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Thousands demonstrate across US against Trump's anti-immigrant orders

By Eric London

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Thousands of protesters converged on major airports across the United States yesterday to demand the release of immigrants detained by US officials following an executive order by President Donald Trump. Those detained are the first victims of Trump's orders, which ban immigrants from seven predominantly Muslim countries and lay the pseudo-legal framework for the detention and deportation of millions of immigrants across the country.

The first detainees included students, scientists, translators and lawyers. Many are legal permanent residents of the US. "We've gotten reports of people being detained all over the country," Becca Heller, director of the International Refugee Assistance Project, told the *New York Times*. "They're literally pouring in by the minute."

A federal judge in New York issued an emergency stay on the ban late Saturday night, but only for those who were either detained Saturday or who were on board flights to the US at the time of the ruling. In other words, Trump's executive orders take full force beginning Sunday.

Two Iraqis who were detained at New York's John F. Kennedy airport were reportedly released from custody after being held for several hours, while others will now be released following the

stay. Detainees also reported that they were not allowed to speak with their lawyers and that they were subjected to intense questioning by immigration officials, who demanded access to their social media accounts and asked them for their political views on Donald Trump.

Immigrants and permanent residents were also removed from flights before departing for the US, and reports show that immigration officials did successfully deport some immigrants yesterday by forcing them on to return flights departing the US.

The executive orders create a dictatorial legal regimen aimed at whipping up anti-immigrant hysteria. The crackdown recalls the anti-communist Palmer Raids of 1920-21, the internment of hundreds of thousands of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act in the 1850s. The orders are unconstitutional and they violate international law.

The order applies both to new immigrants and current permanent residents (Green Card holders) from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. In all, some 500,000 people are legal permanent residents from these countries. However, the unprecedented act to ban the reentry of permanent residents, who for decades have been allowed to travel with minimal restrictions into and out of the United States, throws the fate of tens of millions living in the US into question.

The order banning entry from the seven countries—indefinitely for those from Syria, for 90 days for those from the other six countries named—is just one piece of Trump’s anti-immigrant program. His executive orders on immigration also include:

- * Banning all refugees from entering the US for 120 days;
- * Slashing the number of refugees the US will accept each year in half;
- * Ordering the removal of all immigrants in the US who have committed *or been charged with a crime*, which could include the charge of entering the country illegally;
- * Incarcerating asylum applicants in internment camps before their court date;
- * Hiring 10,000 immigration officials to speed up deportations;
- * Hiring 5,000 border patrol agents to capture migrants attempting to enter the US;
- * Ending the “sanctuary city” policy and forcing local police to aid in immigration round-up efforts; and
- * Constructing a heavily-militarized wall on the US-Mexico border.

The imposition of this program would require the establishment of internment camps to detain millions of immigrants. Rounding up immigrants will involve a massive police mobilization, resulting in the establishment of virtual martial law conditions in neighborhoods with large immigrant populations, including Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Dallas and many more.

Immigration court proceedings will be increasingly devoid of any basic due process rights or will be abandoned altogether. The lives of tens of millions will be upended, families destroyed, and many migrants will die in the deportation centers or in the violence of their home countries where they will be forced to return.

Trump's executive orders mark a point of departure, a qualitative shift in the scope and intensity of the state's attack on immigrants. However, Trump's executive orders cite as legal authority statutes passed with the support of the Democratic Party. Trump cites "the authority vested in me" by "the Secure Fence Act of 2006, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996" (IIRAIRA) as legal authority, as well as the Immigration and Nationality Act.

IIRAIRA was signed into law by Democratic President Bill Clinton after House and Senate Democrats provided enough "yes" votes—88 in the House and 22 in the Senate—to pass the law. House Democrats provided the Secure Fence Act with 64 "yes" votes, enough to secure a majority, while two-thirds of Democrats in the Senate voted "yes," including then Senators Barack Obama, Joseph Biden, Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer.

Trump's deportation and border militarization plans are extensions of policies implemented by the Obama administration, which deported 2.5 million immigrants, more than every previous president combined. The Obama administration also established that even immigrant children as young as three years old do not have the right to an attorney and must appear by themselves in court.

According to a 2015 UN report, there are 63.5 million refugees worldwide who have been forced to abandon their impoverished and war-ridden home countries, the highest figure in human history. Tens of millions of those, including from the seven countries targeted by Trump, are fleeing countries devastated primarily by US imperialism, which has laid waste to the Middle East and North Africa for 25 years, leaving over one million dead.

The groundswell of protests that broke out yesterday shows that Trump's anti-immigrant policies are reviled by tens of millions across the United States, a country where one sixth of the population is foreign-born.

Further protests and meetings should be organized in neighborhoods and on campuses to demand a halt to the anti-democratic and fascistic attack on immigrants and the entire reactionary policy of the Trump administration.

However, the defense of immigrants must be based on a fight against both the Trump administration and the Democratic and Republican parties. It must be aimed at mobilizing the working class—in the United States and internationally—to defend immigrants and to put an end to imperialist war and inequality which drive people from their homes.

The police state methods that are being unleashed against immigrants and refugees will ultimately be turned against the entire working class. The defense of democratic rights can be

advanced only through the unification of the working class against their common enemy, the capitalist system.