

Massachusetts Democrats collaborate with ICE in crackdown on immigrants

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Recent actions by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Massachusetts, coupled with policy changes spearheaded by Democratic Governor Maura Healey, underscore the deepening collaboration of Democratic Party leaders with the Trump administration's fascistic immigration agenda. While claiming opposition to Trump's policies, Democrats have aligned themselves with measures that scapegoat migrants and undermine the democratic rights of the working class.

Between March 18 and March 23, ICE conducted a major enforcement operation across Massachusetts, arresting 370 individuals. The agency claimed to target "dangerous alien offenders," including alleged members of transnational gangs like MS-13 and Tren de Aragua. In fact, the operation swept up individuals with minor offenses or tenuous connections to criminal activity, further criminalizing undocumented immigrants.

Local radio station WBUR reported that civil rights activists dispute how ICE characterized its operation and quoted Neenah Estrella-Lune of East Boston, who said it was likely that many of the people apprehended have only minor criminal records.

"The overwhelming majority of the people are not criminals in that way," she said. "They're people who, at worst, they overstay their visa and—Oh, God forbid, they're painting people's homes."

The *Boston Globe* reported March 24 that several workers were arrested by immigration authorities the previous week on their way to a construction site and a Puerto Rico citizen in Fall River said her car was blocked until she showed them three forms of identification.

The *Globe* added:

And in Chelsea, a Salvadoran father of two with a work permit, no known criminal record, and a pending asylum case was taken into custody last Tuesday on his way to work. The man, who has been in the country for more than five years, is being held at a detention center in Plymouth.

Tom Homan, the anti-immigrant "border czar" appointed by Trump, in a self-congratulatory post on X boasted of traveling to Boston to oversee the sweep, claiming it was in response to reports of "illegal alien child rapists walking the streets." This inflammatory rhetoric, utilizing the vilest tropes to demonize immigrants, served as the pretext for an operation that targeted not only those with criminal convictions, but also 165 individuals for whom ICE provided no information whatsoever. The arbitrary nature of these arrests is representative of a dragnet taking place across the country to ensnare individuals with no significant criminal history.

Federal officials praised the operation as a "whole-of-government approach" to public safety. In fact, the actions are part of a fascistic assault against immigrants aimed at sowing fear within immigrant communities. The raids occurred amid mounting pressure from the Trump administration to dismantle sanctuary policies in cities like Boston, although sanctuary status provides no guarantees to immigrants.

Governor Healey has implemented sweeping changes to Massachusetts' right-to-shelter law, effectively excluding thousands of migrants from accessing emergency housing. Her "reforms" include residency requirements, mandatory verification of legal status and criminal background checks for shelter applicants.

These measures disproportionately impact newly arrived migrants and undocumented families, many of whom fled violence and poverty in their home countries.

Healey's rhetoric frames these restrictions as necessary for fiscal sustainability and public safety. However, her policies echo Trump's anti-immigrant narrative by scapegoating migrants for strained state resources, while ignoring systemic issues like the lack of affordable housing and economic inequality.

Attacks on immigrants are inseparable from broader assaults on the working class. By scapegoating migrants for social crises like homelessness and crime, Democrats deflect attention from systemic failures rooted in the capitalist system.

Healey's refusal to address Massachusetts' housing crisis—despite the state's wealth concentration at the top—reveals the priorities of the Democratic Party as fundamentally aligned with those of the Republicans. The four richest individuals in Massachusetts—including the CEO of Fidelity Investments and two Fidelity Investment heirs, along with Robert Kraft, owner of the New England Patriots—have combined wealth of more than \$66 billion, according to the 2024 *Forbes* Rich List.

The response to the ICE raids from Governor Healey and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, both Democrats, has been to further normalize the federal government's draconian immigration enforcement. While Wu issued a mild statement calling on ICE to release more information and vaguely alluded to concerns about unlawful detention, her words ring hollow in the face of the terror inflicted on immigrant communities.

Healey praised the state's collaboration with ICE, stating:

Massachusetts is not a sanctuary state, and Massachusetts law enforcement regularly partners with federal agencies and federal law enforcement to keep people safe.

She touted the Massachusetts State Police's cooperation with the Trump administration in arresting gang members in Lawrence just two weeks prior. This embrace of collaboration with federal immigration

authorities exposes any claim by the Democratic Party to be defenders of immigrants' rights.

Healey's pronouncements and the lack of any concrete action to resist ICE's rampage demonstrate that relying on the Democratic Party to combat Trump's agenda is a dangerous illusion. The Democrats' actions and rhetoric demonstrate an underlying agreement with Trump's assault on democratic rights, necessitating an independent struggle against both Trump and the Democratic Party.

The claim by ICE officials that the operation targeted "transnational organized crime, gangs, and egregious illegal alien offenders" is the standard justification for such sweeps. Homan's prior threats to unleash "hell" on the state and statements that Healey and Wu should be "ashamed" of themselves were aimed at exerting pressure to dismantle any local protections for immigrants. However, such pressure was little needed.

The collaboration between Democratic leaders like Healey and federal agencies such as ICE highlights the bipartisan nature of the assault on immigrants' rights. Across the country, Democratic governors have supported stricter enforcement against so-called "criminal aliens" and collaboration with ICE, while adopting policies that exclude undocumented immigrants from essential services.

This bipartisan assault must be opposed through unified action by workers—immigrant and native-born alike—to defend democratic rights and demand social equality.



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