

Trump administration carries out large-scale workplace raids as deployment of military to US cities continues

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With Trump's coup d'état set into motion with the deployment of National Guard troops and Marines to Los Angeles, the fascist administration has sharply increased the pace of abductions and deportations by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

One of the largest workplace raids of the new Trump administration was carried out Tuesday, when agents arrested around 80 workers at the Glenn Valley Foods meatpacking plant in Omaha, Nebraska. This represents more than half the workforce of the entire plant, and according to a warrant 107 out of 140 workers were "under investigation." The raid not only involved ICE but three other federal agencies, including the FBI, as well as Omaha police.

According to the *Flatwater Free Press*, this was also the largest workplace raid in the state of Nebraska since 2018.

Reuters reported that company president Chad Hartmann protested to agents that the company uses the government-administered E-Verify system to confirm the legal status of all applicants. However, an agent responded dismissively that the "system is broken." This suggests that many, if not most of those detained are not undocumented.

Significantly, the raid provoked immediate resistance from workers. Local reporters captured footage of workers and their family members attempting to physically blockade federal vehicles with their bodies. According to National Public Radio, hundreds more gathered in Omaha's meatpacking district to protest the mass arrests.

Also Tuesday, ICE agents carried out raids on farmworkers across southern California. Multiple media outlets posted videos of agents chasing workers through the fields. "These are people who are going to be afraid to take their kids to school, afraid to go to graduation, afraid to go to the grocery store," Elizabeth Strater, president of the United Farm Workers, told *Los Angeles Times*. "The harm is going to be done."

The newspaper also reported that immigration agents visited "five packing facilities and at least five farms in the fertile Oxnard Plain" located about 60 miles (97 kilometers) west of Los Angeles. At least half of California's more than 250,000 farmworkers are undocumented, according to a University of

California Merced report cited by the *Times*.

The workplace raids underscore that the attacks on immigrants are an attack on the working class. Immigrants are involved in every industry, including not only farm and meatpacking but manufacturing, logistics and other key industries.

In southern California, many immigrants work as port truckers, moving freight from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to warehouses and railheads further inland. "I don't agree with Trump on this," one Mexican-American port trucker told the WSW. "His policies are really bad. So many immigrants work here, have families, are contributing. It's not fair, I have family who are immigrants. It affects all of us."

He added: "We need something like a general strike. Many truck drivers work across borders or have [international] ties, like between US and Mexico. We are an international community."

Immigrants make up a substantial portion of the population of major US cities. Around 40 percent of the city of Los Angeles and 35 percent of New York City are foreign-born. Entire cities and regions, especially in the southwestern US with the highest concentration of Hispanic immigrants, are being placed under a regime of police terror.

What is unfolding is part of a definite strategy by the White House, cooked up by fascist advisors like White House chief of staff Stephen Miller. The *New York Times* reports that ICE is staggering shifts and working seven days a week to meet the 3,000 per day arrest quota set by Trump.

The raids are characterized by increasingly open lawlessness, where those detained are denied any due process. According to *The Guardian*, many arrested in the last few days have already been deported.

The situation requires the intervention of the working class through a general strike. As the Socialist Equality Party wrote in a statement Wednesday: "The working class must use its immense industrial and economic power. The protests must be directed toward preparing a general strike of the entire working class to bring Trump's coup to a halt."

The statement continued: "The offensive against Trump's

coup must unite all sections of the working class, across nationality, race, gender and all other divisions. No distinction must be made between immigrant and native-born. The United States is a nation of immigrants, and immigrant workers make up a huge and essential part of the American workforce. Their defense must become the cause of the entire working class.”

Such a movement can only be prepared through a rebellion against the union bureaucracy, many of whom have been promoting Trump’s “America First” policies for months and have now issued either toothless statements or kept a guilty silence. The United Food and Commercial Workers, which includes tens of thousands of meatpacking workers across the country, has not issued a statement on Tuesday’s raids. In fact, they have not issued a single statement on immigration since Trump took office, and his name appears only once in any of their statements since his inauguration.

The AFL-CIO union federation, whose member unions cover 12.5 million workers, has only issued one cowardly statement calling for the release of union official David Huerta, who was beaten and arrested while observing demonstrations in Los Angeles. They have refused to call out their membership in mass industrial action against Trump’s coup.

In a statement, the United Farm Workers declared that it calls “on every level of government to take every possible measure to protect immigrant workers and their families. We expect California’s federal, and state and local representatives to take immediate action to demand transparency.” Thus, it only calls for action by local Democrats, who in spite of occasional protestations are collaborating with Trump by imposing curfews and arresting protesters. Meanwhile, the union implores *management* to “train all staff to understand their rights and the requirements needed to enter the property such as a signed judicial warrant.”

The raids on farm and food production workers are all the more striking given the fact that, during his first term, Trump signed an executive order under the Defense Production Act to order food workers to stay on the job during the opening months of the pandemic. Thus, yesterday’s “essential workers” are now being hunted like animals.

Meatpacking was already one of the most dangerous industries in the US, with high injury rates due in particular to fine repetitive cutting motions required of line workers. During the start of the pandemic, these plants became super-spreaders and key transmission vectors of COVID into rural areas where they are typically located. According to figures from the Food and Environment Reporting Network, there were over 59,000 confirmed COVID cases among meatpacking workers and 298 deaths between April of 2020 and September of 2021. Including farmworkers and other food processing workers increases these numbers to over 91,000 and 466, respectively.

However, this is almost certainly a major undercount, given that these figures were culled from local news reports and corporate statements.

The officials of the UFCW and other unions played a key role in keeping the plants open. In one of the most infamous cases, the UFCW worked out an “attendance bonus” at a Tyson pork plant in Waterloo, Iowa, while managers took bets on how many workers would get infected. At least six workers died of COVID at the plant.

The concentration of highly exploited immigrant workers in meatpacking has grown since the 1980s, when the UFCW bureaucrats helped break the 1985-86 Hormel strike by decertifying the local when workers refused to go back to work. While pay in the meatpacking industry was on a rough parity with manufacturing workers, real wages have plummeted since then. The median hourly wage is only \$18.44, according to the latest government figures from May 2024.

However, it is significant that one of the major centers of opposition to the raids has been Chicago, the historic center of the US meatpacking industry. In the muckraking novel *The Jungle*, writer Upton Sinclair describes how meatpacking bosses of the 19th and early 20th centuries exploited immigrants from a series of countries, beginning with Germans, then Irish, “Bohemians” (Czechs), Poles, Lithuanians and Slovaks.

“They were like rats in a trap, that was the truth; and more of them were piling in every day,” Sinclair writes. “By and by they would have their revenge, though, for the thing was getting beyond human endurance.” The novel ends with the growth of the socialist movement among the workers of Chicago, uniting immigrant and native-born workers.

This gives a sense of the direction which the fight against immigration raids, at a far higher level of the crisis of American capitalism, has to take.



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