

# The nightmare reality for immigrants across US in 2018

By Eric London  
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As Democrats and Republicans celebrate last week's budget deal that funds the federal government through March 23 without providing any protections for 800,000 DACA recipients, a nightmare is playing out across America for 12 million undocumented people.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) reported 143,470 arrests in the 2017 fiscal year, a 30 percent increase from 2016. Though ICE raids increased dramatically in all regions, the figure is half the total number arrested in 2009, Obama's first full year in office. The areas with the largest increases in ICE arrests from 2016 to 2017 are Florida (76 percent), Dallas (71 percent), St. Paul, Minnesota (67 percent), followed by New Orleans, Atlanta, Boston, and Detroit (over 50 percent each).

- On January 30, Houston school police detained an undocumented student after a scuffle at Stephen Austin High School. Police turned the teenager over to immigration agents, who sent him to an immigration detention center where he has been held for nearly two weeks. The boy, Dennis Rivera, had been accepted to computer science programs at two Texas colleges, but now faces imminent deportation.

- On February 8, immigration agents denied a request by 30-year-old Jesus Berrones to remain in the US to care for his young child who suffers from leukemia and is currently undergoing chemotherapy. Berrones, who now lives in Arizona, was himself brought to the US in 1989 when he was one year old.

- Construction worker Carlos Gudiel Andres was arrested in front of his Houston apartment on his way to work on January 19. ICE agents had no warrant for his arrest but grabbed him randomly after staking out apartments in working class immigrant neighborhoods. Gudiel called his wife from the detention center: "Immigration has me. Don't come yourself or they will get you too."

- A Bangladeshi chemistry professor, Syed Ahmed Jamal, was arrested in front of his home in Lawrence, Kansas on January 24 while taking his daughter to school. Jamal has three children, aged 7, 12, and 14, and has lived in the US for 30 years. He is now detained in a jail in Missouri, 160 miles from his family. His oldest child, Taseen, wrote on Facebook, "My little brother cries every night, my sister can't focus in school, and I cannot sleep at night."

- Dishwasher Luis Candela-Gonzalez was arrested in Arden Hills, Minnesota in January. ICE documents show the agency targeted Candela-Gonzalez after his wife filed a legal complaint against managers of her mobile home park who repeatedly called ICE agents on impoverished residents. ICE argued against releasing Candela-Gonzalez because he was politically active with an immigrant rights group the government claimed is "known to provide shelter and safety to illegals from authorities."

- Immigration agents arrested 14 construction workers staying at a hotel in Colchester, Vermont at 5 a.m. on January 18. Despite being asked for help by immigration rights groups, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders has made no public statement on the raid.

- Immigration attorneys in Los Angeles report that undocumented immigrants are being sent jury duty summons that ask them to admit they are "non-citizens" in a trap to arrest them if they appear at court.

- Twenty-three-year-old asylum seeker Laura Monterrosa attempted suicide in January after exposing widespread sexual abuse by guards at the T. Don Hutto detention center in Texas, which is owned by the for-profit corporation CoreCivic. After speaking out Monterrosa was forced to eat

in the same cafeteria as the female guard who repeatedly molested her multiple times.

“I feel very desperate because I tried to report the abuse from ICE and facility officials, but they continue to psychologically abuse me through intimidation,” Monterrosa said after being released from the hospital, adding, “I do not feel safe or secure. I am not receiving the medical treatment or help I need.”

- Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner denied clemency for a US Army veteran who faces deportation this month. Miguel Perez Jr., who fought in the war in Afghanistan and suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), was arrested in 2008 on a drug charge. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in January that he would not be in danger if deported to Mexico. His parents took him to live in the US when he was just eight years old.

- An ICE agent allegedly posed as an Amazon delivery worker in an attempt to enter a student housing center at the University of California, Berkeley, where many immigrant students live. A student working at the building refused to let the agent in.

- Twenty-seven-year-old Aboubacar Dembele, who was brought to the US at age three from the Ivory Coast, was arrested outside of a Bronx courthouse at a routine court date. Dembele’s wife, a 24-year-old US citizen, said, “It was like eight of them stepped in front of us. It was an ambush.” After the arrest, 75 public defenders walked out of court in protest.

- In another notable act of defiance, a Montana Department of Labor employee, Jordon Dyrdaahl-Roberts, quit his job after ICE asked him to turn over names and addresses of undocumented workers. “I put in my two weeks’ notice...There were going to be ICE subpoenas for information that would end up being used to hunt down & deport undocumented workers...I refuse to just ‘follow orders’...cooperation with this regime is not acceptable,” he said in a tweet that has been shared 50,000 times.

The Democratic Party has explicitly sought to direct attention away from these raids and arrests for fear that demonstrations or protests will spread and cut across their efforts to pressure the Trump administration to carry out a more aggressive foreign policy, primarily against Russia. Last week, the Democrats provided Trump with the votes required to pass a budget bill that puts 800,000 DACA

recipients at risk of deportation but which provides the military with \$1.4 trillion over two years.

The two parties are now preparing to take up DACA on Capitol Hill this week. All those involved have made clear that the immigration debate will take place on the most right-wing basis, with both Democrats and Republicans already agreeing to massive funding for the building of a militarized border wall, tighter restrictions on family migration, and increased funds for ICE and border patrol. Any agreement will have to win approval from Trump, who has called for reducing the immigrant population of the US by 22 million in the coming decades.

Along these lines the Trump administration has drafted a new plan to block immigrants from achieving legal residency if they use food stamps, healthcare subsidies, or other public programs, which will pave the way for a crackdown on the millions who are properly documented. “Non-citizens who receive public benefits are not self-sufficient...An alien’s receipt of public benefits comes at taxpayer expense and availability of public benefits may provide an incentive for aliens to immigrate to the United States,” a draft of the proposal reads.

Whatever deal emerges from Washington will set the political framework for mass raids and deportations in the weeks and months to come. Opposing the Gestapo-like round-up of immigrants is a fight to defend the democratic rights of all workers, immigrant and non-immigrant alike. It requires a break from both parties and must be based on mobilizing the working class, the world’s chief progressive social force, to ensure the right of all people to travel across the world without fear of harassment or deportation.

*The author recommends:*

A socialist strategy is needed to defend immigrants!  
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