her husband and eldest daughter. In 2009, Vizguerra was cited for minor crimes related to being undocumented, including using a fake Social Security number. For the next several years, Vizguerra appealed deportation orders and attempted to apply for citizenship.

In 2017 she gained international fame after she and her children were obligated to take sanctuary in the basement of the First Unitarian Church in Denver to avoid deportation under Trump. Vizguerra and her three American children spent three years living in the church.

In a statement to Denver's NBC9News, First Unitarian Church Reverend Mike Morran, denounced Vizguerra's detention, "This administration has shown that they don't care about legalities," Morran said. "It's quite obvious to me that the object of this kind of exercise is to generate fear. To keep people quiet. To keep people who might speak out against injustices or insist on due process make them unwilling to do that."

While remaining mostly silent on the abduction of anti-genocide activist and Columbia graduate Mahmoud Khalil, as well as thousands of others who have been kidnapped by the Trump administration in the last 60 days, a few Colorado Democrats have

released tepid statements opposing Vizguerra's arrest.

On March 18, Senator Michael Bennet posted on X, "Jeanette Vizguerra is a mother and pillar in her community. I am deeply concerned about ICE's actions to detain her without any due process, like a deportation order. ICE should ensure Jeanette has legal counsel and immediately release her."

That same day, Denver's Democratic Mayor Mike Johnston released a statement characterizing Vizguerra's arrest as a "Putin-style persecution of political dissidents."

While the Democrats seek to divert mass social anger in service of war against Russia, the fact that Vizguerra is currently incarcerated and facing deportation is entirely the fault of the Democratic Party.

In 2021, after years of fighting against deportation orders, the Biden administration granted Vizguerra and four other Colorado immigrants only a one-year stay on their deportation orders but refused to grant any of them citizenship or permanent legal status.

Instead, throughout the Biden administration, the Democrats and Republicans attempted to pass legislation that would provide some \$20 billion to greatly expand the border police apparatus. The "border bill," was proposed and backed by Democrats as way to secure Republican support for military spending, including funding the US-NATO war against Russia, the genocide in Gaza, and arming Taiwan in preparation for war with China.

The Democrat-backed bill provided funding for more immigrant prison camps and border police but no "pathway to citizenship" or amnesty for undocumented persons currently living in the US. Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris repeatedly stated their support for the legislation and attacked Trump from the right for his role in quashing the bill.

Near the end of his presidency, while Biden found the time to pardon his family members and political allies on his way out the door, he did nothing to protect millions of immigrants including Dreamers who arrived to the US as children, and people like Vizguerra who have lived in the US a majority of their life.

Instead, prior to Trump's inauguration, Democrats in the Senate and House voted with their MAGA-colleagues to pass the fascistic Laken Riley Act. The anti-immigrant legislation greatly empowers state attorneys general, granting them standing to challenge

federal immigration policy, including on an individual basis.

The bill also requires no-bond detention of immigrants who have simply been *accused* of a petty crime, such as shoplifting. According to the latest statistics from the Department of Homeland Security, immigrant detention facilities are currently at 120 percent capacity, with over 43,000 people, including now Vizguerra, languishing in a network of mostly for-profit private prisons.



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