

Minneapolis anti-ICE protesters face federal felony charges in Trump administration frame-up

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The federal felony indictment of 15 anti-ICE protesters in Minneapolis is a naked act of political repression. Brought by the Trump Justice Department under the framework of its fascistic National Security Presidential Memorandum 7, the charges announced Tuesday by federal officials are aimed not at punishing any genuine crime but at criminalizing opposition to the administration's mass deportation regime and intimidating workers and youth who have mobilized against it.

The case exposes once again the class character of the American "justice" system. It does not function as an impartial arbiter of law but as an instrument of the capitalist state, deployed to defend the interests of the financial oligarchy against the working class. While the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents who murdered Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in January remain uncharged, those who protested the federal occupation of the Twin Cities and sought to defend immigrant workers from kidnapping and deportation now face sweeping conspiracy charges and the threat of years in prison.

The 94-page indictment names 15 people: Isaac Auman Sant, Emmett James Doyle, Cameron Kennedy, Callum Robinet, Erik Davis, Brian Stillwell Apland, Kyle Wagner, Hannah Margaret Van De Water Davis, Treasure Cay Thoreson, Nathan Junho Kim, Alec Stewart, Douglas Misterek, Dustin Scott Beisell, William Morgan and Natasha Rakotz.

All 15 are charged in Count One with "conspiracy to impede or injure a federal officer," under 18 U.S.C. § 372. The remaining counts are directed against a smaller number of defendants. Wagner is charged with solicitation to commit a crime of violence and interstate threats. Sant and Morgan are each charged with interstate stalking. Morgan is further charged with assault on a federal officer and destruction of government property. Rakotz is charged with assault on a federal officer.

The indictment does not allege that the 15 defendants, as a group, carried out any coordinated armed attack. Nor does it allege that they amassed firearms or organized any plan to kill or seriously injure immigration agents. Instead, the document seeks to transform protest activity, surveillance of federal agents, Signal messages, social media posts, "hard" and "soft" blockades and the use of homemade shields into a sweeping criminal conspiracy.

The alleged conspiracy centers on protests and community defense efforts around the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building in Fort Snelling, the operational hub of the federal kidnapping campaign in the Twin Cities during Operation Metro Surge. The indictment describes efforts to track ICE vehicles, alert residents to raids, mobilize protesters and obstruct federal agents carrying out deportation operations. In one section, the government quotes Direct Action Minnesota's own description of itself as "a decentralized coalition of working-class people engaged in various forms of community defense against the current

Federal Occupation happening within the wider metro area, and against state and far-right violence more broadly."

In other words, the federal government is criminalizing opposition to its own campaign of state violence. The political character of the prosecution was made explicit in the White House statement issued after the charges were announced. Headlined "Trump Administration Delivers Another Crushing Blow to Antifa Terrorist Network," the statement declared that Trump had "designated Antifa a domestic terrorist organization" and "directed the full power of the federal government to hunt down, disrupt, and dismantle the violent anarchist network." It falsely claimed the 15 defendants had been charged with "coordinating violent attacks on ICE agents and facilities during Operation Metro Surge in Minneapolis."

U.S. Attorney Daniel N. Rosen made the same point at Tuesday's press conference, opening by invoking National Security Presidential Memorandum-7. "Last year President Trump issued National Security Presidential Memorandum-7 which directed the Department of Justice to prioritize politically motivated violence," Rosen said. "To accomplish that mission the deputy attorney general stood up Joint Task Force Vanguard to enforce a national security strategy to investigate, prosecute and disrupt those who engage in political violence and intimidation."

NSPM-7, issued by Trump on September 25, 2025, provided the pseudo-legal framework for this campaign of repression. The memorandum targets "anti-fascism," "anti-capitalism," opposition to Christianity, support for immigration, and race and gender politics as signs of "domestic terrorism." Its purpose is to criminalize broad areas of political opposition to the Trump administration and to place left-wing and anti-fascist views under the surveillance and prosecutorial machinery of the federal government.

