

Massachusetts 13-year-old abducted by ICE and transported to Virginia detention center

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The abduction of a 13-year-old boy by armed agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) provoked angry protests October 14 in the city of Everett, Massachusetts. More than 80 residents and city councillors gathered outside Everett City Hall to demand the return of Arthur Berto, who was taken by ICE and transferred to a juvenile immigration facility in Virginia.

The protest was organized by the LUCE Immigration and Justice Network of Massachusetts and La Comunidad, a local nonprofit supporting Latino and Hispanic families. Protesters held signs with messages like “Don’t kidnap kids” and “Hands off Everett,” expressing outrage over the removal of a minor so far from his home, regardless of any alleged criminal history.

On October 9, the seventh grader at Albert N. Parlin School was arrested by Everett Police at a bus stop outside the school after a tip about him threatening another student violently, according to the police. The boy’s mother, Joseiele Berto, was told to pick up her son at the police station, but after waiting for more than an hour, she was informed that ICE agents had arrived and took the boy into federal custody. Everett Police claim they did not notify ICE, rather the agency accessed law enforcement databases independently and acted on its own authority.

The following day, the boy’s lawyer Andrew Lattarulo filed an emergency habeas corpus petition in federal court in Boston to challenge the legality of the detention and transfer.

On October 13 a federal judge in Boston gave ICE until the end of the day Tuesday to justify the detention or grant the boy a bond hearing by Friday. As of this writing, the boy remains in ICE custody in Virginia. “I only talk to him—never to any official who could explain what kind of place it is or what’s happening,” Joseiele Berto told CNN, speaking in Portuguese.

Arthur is a citizen of Brazil who entered the United States in September 2021. His family has a pending asylum application, and family members have been granted permission to work legally in the United States. The family is seeking asylum, and the boy holds no legal status as a minor immigrant except through this pending process.

The official justifications for the boy’s detention, manufactured by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and echoed by local officials, collapse under the slightest

scrutiny. This is not a story of protecting “public safety” but a coordinated, yet officially denied, collaboration between local police and federal immigration authorities, where a “standard booking process” functions as a direct pipeline to the federal deportation apparatus.

To justify the seizure of a child, the state deployed a campaign of disinformation. Tricia McLaughlin, a DHS spokeswoman, immediately took to social media to brand the 13-year-old a “public safety threat” who was in possession of a “firearm and 5-7 inch knife when arrested” and had an “extensive rap sheet.”

At a press conference, Everett Mayor Carlo DeMaria and Police Chief Paul Strong were forced to admit that “no guns were found.” They confirmed only that the boy possessed a “6-to 7-inch double-sided knife.”

The claim of the teen’s “extensive rap sheet” is a classic piece of state propaganda. The Middlesex District Attorney’s office confirmed that juvenile records are confidential and not subject to public records laws, making the DHS allegations impossible to publicly verify. This allows federal agencies to make unsubstantiated allegations against a minor, knowing they cannot be publicly disproven, thereby manufacturing a pretext for their predatory actions.

Everett officials attempted to wash their hands of any responsibility. Mayor DeMaria insisted his department “does not make arrests based on immigration status” and did not contact ICE, claiming the federal agency “operates independently.”

Police Chief Strong revealed collaboration with the deportation machine when he described the department’s procedures: “Once your fingerprints are taken, it goes to ICE and they determine if you’re an illegal entry.” This “standard booking process” is a direct and automatic funnel from local police departments to federal immigration enforcers.

The Everett incident occurred within the broader context of “Operation Patriot,” a massive immigration enforcement dragnet conducted across Massachusetts. This campaign, far from being a targeted operation against dangerous criminals, is a terror campaign designed to intimidate the entire immigrant working class, carried out with the knowledge and tacit approval of the state’s Democratic political establishment.

In a press release, ICE boasted that “Operation Patriot” resulted in the arrest of what it termed “almost 1,500 illegal aliens” in Massachusetts during the month of May alone. The agency claimed it was targeting the “worst of the worst,” including “murderers, rapists, drug traffickers, [and] child sex predators.”

