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Fear of Trump's henchmen

USA: Government hunts down alleged criminals and dissidents across the country. Minister threatens judges. Civil rights activists alarmed.

Relatives protest against the deportation of their relative from the USA to El Salvador (Caracas, April 15, 2025)

During the 2024 election campaign, he announced he would launch "the largest deportation campaign in US history." A total of around eleven million people are to be deported. Now President Donald Trump is getting serious – with fascistic methods that, after just three months, have also affected US citizens and political dissidents. The enforcers of this campaign are the top deportation agency, ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement), and the Department of Homeland Security. Their agents are scouring the country in search of suspected or alleged Latin American gang members or illegal immigrants.

But activists in solidarity with Palestine are also affected, whose protests contradict the German government's explicitly Zionist foreign policy. This is the case of Mahmoud Khalil, a Palestinian student at New York's Columbia University with legal residency status. Khalil was arrested in his home on March 8 by ICE officers – without a warrant. The authorities claimed he was a "flight risk." Video footage shows Khalil cooperating. Since then, the young man has been held in a deportation center in Louisiana instead of New York State – separated from his pregnant wife and without access to lawyers.

Under the pretext of "national security," the US government is resorting to methods that have already been compared on social media to those of the Nazi Gestapo. In recent weeks, reports have increased of victims being kidnapped from courtrooms or even disappearing without trial. Apparently, these include children with cancer and pregnant women.

ICE commandos resort to all sorts of tricks and lies to capture people, as the Immigrant Defense Project, among others, explains. Common methods include knocking on doors and pretending to be police officers, or claiming to be looking for a suspect. "You have the right to keep your door closed, refuse to answer questions, and remain silent," states flyers from the project, which are also distributed at universities.

Published cell phone recordings from eyewitnesses or relatives demonstrate the dubious nature of the procedure: ICE agents in "plainclothes," without uniforms and without (real or valid) warrants, arrest people, abduct them, and transport them somewhere in unmarked vans. Even when asked, the agents do not identify themselves. They either hide the abductees from lawyers and relatives or hand them over directly to the prison industry.

"The families disappeared, were cut off from their lawyers and relatives, and hastily deported, depriving the parents of the opportunity to protect their children, who are U.S. citizens," Teresa Reyes-Flores explained in a statement from the American Civil Liberties Union. Since March 2025 alone, at least 288 migrants—many of them from Venezuela—have been transferred to El Salvador. There, they are held in the notorious Cecot prison, a maximum-security complex whose conditions have been criticized by international observers as inhumane.

The price of this cooperation is several million US dollars for the fascist President Nayib Bukele, who described himself on X as "the coolest dictator in the world" and boasts about his brutal crackdown on gangs in the country – and is said to have links to them.

The Trump administration is citing the Alien Enemies Act as the legal basis for its actions. The 1798 law allows the president to detain or deport natives and citizens of an enemy nation – without a judicial hearing and solely based on their country of birth or nationality. The Supreme Court, filled with Trump loyalists, recently halted this action. The administration remained unfazed and continued, with the backing of the Department of Justice, under Chief Prosecutor Pam Bondi, which is politically subordinate to the president.

Bondi openly threatened judges who do not act in the government's interests: "If you protect fugitives, you yourself will be persecuted." "We cannot allow a handful of communist, radical left-wing judges to obstruct the enforcement of our laws and take over the responsibilities that belong solely to the president," Donald Trump ranted last Wednesday at his 100-day rally in Michigan. "The judges are trying to take power away from the president," he complained.

Both were reacting to the arrest of Milwaukee Judge Hannah Dugan. She was arrested by FBI agents in her courtroom on April 25. She is accused of allowing an undocumented

immigrant to exit her court through a side exit to protect him from ICE agents who wanted to arrest the man. The Wisconsin Supreme Court immediately suspended Dugan.