

ICE raids tear through California despite Democrats’ “sanctuary” promises

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Communities across California are facing a renewed wave of ICE raids, bringing fear, instability and repression into the lives of countless immigrant families. Central Coast areas such as San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties have been targeted with particular intensity. These operations, largely directed at extremely poor, predominantly Latin American migrant laborers, signal a growing campaign against the working class as a whole—one whose implications reach far beyond immigration policy alone.

The recent actions, confirmed by 805 UndocuFund, an organization that provides assistance to immigrants, included at least three separate raids with seven arrests. Some of those seized were previously protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, a registry originally created during the Obama administration. With this list now controlled by the Trump administration, migrants who once believed themselves shielded from immediate deportation now find themselves targeted by the very apparatus they were encouraged to register with.

In Oxnard, a man was apprehended by ICE in a dramatic ambush at a gas station. Surrounded by multiple cars he was detained in front of his two children. No attention was paid to their welfare during the arrest. A gas station attendant intervened to ensure the children’s safety, allowing them to contact a relative. Such scenes offer a glimpse into the operations of a fascistic state that has contempt for basic legal procedure, democratic rights and human decency.

805 UndocuFund coordinator Beatriz Basurto described the raids as being conducted to “meet a quota,” and pointed to a pattern of warrantless arrests. According to Basurto, ICE agents arrive with a photograph and seize individuals found nearby, often

without any verified identity. This method, far from the procedural norms traditionally associated with law enforcement, resembles dragnet operations historically associated with Latin American regimes in the ’70s or European fascism in the ’30s.

In Pomona, ICE operations targeted day laborers gathered outside a Home Depot on April 22. Between 15 and 20 individuals were rounded up by agents. Three Guatemalan men were swiftly deported despite being present in the United States for more than two years, according to their families. All lacked any criminal history. Others taken during the same raid remain unaccounted for; some may be detained at ICE facilities near the Mexican border.

In another incident in Pomona the same day, 58-year-old barber Martin Majin-Leon was arrested at gunpoint by ICE while opening his shop, which he had operated for over two decades. His family only located him after checking security footage and receiving word from the Mexican consulate. After 30 hours, ICE released him from the Calexico detention center.

These events unfold against a backdrop of bipartisan complicity. The DACA registry—originally presented as a “protective” measure without providing a path to citizenship—created a database that Trump is using to target migrants. Prior to Trump’s return to the White House, no move was made by the outgoing Biden administration to protect these individuals.

The Biden administration, for all its posturing about “humane immigration reform,” did not reverse any of Trump’s attacks, but instead continued the use of “Title 42” to deny asylum claims, oversaw new crackdowns and expanded detention centers.

The notion of “sanctuary” cities and states—promoted by Democratic officials such as California Governor

Gavin Newsom—has proven to be a lie. Upon taking office in 2019, Newsom declared that California would be a “sanctuary to all who seek it,” presenting his administration as a bulwark against Trump’s anti-immigrant policies. He pledged support for the California Values Act (SB 54), which nominally limits cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities.

But this sanctuary framework has never offered real protection. Newsom has actively opposed proposals that would further restrict the ability of state prison officials to hand over individuals to ICE, citing “public safety” concerns—a euphemism long used to justify collaboration with federal deportation forces.

The state continues to facilitate ICE access to jails and prisons, leaving thousands vulnerable to transfer and deportation as Newsom bragged on his podcast this year with Turning Point USA’s Charlie Kirk, “We do work with ICE. ... We coordinate with ICE on the deportation, we’ve done that over 10,000 times since I’ve been governor, we’re not denying access, we’re not denying coordination.”

Migrants deported under these policies face terrifying consequences. Nearly 300 men have been sent to El Salvador’s notorious “terrorism prison” CECOT, a concentration camp that lawyers have described as a legal “black hole” built to imprison some 40,000 people in degrading, violent, and lawless conditions. Detainees are denied due process, crammed into overcrowded cells, and subjected to brutal treatment by the state. The Trump administration is also seeking to deport migrants to Libya, a failed state ravaged by war and human trafficking, where migrants risk torture, enslavement and execution.

Constitutional protections such as habeas corpus and due process are under intense attack and have provided no defense. Indefinite detention, mass raids and lawless expulsions have become normalized tools of federal policy. Under both Democratic and Republican administrations, immigration has been transformed into a national security apparatus used to control labor, suppress dissent, and test mechanisms of authoritarian rule.

The same ICE agents who round up undocumented workers are increasingly deployed against political opponents. In one of many examples, Tufts University student Rümeysa Öztürk was seized by ICE after

writing a pro-Palestinian op-ed, in what bore all the markings of a political abduction. Though released by a judge, her case reveals the government’s willingness to use immigration enforcement against students and protesters. Mahmoud Khalil and Momodou Taal are similar cases.

Local institutions have failed to act as any kind of bulwark. In Santa Barbara, more than 150 protesters packed a county board meeting to demand an end to local cooperation with ICE. Despite overwhelming public opposition, officials delivered vague statements and refused to commit to meaningful action. Attorneys from the Immigrant Legal Defense Center described existing collaboration as deliberate and ongoing.

The role of the working class becomes decisive. The attacks on immigrants function not as isolated incidents but as elements of a broader, bipartisan class war from above. ICE’s operations are testing grounds for domestic militarization, repression and the erosion of civil liberties.

The same systems built to deport workers will be used to crush strikes, protests and mass resistance. As the gap between rich and poor widens and social unrest grows, the ruling class turns toward authoritarianism as its preferred method of governance.

Workers have no interest in defending borders that divide them. The struggles of Guatemalan day laborers, barbers in Pomona and detained students mirror those of workers across the US—and every other country—facing layoffs, wage cuts and state violence. Under capitalism, immigration enforcement does not protect jobs or communities, it enables exploitation, division and political control.

The attack on immigrants is the cutting edge of a ruling class project to dismantle democratic rights and impose a system of rule based on force. The defense of immigrants must become the foundation for a broader battle against inequality, dictatorship and war in the course of a struggle for socialism.



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