Rosen accused the defendants of being members or associates of Direct Action Minnesota and the Black Cat Workers Collective. He said they were facing charges including "conspiracy to impede or injure a federal officer, solicitation to commit a crime of violence, interstate threats, interstate stalking, assault on a federal officer, destruction of government property." He claimed that the group "infiltrated" peaceful protests in order to "more efficiently carry out its unlawful direct actions."

But the flimsy character of the charges was underscored by Rosen's own presentation. Among the supposedly criminal acts he cited were that protesters "used homemade shields to resist law enforcement" and "followed" agents in their vehicles. Neither fact, in itself, establishes a violent conspiracy. Much of the indictment rests on hearsay, guilt by association and the presence of particular defendants at protests where others are accused of acts such as damaging or entering federal vehicles.

Rosen was repeatedly challenged by reporters over the weakness of the government's case. When pressed, he responded to most questions with some variation of "read the indictment," even though the nearly 100-page

document had been released only minutes before the press conference.

Minnesota Reformer reporter Madison McVan noted that “more than one-third” of the protest or stalking cases brought against people accused of interfering with federal officers during Operation Metro Surge had already been dismissed or had failed in some way. Another reporter followed up, saying, “It’s actually half now. I’ve been tracking these 18 U.S.C. 111 cases closely. Of 36, 18 have been dropped entirely, three with prejudice. There are non-prosecution agreements in at least 11 others, a magistrate judge called one of the affidavits that Special Agent Richard Berger had signed, one of many, a ‘false affidavit,’ and was unclear why your office was continuing to prosecute this case.”

Jana Shortal of KARE 11 asked Rosen why no charges had been filed against the officers who shot and killed Good or Pretti. Rosen replied, “Those investigations are ongoing.” Pressed by reporters to say which agencies were investigating the killings of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti, Rosen said, “We are not going to get into the details of those investigations here today.”

Reporters also asked what injuries, if any, immigration agents suffered as a result of the alleged conspiracy. No such injuries are detailed as the product of Count One, and Rosen could not cite a single concrete injury suffered by federal agents as a result of the alleged conspiracy.

The announcement of the charges was followed by a protest outside the federal courthouse in St. Paul. Demonstrators denounced the indictments as politically motivated and demanded the release of the accused. The protest became violent when U.S. marshals deployed chemical agents against demonstrators, who were attempting to hold a courthouse door open while voicing their opposition to the charges.

Natasha Rakotz, one of the 15 defendants, rejected the charges in comments to MPR News after turning herself in on June 17. “I think all of this is absolutely ridiculous,” she said. “I am not a violent person. I’ve never been violent. I’ve never had trouble with the law. The only thing I did was care about my community and my neighbors and against the government’s violence to our communities. And to try to mitigate and help those affected because they’ve been terrorizing us.”

Rakotz continued, “I’m just one of many people trying to help our immigrant neighbors, and they’re untrue. These charges are absolutely untrue.”

She added, “I can’t just sit there and not do anything. But I definitely would never do anything illegal. It sickens me and it makes me really sad that this is happening to me and others, because none of us deserve this. Because all we want to do is create a better world, a better community.”

Trisha Pohland, Rakotz’s attorney, said the media had unfairly characterized her client as a “fugitive.” Rakotz, Pohland said, is a “wonderful person, a wonderful citizen. She works as a home healthcare aide, taking care of elderly clients and other clients who can’t take care of themselves.”

Jodi Wishart, one of Rakotz’s neighbors, likewise rejected the “fugitive” smear. She told MPR News that armed people came to Rakotz’s house multiple times the previous day but refused to identify themselves to neighbors monitoring the situation. “We were on the sidewalk, we had our whistles, all of the neighbors came out,” Wishart said. “And so we were stopping them from taking her because we didn’t know who they were.”

Wishart added, “It was a different group of people every time. And they were circling the block. They came disguised as work people in a four-door pickup truck, and got out acted like they were working. I’m like, we know everyone’s houses and what’s being done.

“It was very intimidating and scary,” she continued. “So she was never a fugitive. They knew where they were. They could have mailed it. This whole thing could have been an email. So it was just a show of intimidation.”

