

Democrats enforce crackdown outside Delaney Hall as Congress prepares billions more for ICE and Border Patrol

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2 June 2026

New Jersey state and local police have continued their crackdown on protesters outside the Delaney Hall immigration detention center in Newark, New Jersey, where hundreds of immigrants are nearing the end of a second week of hunger and labor strikes against filthy conditions, medical neglect, rotten food, lack of access to counsel and pressure to sign deportation documents.

Police arrested 61 people outside Delaney Hall on the first night of a curfew imposed by Democratic Mayor Ras Baraka to suppress protests against the Trump administration's mass deportation regime.

The arrests took place overnight May 31 into June 1, after Baraka imposed a 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew covering a half-mile radius around Delaney Hall. According to Newark Public Safety Director Emanuel Miranda, those arrested face charges including failure to disperse, curfew violations and resisting arrest. No arrests were reported the following night.

The Delaney Hall arrests are part of a broader effort to criminalize opposition to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Last week, three anti-ICE protesters in Spokane, Washington—Bajun Mavalwalla II, Justice Forral and Jac Archer—were convicted on federal conspiracy charges stemming from a June 2025 protest at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma.

Spokane police arrested 30 people that day, but no officers or protesters were injured. Richard Barker, then the acting-US attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, resigned before the indictments were filed and has since said he did not believe the charges were warranted. There was no “conspiracy,” only a call to action answered by dozens of people. The three now face up to six years in prison if their appeal is denied.

The message is clear: Those who oppose ICE raids, deportations and detention centers are to be treated as criminals and potential federal felons.

In Newark, the curfew was officially lifted Tuesday night. The purpose of the curfew was not to protect Newark residents, let alone the immigrants imprisoned inside the for-profit concentration camp, its purpose was to protect ICE agents and ensure that Trump's mass deportation operation can continue.

It was imposed after New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill, also a Democrat, deployed state police against protesters and slandered them as “out-of-state agitators.”

The Democratic governor's language echoed the lies of the Trump administration, which has sought to portray opposition to masked federal agents kidnapping immigrants as “rioting” and “extremism.”

Rather than defending those imprisoned inside Delaney Hall or the residents protesting outside it, the Democrats have mobilized the police to secure the facility for ICE and GEO Group, the private prison contractor operating Delaney Hall under a \$1 billion, 15-year federal contract. While Trump sends masked ICE agents to kidnap workers and warehouse them in for-profit detention centers, Democratic officials deploy state and local police to beat, arrest and disperse those who protest.

The connection between ICE and GEO Group was further underscored by the Trump administration's elevation of David Venturella as acting director of ICE. Venturella is a former GEO Group executive who left the company in 2023 before returning to ICE under the Biden administration.

The hunger and labor strike at Delaney Hall, now nearing two weeks, is one expression of growing resistance inside the expanding network of ICE prisons. In California, immigrants detained at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center launched a hunger strike on May 20 over similarly abusive conditions, including inadequate medical care, filthy facilities and mistreatment by guards. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has denied the existence of the hunger strike, just as it has denied reports of organized resistance inside Delaney Hall, but detainees and immigrant rights groups have reported that at least 20 people were refusing food.

The reports from inside Delaney Hall and the Adelanto ICE processing center are part of a national pattern. An investigation by the Associated Press and *KFF Health News*, based on federal court filings, found that detainees across the US have described being denied medication, left with festering infections, forced to endure untreated cancers and ignored until medical emergencies became life-threatening.

One of the most revealing cases cited in the AP/KFF investigation is that of Vardan Gukasian, an Armenian political dissident and former paramedic held at the Henderson Detention Center in Nevada. In a March 30, 2026, declaration, Gukasian stated that while serving as a police official in Armenia, he exposed government corruption and abuse of power, leading authorities to view him as an enemy of the state.

In 2015, Armenian officials filed false charges against him and forced him to plead guilty by kidnapping his mother, holding her captive and threatening to kill her, according to the declaration. He was sentenced to three years in prison, often held in solitary confinement, and later fled with his mother to Russia and then the United States, where they applied for asylum. Armenia sought an Interpol Red Notice, but Interpol rejected the request, finding that Armenia had not established a legitimate criminal offense.

Gukasian has been imprisoned at Henderson since February 20, 2025, despite no US criminal conviction. He suffers from diabetes and hypertension. Last June, after nosebleeds, headaches and dizziness, his cellmate and then the entire block banged on doors before guards responded. A hospital doctor later told him his blood pressure was so high he could have suffered a stroke or seizure.

At the same time immigrants and their family members are forced to languish in deadly detention centers, the Trump administration is moving to extend the assault on immigrants to the financial system. On May 19, Trump signed an executive order, “Restoring Integrity to America’s Financial System,” directing the Treasury Department, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and federal banking regulators to treat immigration status as a factor in access to credit and financial services. The order presents undocumented immigrants as a “safety and soundness” risk to the banking system and directs regulators to consider whether possible deportation or loss of wages should be treated as evidence that a borrower cannot repay a loan.

Trump made the police-state character of the order explicit in a Truth Social post Tuesday, declaring that access to the financial system “must be limited to those who have a Legal Right to be here” and warning “anti-ICE rioters” that their protests were only strengthening his resolve. In a society where it is virtually impossible to rent an apartment, receive wages, pay bills or travel without a bank account, the administration is preparing to use financial exclusion as a weapon against immigrants and those who oppose the mass deportation regime.

The return of Congress to Washington this week will bring the resumption of work on the reconciliation package that would fund ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), including the Border Patrol, through the end of Trump’s term. Senate Republicans have proposed roughly \$72 billion for the two agencies, including more than \$38 billion for ICE and more than \$26 billion for CBP. Senate Majority Leader John Thune

has made clear that the purpose is to provide “border security and immigration enforcement for the next three years,” bypassing the normal appropriations process and insulating the agencies from even token oversight votes.

This outcome was prepared in advance by the Democrats. As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained last month, Democratic leaders helped separate ICE and CBP funding from the broader DHS funding bill, allowing them to posture as opponents of Trump’s immigration Gestapo while ensuring that the money would be delivered through reconciliation. Having helped split DHS funding from ICE and CBP funding, they could then claim innocence as Republicans moved to funnel tens of billions of dollars to the very agencies carrying out masked raids, warrantless home invasions, illegal detentions and killings.

The Democrats, who postured as opponents of ICE and CBP following the murders of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis, have in fact dropped any attempt to impose even token restraints on the police-state operations of the immigration agencies. Meanwhile, Trump has indefinitely deployed hundreds of armed ICE officers at major airports to harass and detain immigrants and, ultimately, political opponents of his dictatorial regime, without the slightest protest from the Democrats, including figures such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

This was not a tactical error. It expresses the class function of the Democratic Party. The Democrats may object to some of Trump’s methods, especially where they threaten to provoke uncontrollable opposition from below, but they share the same fundamental commitment to defending the capitalist state, policing the working class and protecting the interests of American imperialism. Their role is to provide a “democratic” cover for dictatorship, while channeling mass anger into harmless appeals for reforms that they have already abandoned.

They do not oppose the buildup of ICE and CBP. They seek to manage it, conceal their role in funding it and suppress opposition when it erupts outside facilities such as Delaney Hall.



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