

Mass walkouts in North Carolina against immigration raids: Workers must lead the fight against kidnapping operations!

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Over 30,000 students in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district took part in a sickout on Monday to protest the police-state raids being carried out by the Trump administration. Representing 20 percent of the district's total enrollment, the walkouts were a powerful rebuke to the ongoing Gestapo-style raids in Charlotte, North Carolina's largest city.

The protests continued throughout the week, with hundreds joining walkouts on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at schools including East Mecklenburg High School, Philip O. Berry Academy, Ballantyne Ridge High School and Northwest School of the Arts. Many students carried handmade signs defending immigrant rights and denouncing the raids. Of the over 147,000 students in the district, some 44,000 students are Hispanic.

By week's end, more than 56,000 students had refused to go to class, making the Charlotte protests one of the largest expressions of opposition to Trump's immigration crackdown in the country.

"We've noticed a really dramatic change as ICE raids have continued to get a lot worse in our community," said Chase Jordan-Fancher, a senior and one of the organizers of a walkout at his school. "After seeing several other schools start protests, we wanted to do the same."

The students have been joined by growing sections of the population. Charlotte residents are organizing in chat groups and on social media to monitor and resist federal raids. They are sharing reports on sightings of Border Patrol and ICE agents, including at schools, homes and even retail outlets like the Charlotte Premium Outlets, where a heavily armed and camouflaged agent was spotted. "Absolutely disgusting to post up in an establishment where families, workers and children are present," wrote one local resident.

As in Chicago and Los Angeles, many residents who are not themselves targeted by immigration raids are defending their immigrant neighbors. At a Home Depot on Wednesday, more than 100 people gathered to confront federal agents attempting to abduct day laborers. The same day, over 1,000

people attended a volunteer event at a local church to offer support and protection to immigrants. Erika Reynosa, a local resident, said many immigrants are staying home: "They're locked in for their own safety."

That same night, hundreds of workers and young people marched through Charlotte, demanding an end to the raids. Signs at the demonstration read, "Human rights have no borders," "Immigrants are not criminals, but Donald Trump is," and "No human being is illegal."

The protests are a response to a brutal and unprecedented immigration crackdown that has turned entire working-class communities into militarized zones. Last week, as part of Trump's expanding war on the working class, federal immigration agents launched a sweeping operation across North Carolina under the direction of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) commander Gregory Bovino.

The operation, given the absurd code-name "Charlotte's Web" by the Department of Homeland Security, marked a sharp escalation in brutality. Unlike previous operations carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), this one was spearheaded by CBP, a move designed to circumvent any local legal restrictions. The result has been a campaign of terror: masked, heavily armed agents in unmarked dark vehicles have been filmed trespassing on private property, pulling over drivers at gunpoint, and abducting workers suspected of being undocumented—all without warrants or legal justification.

In the span of just one week, nearly 400 people have been arrested in Charlotte and other cities and towns in North Carolina such as Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Hickory, Lenoir and Blowing Rock. Agents have refused to disclose the identities of those detained, their legal status or whether any had outstanding charges. Eyewitness accounts describe agents monitoring traffic for "suspicious" patterns, targeting families in stores and public spaces, and terrorizing entire neighborhoods.

Local residents, regardless of immigration status, are being

subjected to racial profiling and unconstitutional searches. What is underway is mass abduction and political intimidation carried out by a fascistic police apparatus.

On Thursday, the Department of Homeland Security told Mecklenburg County Sheriff Garry McFadden that “Charlotte’s Web” was officially over. But DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin told the *Guardian*, “The operation is not over and it is not ending anytime soon.” Many federal agents are now expected to redeploy to New Orleans for “Swamp Sweep,” a month-long operation targeting southeast Louisiana, with up to 250 agents arriving beginning Friday.

The protests in North Carolina mark a significant development in the growing popular opposition to Trump’s war on democratic rights. They come just one month after millions participated in the nationwide “No Kings” demonstrations. Recent polls show that more than half of North Carolinians believe the country is headed in the wrong direction, with a majority disapproving of Trump, in a state Trump carried in the last three elections.

The immigration raids in Charlotte mark a major escalation of the Trump administration’s conspiracy to establish a presidential dictatorship. With no legal justification, the administration is deploying heavily-armed Border Patrol agents, far from any border, as a paramilitary force to carry out abductions and terrorize the population. The deployment is part of a broader assertion of unlimited executive power, including the use of federal troops in American cities, the preparation for invoking the Insurrection Act, and the declaration of a war on what Trump calls the “enemy within,” that is, the American working class.

When NBC’s Jacob Soboroff asked the DHS spokesperson McLaughlin to explain the legal basis for deploying the Border Patrol, which is legally allowed to operate within 100 miles of the border, in Charlotte, she replied with a single word: “Airport.” This answer, even more absurd than the previous justification of “Lake Michigan” used to deploy agents in Chicago, makes clear that the administration is dispensing entirely with all legal norms in its drive toward authoritarian rule.

The raids in Charlotte are taking place just a week after the end of the government shutdown, which the Democratic Party ended on Trump’s terms. Throughout the shutdown, the Democrats avoided any mention of Trump’s conspiracy for dictatorship, presenting the conflict as a budgetary disagreement. Then, as popular opposition grew and the crisis of the administration deepened, they handed Trump a political lifeline.

Their aim was not to oppose Trump’s war on democratic rights, but to contain mass anger and preserve the state. Far

from an opposition party, the Democrats—including Biden, Harris, and figures like Bernie Sanders—have facilitated Trump’s anti-immigrant program at every step: from Title 42 expulsions to expanding deportation powers under the Laken Riley Act. Sanders, in particular, has repeatedly praised Trump’s attacks, telling right-wing comedian Tim Dillon last month that “Trump did a better job” than Biden in waging war on immigrants.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the broadest mobilization of the working class in defense of immigrant workers and democratic rights. The brutal ICE and Border Patrol raids in Charlotte and across the country are central to the fascistic program of the Trump administration, which is seeking to build an American police state under the command of the financial oligarchy.

At the same time that immigrant families are being terrorized and disappeared, workers are confronting mass layoffs, plant closures and industrial deaths. The same government that is rounding up workers on the streets of Charlotte is overseeing the gutting of food stamps, Medicaid and public education; it is sending workers to die in unsafe facilities, and handing out trillions to billionaires like Elon Musk and Wall Street speculators.

The defense of immigrants must be fused with the growing resistance in the working class. Students must turn to workers and workers must take up the cause of immigrants as their own. The SEP calls for the formation of rank-and-file committees in every workplace and neighborhood to organize opposition from below, independently of the union bureaucracy and both corporate-controlled parties.

Workers must demand and fight for the immediate end to the mass roundups; the release of all those detained; and the withdrawal of Border Patrol and CBP from all domestic policing operations.

The Trump administration is a government of, by and for the capitalist oligarchy. Its goal is to smash all opposition to the social counterrevolution being carried out on behalf of the billionaires. To stop dictatorship, defend democratic rights and secure jobs, wages and a future for all, workers must unite across all racial, national and citizenship lines, and build a socialist movement to take power and reorganize society on the basis of human need, not private profit.



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