Bruce Nestor, past president of the National Lawyers Guild and an

attorney for one of the 15 defendants, characterized Rosen’s press conference as a “propaganda show.”

“This is not about law enforcement,” Nestor said. This is an act of political repression. It’s designed to punish and intimidate.”

Nestor placed the charges in the context of Trump’s broader campaign against anti-fascist and anti-capitalist opposition. Trump, Nestor said, “labeled ‘antifa,’ an ideological belief, wildly diverse, a domestic terrorist organization, a designation which does not exist in law, and called for the full weight of the federal government, federal law enforcement to target people because they had beliefs that he thought were anti-American, anti-Christian or anti-capitalist.”

He continued, “That’s what’s happening now and that’s what Daniel Rosen, the US attorney for Minnesota, announced today, the same Daniel Rosen who saw mass resignations from his office when instead of investigating and prosecuting the murders of Renée Good and Alex Pretti, he called for investigations of their family and friends for the same charges he announced today, impeding ICE, impeding the kidnapping of our neighbors, impeding the use of tear gas in our neighborhoods, impeding the breaking of windows on lawful constitutional observers.”

The Minneapolis indictments are part of a broader wave of politically motivated prosecutions against opponents of Trump’s mass deportation regime. On Tuesday, a federal judge refused to overturn the obstruction conviction of former Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Hannah Dugan, who was prosecuted after allegedly helping Eduardo Flores-Ruiz leave her courtroom when ICE agents arrived to detain him. According to the AP, Dugan challenged the agents’ use of an administrative warrant, directed them to the chief judge’s office, and later led Flores-Ruiz and his attorney through a private jury door. ICE agents arrested him outside, and one week later FBI agents arrested Dugan at the courthouse and led her away in handcuffs.

The White House itself grouped the Minnesota case with prosecutions in Oregon, Texas, Washington, New Jersey, California and Indiana, presenting them as components of a single national campaign to “neutralize” so-called “Antifa terrorists.”

One of the most revealing precedents is the collapsed prosecution of the Broadview Six in Illinois. In that case, grand jury transcripts showed that federal prosecutors dismissed grand jurors who resisted the government’s case. One juror said he had heard the case before and thought it was a “crock of sh*t” then and still thought so. The case collapsed amid revelations of prosecutorial misconduct, including improper contacts with grand jurors and attempts to pressure the grand jury into returning an indictment.

The same basic method is now being deployed in Minnesota: inflammatory claims of “terrorism,” sweeping conspiracy allegations, federal felony charges and press conferences designed to criminalize political opposition before any trial has taken place.

More than 24 hours after the charges were filed, leading Minnesota Democrats remained silent on their fraudulent character and on what the prosecution portends for future attacks on democratic rights. On June 15, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz tweeted in defense of California Governor Gavin Newsom after Trump’s Justice Department announced an investigation into Newsom and his wife. “The Justice Department is not a tool for the President to investigate his political opponents,” Walz wrote. “Welcome to the BS investigations club, Governor Newsom. You’re in good company.”

But as of this writing, Walz has issued no public statement denouncing the charges against citizens of his own state. The same is true for Democratic Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey.

The only major Minnesota Democrat to comment on the case was Rep. Ilhan Omar, herself a frequent target of the Trump administration. Omar wrote on X on June 16, “While the killers of Renée Good and Alex Pretti walk free, the DOJ is busy bringing bogus charges against protesters. The

Administration thinks intimidation will make us back down. They keep learning the same lesson: Minnesotans don't scare easily. We organize for our rights.”

The Minnesota population did organize in defense of democratic rights, but it did so without the help of, and in direct confrontation with, the Democratic Party. The Democrats have provided Trump and the Republicans the votes and political space needed to fund ICE and CBP through the end of Trump's term, ensuring the continued expansion of the unaccountable immigration Gestapo and its network of for-profit concentration camps.

Working with the trade union bureaucracies, the Democrats have buried calls for a general strike and instead insist that workers and youth fight fascism by voting for the same party that has facilitated Trump's escalating dictatorship.



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