

US Customs and Border Protection agents violently arrest Los Angeles nurse monitoring ICE operations

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On Friday, August 8, federal agents violently arrested Registered Nurse Amanda Trebach outside the gates of Terminal Island in San Pedro, Los Angeles—a Coast Guard base utilized by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) as a staging hub for immigration raids across California.

Video footage shows Trebach being thrown face-down to the ground, her head pressed down by the knee of a masked agent, before being forced into an unmarked black van by at least six unidentified men in tactical gear. Her backpack was seized from her vehicle without a warrant.

Eyewitnesses reported she had been monitoring immigration enforcement activities with the community group Unión del Barrio as part of a “peace patrol” documenting what she and others described as “abductions by masked officers.”

CBP’s official account accused Trebach of “impeding and obstructing federal law enforcement,” claiming she “jumped in front of moving vehicles,” “hit the car with her signs and fists while yelling obscenities,” and “physically blocked and impeded CBP from completing their duties.”

Early reports, including those from National Nurses United (NNU), referred to her detention by “federal” or “ICE agents,” but CBP later confirmed their direct involvement. She was initially accused of “assaulting a federal vehicle.”

Eyewitness statements, video, and the absence of any charges directly contradict CBP’s claims. Cynthia Avina of Unión del Barrio stated that Trebach was simply holding a poster when she was accosted by CBP agents.

“They charged at her, and she dropped the poster. The agents are claiming that she attacked them with that

poster, and we know that that is not true,” Avina told ABC 7. “They are making false claims to try to intimidate us, to try to stop us from doing the work that we’re doing.”

Trebach, a US citizen and former member of the California Nurses Association (an NNU affiliate), was held for over a day and released without criminal charges on Saturday evening, August 9. The NNU had called for her “immediate release and a full dismissal of all charges.”

On Friday, community members protested outside the Metropolitan Detention Center in downtown Los Angeles during her detention, demanding her freedom. In response the Los Angeles Police Department declared an “unlawful assembly” and arrested over a dozen people.

While NNU celebrated the outcome as a “testament to the power of organizing resistance and solidarity,” the arrest is in fact a warning shot from the state. It signals an escalation of efforts to criminalize protest and suppress any monitoring of immigration raids.

Terminal Island—off limits to the general public and heavily militarized—is one of the key operational hubs for immigration enforcement in Southern California. The decision to target and violently detain a nurse participating in peaceful observation was deliberate, intended to intimidate others who might do the same.

Large sections of nurses are themselves immigrants or work side-by-side with undocumented colleagues and patients. Many live in households directly affected by the threat of raids, deportations, and family separation. In Los Angeles, one every five people is either undocumented or has an undocumented family member.

For these workers, opposition to immigration repression is not a matter of electoral calculation but of survival and solidarity. Their class position compels them toward unity

with immigrant workers, documented or not, against the machinery of state violence.

This stands in sharp contrast to the outlook of the political establishment, including its so-called “progressive” wing, fully implicated in the climate that enables such arrests. The alignment between Senator Bernie Sanders and the NNU bureaucracy exposes this collusion. NNU, the largest union of registered nurses in the US, has repeatedly endorsed Sanders in his presidential campaigns.

Sanders’ recent public statements—praising Donald Trump’s “crackdown” on fentanyl, calling for stronger borders, and insisting “I don’t think it’s appropriate to have people coming across the border illegally”—do not represent some unfortunate “nuance” in an otherwise humanitarian position. They reveal fundamental agreement with the framework of repression, the defense of national borders and the reactionary narrative of “legality” that criminalizes undocumented workers.

The NNU bureaucracy, while posturing as a defender of immigrants, adapts itself to this same nationalist framework. It condemns the most egregious outrages but refuses to directly challenge the existence and legitimacy of the border enforcement apparatus. Its official responses frame the issue in terms of constitutional rights and procedural overreach, leaving untouched the bipartisan system of repression that operates with or without “due process.”

The dismantling of the “Sensitive Locations” policy under the Trump administration—which removed restrictions on immigration enforcement at hospitals, schools, and churches—has greatly intensified the danger.

Healthcare facilities and personnel are now fair game for surveillance, raids, and intimidation. Trebach’s arrest, as a registered nurse, underscores the readiness of the state to target workers as a whole and amplify the repression of basic democratic rights.

It is no accident that CBP and ICE operations are increasingly staged from military installations like Terminal Island. The integration of civilian immigration enforcement with military facilities and tactics reflects the broader authoritarian trajectory of the American state. Unmarked vans, masked agents, and warrantless seizures are methods tested in the suppression of immigrant workers and destined to be turned against the working class as a whole.

In the most open step yet toward establishing a presidential dictatorship, Donald Trump has declared a state of emergency in Washington D.C., placed the

Metropolitan Police Department under federal control, and mobilized nearly a thousand soldiers from the D.C. National Guard to patrol the streets. Cloaking this action in the fraudulent claim of a “crime wave” in the capital, Trump is placing the city under direct military rule.

The administration has already floated the deployment of combat troops, citing as precedent the militarization of Los Angeles’s MacArthur Park earlier this summer, where 500 heavily armed US Marines backed mass immigration raids and the rounding up of immigrant workers for deportation.

In Los Angeles and across the country, protests against militarized raids and Trebach’s arrest reveal the genuine and strong opposition to the draconian repression of immigrants and democratic rights among the working population.

But without a clear political perspective, such protests are contained and dissipated. The union bureaucracy and allied organizations seek to confine resistance within safe, legalistic channels that pose no threat to the institutions of capitalist rule. Appeals to Democratic politicians, who are themselves co-architects of immigration repression, serve only to disarm the working class.

The defense of immigrant rights cannot be entrusted to the Democratic Party, the Sanders wing of its “progressive” faction, or the trade union apparatus. These forces are committed to defending the capitalist nation-state, which by its nature enforces borders, criminalizes migration and divides workers along national lines.

The alternative is the independent political mobilization of the working class, uniting native-born and immigrant workers across borders in a common struggle against the capitalist system. Such a movement must reject the framework of “legal” and “illegal” immigration entirely, recognizing the right of all workers to live and work wherever they choose, free from harassment, detention, or deportation.

Amanda Trebach’s arrest exemplifies the escalating repression that will accompany deepening inequality and growing opposition to capitalism. The fight for socialism is the only viable path to end immigrant persecution and guarantee full equality and freedom of movement for all.



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