

Military-style anti-immigrant raids in Los Angeles spark mass protests and violent repression

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7 June 2025

Widespread anti-immigrant raids coordinated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) were carried out throughout the Los Angeles metropolitan area Friday, sparking citywide protests and numerous violent altercations between heavily armed federal agents and unarmed protesters, turning many areas of the city into a war zone.

The raids, which began Friday morning, targeted numerous sites in downtown and central Los Angeles, including the Fashion District, the Westlake District, South Los Angeles and Cypress Park, all areas known for their large immigrant populations and labor-intensive industries.

Multiple raids occurred at clothing wholesalers such as Ambiance Apparel and other businesses in the Fashion District downtown. At least two Home Depot stores, where day laborers congregate for work, and other businesses were targeted in West Lake, including other day labor centers and a doughnut shop. An additional Ambiance Apparel was raided in South Los Angeles, and Home Depots in the Cypress Park neighborhood.

ICE officials were also seen near a school in Koreatown, sparking fear and confusion among students and families. Connie Chung Joe, the chief executive of Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California, stated she received notice that ICE officials were “going to a school in Koreatown,” but it is still unclear if ICE agents entered any schools.

In downtown’s Garment and Fashion district near 9th and Towne street, workers were dragged away and thrown into unmarked white vans. Activists in trucks read instructions over a loudspeaker to those detained inside Ambiance Apparel’s warehouse, informing them of their rights. Demonstrators attempted to block the convoy of vehicles from leaving, eventually being cleared by pepper spray. Agents are seen in video footage riding on the back of military vehicles as protesters shout for them to leave, throwing objects and denouncing the agents as “fascists” and “pigs.”

In South Los Angeles a demonstration sprang up at 15th Street and Santa Fe Avenue in response to the detention of

workers from Ambiance Apparel. Officers with the LA Police Department (LAPD) established a skirmish line and agents in riot gear attacked the crowd with pepper spray and flash-bang grenades to disperse protesters who were blocking vehicles from leaving with the detained immigrant workers. At least one protester received medical treatment for being pepper-sprayed after being tackled to the ground and forcefully detained.

The raids quickly provoked protests which grew to some 500 people who gathered in front of the Metropolitan Detention Center in downtown Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Federal Building, which are adjacent to each other. Federal agents and riot police were called in to disperse the crowd.

The federal agents showed up in military armored vehicles wearing camo gear and brandishing heavy rifles. Agents deployed flash-bang grenades, pepper grenades and teargas on the unarmed demonstrators. One person threw eggs at one of the military-police vehicles. Video footage from Reuters in front of the LA Federal building and Detention Center shows agents violently tackling a protester and dragging their limp body into the building.

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California President David Huerta was injured and detained by federal agents. According to Democratic Congressman Gil Cisneros, Huerta was also tased. Reports indicate that Huerta was knocked down and suffered an injury to his head. Huerta was treated at LA County General Hospital, then transferred to Federal detention and remains in custody, according to a statement from the SEIU.

The Los Angeles Police Department declared that the protest taking place outside the Los Angeles Federal building was an unlawful assembly and the estimated 200 protesters remaining were ordered to disperse by 7 p.m.

In response to the protests, Assistant Attorney General Harmet Dhillon, head of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, stated publicly, “There is not a First Amendment right to physically obstruct law enforcement officers from executing a duly issued warrant.”

Yasmeen Pitts O’Keefe, a spokesperson for HSI branch of ICE, said that a total of 44 people were administratively

arrested and one person was arrested for obstruction. O'Keefe claimed that agents were executing search warrants in the investigation of businesses "suspected harboring of people illegally in the country." One business owner is claimed to have locked ICE agents in his building, prompting charges of "obstruction of a federal investigation."

HSI military-style vehicles and armed agents were preparing a night raid in Chinatown, with activists calling for a mobilization against ICE at 721 Hill St., as of 10:00 p.m. Friday night. No reports as of this morning indicate the raid occurred, but numerous reports indicate that HSI agents were staging in the area with some in military vehicles and tactical gear.

Numerous Democratic Party officials from Los Angeles and throughout California have condemned the raids, although the Democratic Party is equally culpable for attacks on immigrants and deportations, which reached record highs under the Democratic administrations of Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Mayor Karen Bass stated she was "deeply angered" and that the tactics "sow terror in our communities and disrupt basic principles of safety in our city." All 15 members of the Los Angeles City Council released a joint statement denouncing the raids and stating the "fear tactics" employed "support extreme political agendas that aim to stoke fear and spread discord in our city."

California congressmen Scott Peters and Juan Vargas called for an investigation into the tactics used in Friday's raids, writing to the Department of Homeland Security that "it appears to be part of a broader pattern of escalated and theatrical immigration enforcement operations across the country. These events raise serious questions about the appropriateness, proportionality, and execution of ICE tactics."

California Governor Gavin Newsom described the operations as "cruel" and "chaotic," criticizing them as an attempt "to meet an arbitrary arrest quota." The comments from Newsom are particularly cynical as his administration is currently seeking to prevent undocumented immigrants from enrolling in healthcare benefits through Medi-Cal, in a move which has been celebrated by the far right.

The posturing by the California Democrats at the federal, state, and local level, against the "tactics" used in raids by federal agents in Los Angeles and San Diego this week, cannot disguise their agreement with the program of mass deportations.

Their objection is that the military-style assaults against protesters is too transparently anti-democratic, and they fear that the Trump administration is too obtrusively carrying out mass deportations and provoking anger and social opposition. They present no opposition to the policy of mass deportations, only the tempo and brazenness with which raids have been carried out.

There is growing opposition to the Trump administration's vicious assault on immigrants and their families, as

demonstrated by the protests against the administration's policies. Demonstrations against raids are increasingly militant, reflecting a deepening mood of opposition.

The mass demonstrations in Los Angeles and response by workers and the community represent the growing anger by the working class and youth toward the brutal disappearances of immigrants, but more broadly the intensifying socio-economic crisis facing the working class.

Poverty, homelessness and other forms of social misery are increasing, even as the Trump administration is escalating attacks on living conditions and wages, education, healthcare, and all social welfare programs as part of a broader social counterrevolution which workers have faced under Democratic and Republican administrations for decades.

The scenes Friday hark back to the mass city-wide protests and violent police repression that were carried out in response to the acquittal of the cops who brutally beat Rodney King in 1991. The mass protests which the ruling class called "riots" sparked one of the deadliest acts of retaliation by the state and police in US history, producing more casualties, 54 dead and 2,000 injured, than any civil unrest since the Civil War.

As the *Bulletin*, the US predecessor of the *World Socialist Web Site*, wrote at the time: "When 27 cops gather on a Los Angeles street corner, in full public view, to make sport of beating a man to within inches of death, they are not acting as 'individuals.' They are the representatives of a society on the brink of breakdown, where the relations between people have descended to the level of the animal kingdom. They personify a dehumanized society whose ruling class they are hired to defend."

The intensified attacks on the immigrant population and the working class as a whole reflect the violent state of class relations and the crisis of the global capitalist system. The growing militarized ICE raids on immigrants and communities throughout the US are only test runs for the ruling class, who will be prepared to deploy far greater force against the population, immigrant and citizen alike, as the social anger directed against capitalism explodes.



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