

Trump administration prepares anti-immigrant raids in Democratic Party-led “sanctuary cities” ahead of November election

By Trévon Austin
1 October 2020

According to a report Wednesday by the *Washington Post*, the Trump administration is preparing a series of raids targeting immigrants in Democratic Party-led cities and jurisdictions across the US that have adopted so-called “sanctuary” policies. The *Post* cited three federal officials who described the move as part of Trump’s effort to present himself as the “law and order” candidate in the run-up to the presidential election.

The planned Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operation, informally known as the “sanctuary op,” will reportedly begin in California as early as this week. The raids would subsequently spread to other cities, including Denver and Philadelphia.

Two officials said that acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Chad Wolf is expected to travel to at least one of the jurisdictions where the operation will take place to emphasize Trump’s assertion that that local officials have failed to protect residents from alien criminals.

The operation is widely seen as a political maneuver by Trump, considering the organization already rounds up and incarcerates undocumented immigrants on a regular basis throughout the country.

Trump’s latest maneuver in his war on immigrants cannot be separated from his effort to carry out a coup d’état and establish a presidential dictatorship. Trump is making it clear that he will utilize all resources in his possession to suppress opposition to his repudiation of election results in the event he loses the popular vote.

Federal agents, including officers from ICE and Customs and Border Protection, are already playing a role in suppressing protests against police violence across the US. There is no doubt that the increased

presence of ICE in cities due to the “sanctuary op” will be utilized in Trump’s strategy.

Throughout his presidency Trump has railed against cities that have limited police agencies’ cooperation with ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Trump has blamed city mayors that implement the policies, often Democrats, for a sharp rise in violence and crime throughout the US. The same accusations were levied against officials who refused to accept federal intervention in recent protests against police brutality.

ICE officials have repeatedly threatened to send additional agents to cities and counties considering sanctuary policies, if they continue advocating for them. Mike Alvarez, an ICE spokesman, claimed jurisdictions that don’t cooperate with ICE increase the risks facing immigration agents and the public.

“Generally speaking, as ICE has noted for years, in jurisdictions where cooperation does not exist and ICE is not allowed to assume custody of aliens from jails, ICE is forced to arrest at-large criminal aliens out in the communities instead of under the safe confines of a jail,” he told the *Post*.

Sanctuary protocols restrict the extent to which local law enforcement can cooperate with federal immigration officials. Places with the policies in place generally refuse to hold immigrants in jail for longer than they are required to so that ICE agents can arrest them after they leave custody. Additionally, sanctuary cities do not check the immigration status of suspects arrested or detained for minor criminal offenses.

Federal immigration officers in sanctuary jurisdictions are still allowed to detain individuals they suspect of being undocumented immigrants. However,

without the cooperation of local law enforcement, ICE agents are left to do their own dirty work of monitoring when suspected individuals are being released from jail.

Many of the country's largest cities have adopted sanctuary policies. According to the most recent statistics, 70 percent of the arrests ICE makes occur after the organization has been notified of an immigrant's pending release from state prison or local jail. In 2019, the agency claimed it arrested more than 160,000 immigrants this way.

ICE officials have used the issue to whip up xenophobic fears, claiming that sanctuary policies increased a backlog of "at-large criminal and fugitive aliens ICE seeks to apprehend."

In a statement, ICE official Henry Lucero said the agency "cannot stand by idly while knowing the public is being misled about the role ICE plays in keeping the public safe."

"The fact is local policies prohibiting agencies from working with ICE put you in danger and waste police resources," he said. "The public should hold its leaders accountable and demand to know what type of criminals are being released from local custody instead of turned over to ICE."

The Trump administration has repeatedly threatened to carry out anti-immigrant operations in sanctuary cities throughout his presidency. A proposal last year suggested busing migrants from the US-Mexico border into the streets of San Francisco and other sanctuary cities. Another operation purposefully targeted migrant parents with children. Trump has also threatened to revoke federal funding from jurisdictions refusing to comply with ICE.

On Monday, in another political action, ICE announced a dozen arrests in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. The community was featured in the Netflix documentary series "Immigration Nation" for electing a sheriff in 2018 who ended local law enforcement's cooperation with ICE. ICE officials claimed that six of the arrests included immigrants with criminal backgrounds and that sanctuary policies left them "free to reoffend until their capture."

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