

Immigration attorney Eric Lee warns ICE mass detention is spearhead for dictatorship in MS Now interview

Our reporter
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Immigration attorney Eric Lee appeared on MS Now on February 15 to expose the horrific conditions faced by immigrants held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities. He also warned that these attacks on immigrants are part of a broader project by the US ruling class to establish a presidential dictatorship, using mass detention infrastructure as the backbone of that repression.

Documents made public in recent days outline plans by ICE to dramatically expand its network of concentration camps, including eight “mega-centers” capable of holding thousands of people and hundreds of additional processing sites to boost capacity to approximately 92,600 beds nationwide by late 2026. This \$38.3 billion plan is being financed through the “One Big Beautiful Bill” and includes converting warehouses and other large facilities into long-term detention campuses to “effectuate mass deportations.”

Data analyzed by The Marshall Project shows the number of children held in ICE detention on any given day has increased more than six-fold under the current administration, with some days seeing more than 400 children locked up at family detention centers such as Dilley in Texas, where disease outbreaks and abusive guards have fueled mounting outrage.

Speaking on *The Weekend: Primetime*, Lee bluntly declared, “We live in a country where the federal government kidnaps children, spirits them away to what are really concentration camps, hundreds of miles from home,” describing months-long detention in “disease infested conditions,” without adequate food, clean water, or medical care.

Lee stressed that the abuse is intentional. “This is not negligence or a few ‘bad apples.’ This is a deliberate

policy directed from the White House by Donald Trump and his fascistic aides like Stephen Miller to harm children,” he said, adding, “the fact that this administration and Trump himself are so deeply implicated in the Epstein scandal, it really comes as no surprise that this is how children of vulnerable working class families are treated in this country.”

He cited his own clients, the El-Gamal family, whose two five-year-old children have been held at the Dilley detention center for eight months. The children, Lee explained, suffer recurring nightmares, wake up screaming for their mother and are denied basic necessities such as fruit, books and candy. “The guards are abusive,” he said.

Lee warned that what is unfolding goes far beyond detention. He pointed to facilities such as the East Montana facility in El Paso, where guards are “systematically beating detainees in detention, wrapping flannel around their fists so that they can beat them in the head without giving them bruises. This is what the federal government is doing to people in this country, some of whom have been here for years and most of whom have committed no crime.”

“That is the state of reality in this country, before it gets worse, the 20th century tells you when mass detention and camps are being built across the country that can house hundreds of thousands of people,” he said. “We are going down a very dangerous path in this country if the population doesn’t stand up and fight back.”

In closing, Lee rejected claims by Democratic Party figures that past administrations carried out deportations without brutality. Referring to remarks by Hillary Clinton at the Munich Security Conference, in

which she declared that “More people were deported under my husband and Barack Obama without killing American citizens and without putting children into detention camps than were in the first Trump term or this first year of Trump’s second term,” Lee said such statements were “about as big of a lie as we should expect from the Clintons.”

He noted that some 10,000 people died following Bill Clinton’s Operation Gatekeeper and that “Millions of families were broken by the Obama administration and this network of detainment camps, including Dilley, which Obama opened, are bipartisan.”

Lee warned that Trump is expanding this network “as the spearhead in his attempt to set up a dictatorship in this country.”



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