

Social Security to mark immigrants as dead to force them to “self-deport”

Marc Wells
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In one of the most ruthless assaults on immigrant workers in American history, the Trump administration has launched a policy that weaponizes the Social Security Administration’s “Death Master File” to erase the legal existence of thousands of living people.

This is not mere administrative cruelty. It is a campaign of financial assassination, designed to strip immigrant workers of their livelihoods, sever their access to essential services, and force them to “self-deport” through economic strangulation.

The list already includes over 6,300 individuals, and officials admit it will likely expand. Among them are minors and individuals with no criminal record. While the administration claims these people are “suspected criminals” or “terrorists,” even internal agency staff have found no evidence to support those allegations. These are workers who have paid into Social Security, Medicaid and unemployment insurance programs now used as weapons against them.

The scheme targets immigrants who were granted temporary legal status under the Biden administration, a status that carried no path to citizenship and no permanent protection, only the illusion of security until the political winds shifted. Trump has already started revoking their temporary status.

Their real “crime” was allowing themselves to be registered and tracked in federal databases built by Democratic administrations, which have long relied on immigrant labor while denying them lasting political rights or protections.

Now, under Trump, these records have been repurposed into a purge list.

Through this sinister manipulation, the government has begun reclassifying living immigrants as “dead,” transferring their names and Social Security numbers into a system meant for the deceased. The

consequences are catastrophic: without a valid Social Security number, one cannot legally work, open a bank account, sign a lease, access healthcare or claim any benefit. In the eyes of the financial system, they cease to exist.

The government’s intent is clear: dismantle the Social Security system as part of its attacks on fundamental past gains such as Medicare, Medicaid and other vital social programs. It starts by erasing these immigrants on paper and forcing them out of the country by depriving them of every means of survival after years of exploiting their labor.

As Leland Dudek, Trump’s acting commissioner of Social Security, admitted in an internal email, the financial lives of these immigrants will be “terminated.”

Martin O’Malley, Social Security commissioner under Biden, said, “It’s tantamount to financial murder.”

There is no due process, no hearing, no appeal before one’s life is wiped from the records. And getting off the death list is no simple matter. As former Social Security Administration (SSA) official Marcela Escobar-Alava noted:

“There’s a whole ‘I’m not dead’ routine... but the centers are backlogged.”

Staffing cuts have only deepened that backlog, leaving thousands trapped in legal limbo.

But this attack did not appear from nowhere. It stands on the shoulders of decades of bipartisan reaction.

Under Bill Clinton, border militarization and punitive immigration laws were expanded. The Obama

administration perfected the digital architecture that made this atrocity possible, building mass surveillance systems, registration pipelines and legal frameworks that funneled immigrant workers into the machinery of deportation. Despite his “progressive” facade, Obama earned the title “deporter-in-chief,” overseeing the forced removal of more immigrants than any other president in US history.

Biden extended these policies under more “humane” branding. Programs like the CBP One app and humanitarian parole created vast registries of immigrant workers, funneled into low-wage jobs while awaiting permanent status that was never offered. These workers paid taxes, contributed to Social Security, and enriched American society—only to be left completely exposed when the political calculations shifted.

Now Trump, inheriting these lists, has flipped a bureaucratic switch and declared them dead.

To justify this grotesque act, the administration has fallen back on the well-worn rhetoric of “law and order.” Trump and his mouthpieces, including the corporate media, have painted immigrant workers as criminals, rapists, terrorists, and freeloaders.

Internal agency reports confirm that most of the people targeted have no criminal history at all. The lists have been compiled so recklessly they even include minors, some as young as 13.

The real “crime,” in the eyes of the capitalist state, is not violence or fraud—it is being poor, foreign-born and a member of the working class.

This scapegoating is a classic feature of capitalism in crisis. As social inequality deepens and economic instability spreads, the ruling class turns to repression and nationalism to deflect working class anger. Immigrants, marginalized and politically weakened by legal status, become the most convenient targets, used to distract attention from the real architects of the crisis.

While immigrant workers are being declared “dead,” the true parasites—the financial oligarchy—continue to plunder society with impunity.

Donald Trump has built his fortune on tax fraud, wage theft and financial scams. Elon Musk, now actively shaping immigration enforcement policy, spreads conspiracy theories about immigrants “stealing benefits” while personally profiting from billions in government subsidies.

These men produce nothing. It is immigrant

workers—alongside their native-born brothers and sisters—who create the wealth that the ruling class seizes. They clean hospitals, deliver goods, build homes, care for children and harvest food. Their labor sustains the world. The billionaires feed off it.

This attack is not an isolated policy but part of a sweeping assault on democratic rights. The same apparatus of state repression that targets immigrant workers is being deployed against students, young people and anyone perceived as politically oppositional. Students like Mahmoud Khalil, Momodou Taal and Rumeysa Ozturk are only a few among many.

The campaign to erase immigrant workers from economic life is part of a broader offensive against the entire working class. Once normalized, these tools of control will expand, targeting dissent, slashing social protections and undermining labor rights for all.

The fight to defend immigrants is inseparable from the fight to defend all workers. This struggle cannot rely on the Democratic Party or the courts. Only a united, independent, socialist movement of the working class can defend immigrants and democratic rights by overthrowing the capitalist system and building a society based on human need, not private profit.



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