

# Kristi Noem defends murderous immigration Gestapo as Senate hearing exposes bipartisan support for ICE

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On Tuesday, embattled Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem appeared before the United States Senate Judiciary Committee to defend both her own record and the murderous and criminal actions of the immigration agencies she oversees.

The hearing takes place under conditions where DHS employees are going without pay for over two weeks after Democrats refused to provide votes to fund the agency unless it adopted cosmetic measures aimed at restoring the credibility of the widely hated department, which has Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under its purview.

Millions of people are outraged over the brutal and criminal character of the “mass deportation operation,” which serves as a spearhead of dictatorship, and the murder of multiple Americans this year, including Keith Porter Jr., Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti.

In response to the murders of Good and Pretti in Minneapolis, Minnesota, tens of thousands of people held mass demonstrations on January 23 and 30 demanding that all immigration agents leave the state and that those responsible for the murders be held accountable. Some two months after the murder of Good and Porter Jr. and more than a month after the murder of Pretti, none of the agents responsible for their killings have been arrested or charged with a crime.

Underscoring the mass anger directed at Noem and the immigration agents under her command, the hearing was interrupted twice by protesters.

Near the beginning of the hearing, a protester shouted, “Kristi Noem, you should be ashamed of yourself,” before being wrestled to the ground by Capitol Police. As they were carried out of the chamber, the protester called for the abolition of ICE.

A second protester shouted, “Two other Americans were killed by ICE, Keith Porter Jr. and Dr. Linda Davis. They were Americans killed by ICE. Say their names, their black lives matter.” Dr. Linda Davis, a special education teacher in Savannah, Georgia, was killed on February 16 when a vehicle fleeing federal immigration agents crashed into her car during a morning commute near her school.

In her opening remarks and testimony, Noem repeatedly defended the immigration Gestapo and refused to apologize to the families of Good and Pretti for smearing them after they were killed. In the case of Pretti, Noem falsely claimed that the VA ICU nurse was “brandishing a weapon” and appeared to be engaged in “domestic terrorism.” These comments were made hours after video emerged showing Pretti was disarmed, shoved to the ground and shot in the back multiple times by CBP thugs.

Noem likewise refused to apologize to Marimar Martinez, who attended the hearing in person. Last year during “Operation Midway Blitz” in Chicago, Martinez was shot multiple times by CBP thug Charles Exum after CBP agents rammed her car. Exum bragged over text message that he put “five holes” in Martinez, a US citizen on her way to donate clothes at a local church.

In response to concerns raised over the deplorable conditions immigrants are held for months at a time in for-profit concentration camps, Noem falsely claimed detainees were given prompt medical treatment and three healthy meals a day. As Noem was testifying the *El Paso Times* reported that the sprawling Camp East Montana immigrant concentration camp was under quarantine following a measles outbreak at the Texas detention facility.

This is the second time measles cases have been confirmed at the camp and follows at least two cases of tuberculosis at the facility.

In his opening remarks, chairman of the committee Iowa Republican Chuck Grassley condemned Democrats for not voting to approve funding for the DHS, “Now more than ever I hope the Democrats work to end the shut down.” Retiring Senator Thom Tillis (R-North Carolina) fumed that under Noem’s leadership, “the American people...think that deporting people is wrong.”

In his opening statement, ranking member of the Judiciary Committee Illinois Senator Dick Durbin (D) attacked Noem over the murders of US citizens before proposing immigration goons “follow the same rules as police.”

While many Democrats mentioned the murder of US citizens

and the lack of any accountability from ICE agents, none of them proposed actually abolishing ICE, a demand that has the support of 50 percent of the US population according to a YouGov poll released on March 3, the highest registered support for abolishing the agency YouGov has measured.

Instead, multiple Democrats talked about “reining in” DHS and installing “guardrails,” such as requiring agents not to wear masks while kidnapping people and receiving more training. “DHS needs the same use-of-force requirements as police,” Hawaii Democratic Senator Mazie Hirono said.

Democrats repeatedly, and unprompted, agreed with their “Republican colleagues” that ICE and CBP were necessary and that the government should have the ability to deport people who have committed “serious crimes,” although neither Democrats nor Republicans could agree on what constitutes a “serious crime.”

Turning to Minnesota, Noem confirmed during the hearing that roughly 650 federal immigration agents remain in the state, weeks after the Trump administration claimed it was winding down its massive enforcement operation. Pressed by senators on why hundreds of agents were still deployed following the murders of Good and Pretti, Noem claimed that the agents were now primarily investigating alleged “fraud,” including supposed Medicaid fraud cases in Minnesota.

Last week the federal government announced it would withhold \$259 million in Medicaid payments to Minnesota—a move without precedent in modern US politics and yet another attack on the working class by the Trump administration. The announcement was publicized by Health and Human Services Secretary Mehmet Oz and Vice President JD Vance, who claimed the action targeted “scammers” who have “hijacked in particular a certain part of the Medicaid system,” but offered no concrete evidence to justify such sweeping punishment. Promising further attacks on workers and families, Oz warned that Minnesota “is not alone” and “won’t be the first to receive this action”.

Medicaid in Minnesota is a major social lifeline: over 1.26 million people are beneficiaries, it covers three in 10 children, and more than 78 percent of adult recipients are working, in school, or caregiving. The program insures over 300,000 low-income workers. Cutting funds to such a program is an assault on working class families—children, the elderly, people with disabilities and low-paid workers who rely on Medicaid for basic health care. The freeze is part of the Trump administration’s escalating offensive in Minnesota, first with the killings of Good and Pretti, and now through social murder carried out by cuts to vital programs.

Despite claims of a “drawdown” of federal agents, which Democratic Party figures including Governor Tim Walz helped promote, the Trump administration’s terror against Minnesota workers has continued, with collaboration from the DFL/Democratic Party–run state administration. This past

Sunday, police with the Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office were recorded assaulting anti-ICE protesters in St. Paul, Minnesota. The video shows police spraying protesters with pepper spray and throwing one to the ground and slamming their head.

The Democrats have played a particularly treacherous role spreading the lie that protests alone had convinced the Trump administration to dial back ICE terror.

The same ruling circles attacking social programs enrich themselves through speculation, war profiteering and corruption. There is real fraud taking place, and it is in Washington, particularly in the White House. Trump has enriched himself to an extraordinary degree, personally accumulating at least \$1.4 billion in a single year of his presidency, including more than \$800 million from cryptocurrency ventures, bribes and other transfers of money.

The biggest fraud of all is the illegal war on Iran, which exposes the lie that social programs must be cut for lack of funds. Billions of dollars have already been wasted massacring school girls in Tehran and workers throughout the region. The Trump administration’s broader trajectory—the expansion of ICE, the trampling of democratic rights and the launching of illegal wars—expresses the logic of a ruling class defending its ill-gotten wealth and power. The same ruling class that wages war abroad now demands austerity and dictatorship at home to pay for it.

The defense of democratic rights and social programs cannot be left to either party of the ruling class. Workers must build rank-and-file committees, convene mass meetings in workplaces and communities, and unite struggles over health care, wages and democratic rights into a mass movement independent of the two capitalist parties and their adjuncts in the trade unions.



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