

Young protester permanently blinded as DHS agents attack anti-ICE demonstration in Santa Ana, California

Marc Wells**14 January 2026**

On the evening of January 9, 21-year-old protester Kaden Rummler was permanently blinded by federal agents during a protest outside a government building in Santa Ana, California, housing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) offices.

The demonstration had been organized to protest the killing two days earlier of Renee Nicole Good, a Minneapolis woman shot dead at point-blank range by an immigration agent on January 7 during the federal “Operation Metro Surge,” an unprecedented mass deployment of federal agents that sparked widespread outrage. Thousands have taken to the streets in response to Good’s death; in Santa Ana that evening, what began as a large march thinned out by late hours, leaving only a smaller group at the federal plaza.

Video footage and eyewitness accounts show three armed Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agents in riot gear advancing on the remaining protesters. One agent is seen attempting to arrest a demonstrator identified as Skye Jones. As other protesters moved toward the agents, at least one DHS officer fired so-called “less-lethal” rounds into the crowd from close range, striking Rummler directly in the face.

Rummler fell immediately, bleeding profusely and crying out for help as others retreated. In a statement released through associates while he remained hospitalized, he described seeing “dark and thick blood pooling beneath me” and pleaded with federal agents to call an ambulance. According to his account, agents instead taunted him, laughing and saying he would never see out of his left eye again. Rummler was then hauled by an agent into the federal building by his collar as he struggled to breathe.

Surgeons later removed shards of plastic and

potentially toxic materials from his skull and face, and found metal fragments dangerously close to his carotid artery, meaning he will require lifelong medical monitoring. Doctors were unable to remove all of the shrapnel. His left eye was destroyed and his tear duct was damaged; he has permanently lost vision in that eye. Rummler said that hearing the voices of friends and comrades helped keep him conscious during the ordeal.

Within hours of the incident, federal authorities moved into “Big Lie” mode. DHS spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin described the demonstrators as a “mob of 60 rioters” who had hurled rocks, bottles and fireworks at law enforcement. A terse statement from the department called allegations of excessive force “absurd” and reiterated that assaults on law enforcement are “dangerous and criminal.”

The Santa Ana Police Department contradicted that version of events, said it was only aware of protesters throwing orange traffic cones at federal agents, and reported no significant violence such as rock or bottle throwing or serious attacks on officers. Activist Connor Atwood, who was present during the confrontation, confirmed he did not see rocks or bottles used against DHS agents and noted that firecrackers were set off only on the sidewalk, away from the federal building entrance.

Skye Jones, arrested and later released after several days in custody, stressed at a news conference outside the Santa Ana city jail that protesters had gathered to oppose brutal and unjust federal enforcement practices, not to incite violence against law enforcement. Fellow protesters and Rummler’s supporters decried the federal response as unjustified and excessively forceful,

pointing to the severity of his injuries and criticizing the behavior of DHS agents in the aftermath of the shooting.

Amid these events, a chilling statement by Trump White House deputy chief of staff and senior immigration adviser Stephen Miller on Tuesday further exposed the administration's contempt for democratic constraints on state power.

On *The Will Cain Show*, Miller declared to ICE officers that "you have federal immunity in the conduct of your duties." He went on to assert that "the Department of Justice has made clear that if officials cross that line into obstruction, into criminal conspiracy against the United States or against ICE officers, then they will face justice," essentially justifying any crime committed by ICE or the state against the population.

Miller emphasized that no local or state official, "no illegal alien, no leftist agitator or domestic insurrectionist," could obstruct federal agents without facing felony charges, a message that had been amplified by DHS on social media.

Legal experts have noted that federal agents do not enjoy blanket immunity under law and can be held accountable if their actions exceed lawful authority. But Miller's remarks, broadcast amid the uproar over Good's killing and the Santa Ana confrontation, amount to an open signal from the administration that immigration agents are being given free rein to carry out violence in support of the mass deportation operation.

Both the Minneapolis shooting and the blinding of Rummler in Santa Ana are the logical outcomes of a broader political program under the Trump administration: to escalate paramilitary repression domestically as well as abroad. DHS, ICE and Customs and Border Protection are being empowered and armed with military hardware, not just to carry out immigration raids but to suppress social opposition. Rummler's injury and Good's death reflect a political strategy of state terror aimed at crushing resistance to deportations and federal repression generally. The ultimate target is the entire working class.

This paramilitary mobilization is occurring without democratic constraint. Federal agencies now operate with impunity, shielded by political cover from both executive and legislative branches.

Responsibility for this state violence is shared by both

major political parties, as the Democrats have contributed to the growth of the national security state and its deployment against civilians. They serve the same capitalist ruling elite as Republicans, and neither party will mount a genuine defense of democratic rights.

The domestic repression of dissent is inseparable from an aggressive foreign policy that relies on military force, regime change and imperialist dominance, as seen in the January 3 invasion of Venezuela and the kidnapping of its president, in the saber-rattling over Greenland that threatens to fracture NATO, and in the looming threat of war with Iran. Both domestic and foreign policy serve the interests of a financial oligarchy determined to maintain its privileges and wealth while suppressing working-class unrest and resistance.

At the same time, resistance is growing. The strike by 15,000 nurses in New York and a wave of labor struggles across the country show that the working class remains the only social force capable of stopping authoritarianism, fascism, war, imperialism and, ultimately, capitalism itself, the root cause of the repression and violence now engulfing the United States.



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