

# ICE agents mount violent attacks against Chicago workers

Patrick Martin  
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Over the past several days, agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have carried out increasingly violent and provocative raids throughout the Chicago area.

On Thursday, ICE agents raided a flea market on Ashland Avenue on the city's South Side. Nearly all the agents were wearing masks, and there is no indication that any were wearing body cameras. This is despite an order that morning by a federal judge that agents must wear body cameras, and they must be turned on at all times.

Several young men were snatched from stalls and frog-marched out of the flea market by the heavily armed agents, as dozens of friends and family members shouted their opposition and held up cellphones to record the anti-immigrant raid.

At the hearing earlier in the day, US District Court Judge Sara Ellis expressed shock over the brazen defiance of the orders she had issued earlier in the week barring ICE from firing tear gas and pepper balls against protesters, journalists, legal observers and bystanders.

"I'm a little startled frankly," she said. "I live in Chicago if folks haven't noticed. And I'm not blind, right? I'm getting images and seeing images on the news, in the paper, reading reports, where at least from what I'm seeing, I'm having serious concerns that my order's being followed."

Sean Skedzielewski, an attorney representing the Trump administration, laid blame on "one-sided and selectively edited media reports," effectively justifying the ICE tactic of treating journalists as part of the "enemy" camp.

Last week, Ellis ordered agents to wear badges on raids and banned them from using riot control techniques against peaceful protesters and journalists. At Thursday's hearing, she said, "I am adding that all agents who are operating in Operation Midway Blitz are to wear body-worn cameras, and they are to be on."

After Skedzielewski claimed this would be logistically

impossible, the judge agreed to allow some exemptions, but this has evidently been interpreted by ICE as a green light to continue as before.

The judge disputed the claim by President Trump that the US border "starts at Lake Michigan." Immigration agents could not proceed as they did on the border, she said. "We are in an urban, densely populated area where crowds are going to converge when there's a commotion, where appropriate crowd control is important," she continued.

"The issue is that DHS [Department of Homeland Security] is using force in a manner that violates the constitutional rights of peaceful protesters, journalists and, essentially, clergy members," she continued.

"You can't shoot 'em in the head [with pepper balls]. You can't deploy tear gas. You can't use flash-bang grenades. You can't drive a car through a crowd."

The judge set a court appearance for Monday, October 20, at 10:30 a.m. for ICE Field Director Russell Hott "to explain to me why I am seeing images of tear gas being deployed and reading reports that there were no warnings given before it was deployed out in the field."

Other reports of ICE violence appeared in the local media. The *Chicago Sun-Times* described in detail a car chase through a quiet residential neighborhood, which drew a crowd of residents who were then attacked with tear gas and smoke grenades.

The Trump administration has mobilized more than 500 National Guard troops from Illinois, Texas and California at a training center outside Chicago. However, another federal judge, April Kelly, issued a temporary restraining order blocking their deployment onto the streets of the city. An Appeals Court upheld the order, but the administration is continuing to appeal, expecting eventual authorization by the ultra-right majority on the US Supreme Court.

A further court setback for Trump came when the top

judge in Cook County, which includes Chicago, issued an order barring ICE from arresting people at courthouses, an increasingly frequent tactic by the immigration Gestapo. The order, which took effect Wednesday, prohibits the arrest of any “party, witness, or potential witness” while attending court proceedings.

Far from deterring the Trump administration, these court orders have led the White House to focus more directly on suppressing the resistance of working people in Chicago. Meta, responding to a call from Attorney General Pam Bondi, shut down a Facebook group that was sharing information about ICE raids as a way to warn the communities being targeted. Bondi claimed the group was being used to “dox and target ICE agents.”

While Bondi complained about an alleged “wave of violence against ICE,” it is ICE that is perpetrating violence and brutal repression against workers and youth in the city.

There is clearly a political calculation in the White House that a political explosion in Chicago would provide the pretext for invoking the Insurrection Act of 1807, under which Trump would assume the authority to order federal troops into Chicago, regardless of the opposition of Illinois Governor JB Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson.

Invoking the Insurrection Act—which the Trump administration has indicated is imminent—would be a critical step in the establishment of an outright presidential dictatorship.

Appearing Wednesday night on the Sean Hannity program on Fox, Trump’s top aide Stephen Miller denounced Pritzker as a “moron” who “hates America.” His voice rising to a shout, Miller declared, “You can’t love your country and then fight President Trump,” essentially identifying the gangster in the White House as the personification of America. Miller claimed that Pritzker “wants to protect the murderers, the people that are shooting dozens, and dozens of people every single week.”

In the same vein, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox, “The Democrat Party’s main constituency is made up of Hamas terrorists, illegal aliens, and violent criminals.”

Such statements can only mean that the White House is in daily discussions about preparations to outlaw all forms of political opposition, directed primarily not at the Democratic Party, but at the working class.

A dispatch filed by Julie Bosman, Chicago bureau chief for the *New York Times*, carried the remarkable headline,

“Chicagoans Resist I.C.E. Agents.” She continued, “Immigration agents are using aggressive tactics. Residents of the sanctuary city are trying to resist them.”

After describing the openly racist and provocative tactics of the ICE thugs, Bosman writes, “The presence of officers from Border Patrol and ICE has brought forth an intense backlash. Chicagoans are shouting at immigration agents, calling them fascists and Nazis, throwing objects at them and chasing their unmarked S.U.V.s or minivans, honking their horns to warn bystanders of ICE’s presence.”

The response of the Democratic Party to these developments is silence and complicity. While Democrats in Chicago and Illinois are calling on residents to trust the courts and wait for legal remedies, the Trump administration has already made clear that it will defy any ruling that interferes with its operations. At the national level, the Democratic leadership is simply ignoring the unfolding assault on democratic rights.

On Wednesday night, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez held a televised CNN “town hall” devoted to appeals for bipartisanship. Their central message was a plea for some Republicans to join with Democrats to pass a continuing resolution and end the government shutdown. Over the course of the event, neither Sanders nor Ocasio-Cortez mentioned the ICE raids in Chicago, the National Guard deployments or Trump’s declared intention to invoke the Insurrection Act and deploy the military against the American people.

The Democrats fear that any genuine opposition to Trump’s drive toward dictatorship would trigger a mass movement of workers and youth that would go far beyond their control.



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