This is a deliberate lie. A letter sent by the Massachusetts congressional delegation to DHS, citing ICE’s own data, revealed that “almost half of the individuals recently arrested by ICE in Massachusetts have no criminal record whatsoever.”

The high number of non-criminal arrests is the result of a conscious policy of seizing so-called “collaterals.” Trumps fascistic “border czar” Tom Homan articulated this ruthless tactic, stating that if ICE agents encounter other undocumented individuals while searching for a specific target, “they’re coming too.”

This policy was on full display in the case of Marcelo Gomes Da Silva, an 18-year-old high school junior in Milford. ICE agents, who were seeking his father, arrested Marcelo as he was on his way to volleyball practice. According to his lawyer, the teenager has “no criminal history anywhere in the world.” This practice of seizing anyone in the vicinity transforms targeted enforcement into indiscriminate community-wide raids.

The tactics employed by ICE agents are designed to maximize fear and disorientation. Community members and advocates have documented agents using “unmarked with tinted windows” vehicles, wearing masks and refusing to display badges.

The congressional delegation’s letter corroborates these accounts, citing the use of “military-style gear” and gratuitous violence. In New Bedford, agents used a sledgehammer to smash the window of a parked car to arrest a couple waiting inside for their attorney. In Chelsea, agents allegedly held a gun up to a family’s car after they left church, broke the window and threw the father to the ground. These raids increasingly target “sensitive locations” like courthouses, spreading panic.

The result is a climate of terror. This fear is not an unintended byproduct of the operations; it is their central political objective. It is the tool used to isolate immigrant workers, atomize communities and discourage solidarity from other sections of the working class.

This federal crackdown unfolds not in a political vacuum but under the watch of a Democratic Party that postures as a defender of immigrants while overseeing the very state apparatus that terrorizes them.

While Democratic officials from the local to the federal levels issue carefully worded statements of outrage to placate public anger, their actions—and inactions—demonstrate a fundamental complicity with the anti-immigrant agenda.

In response to a Trump administration lawsuit targeting Boston’s sanctuary policies, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu issued a defiant statement defending the city’s Trust Act, declaring that “no Boston police or local resources will be co-

opted into federal immigration enforcement.”

While Wu makes these claims, ICE is carrying out a new surge of arrests dubbed “Patriot 2.0.” Federal officials openly state that they are using the existence of sanctuary policies as a pretext for *more* aggressive federal enforcement, rendering local protections meaningless. Wu’s claims provide political cover while her constituents are seized off the streets.

The response from leading state and federal Democrats reveals the same pattern. Governor Maura Healey initially refused to comment on the Everett boy’s abduction. Later, she dismissed ICE’s statewide crackdown as “political theater,” a characterization that trivializes the real terror and family separation inflicted on working class communities.

Representative Ayanna Pressley issued a forceful statement, rightly calling the boy’s detention an “abduction” carried out by “rogue ICE agents.” Yet, such condemnations are political posturing so long as she and her party vote to approve the massive federal budgets that fund ICE’s existence and empower these very agents.

The most cynical response came from Senator Elizabeth Warren and the Massachusetts congressional delegation. They dispatched a letter to DHS demanding an “investigation” into ICE’s tactics. Calling for an investigation by the very department overseeing the terror campaign is a well-worn tactic to absorb public anger and create the illusion of action, without fundamentally challenging the state apparatus responsible for the attacks.

This bipartisan consensus in defense of the capitalist state and its repressive machinery demonstrates that the war on immigrants is aimed at a far broader target.

The brutal ICE crackdown in Massachusetts, exemplified by the state-sanctioned abduction of a 13-year-old child, is not an “excess” of the Trump administration but a calculated policy of the capitalist state, enforced with the full complicity of the Democratic Party. The events in Everett and across the state prove that the Democrats are both incapable of and unwilling to defend the basic rights of immigrant workers. Their condemnations are a political fraud, designed to conceal their fundamental role in administering the capitalist state.

These savage attacks are aimed at terrorizing and atomizing the most vulnerable sections of the working class, whipping up xenophobia and dividing workers against each other. The goal is to prevent the unification of all workers—immigrant and native-born—in a common struggle against exploitation and inequality.



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