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USA

Trump's Mass Deportation Wave

- Features -

Publication date: Friday 23 May 2025

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Key to Trump's Make America Great Again pledge was the promise to deport millions of immigrants. During both his presidential campaigns he identified immigrants as "terrorists, murderers, rapists" or "individuals let loose from mental institutions." Once elected again, he promised to seal the U.S.-Mexico border and deport several million people.

Since December 2023, as the Biden administration introduced restrictions, the number of migrants has sharply declined. That trend has continued as Trump issued a series of executive orders that ignore the protocols of the U.S. asylum system. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are to rapidly deport migrants to their home countries, ignoring their right to court hearings. Seven thousand soldiers have been deployed to help CBP detain migrants and install miles of concertina wire. A 60-foot wide, 700-mile military zone parallel to the border is being equipped with armed combat vehicles.

Figures for the "first 100 days" of the Trump administration reveal [168,999 immigrants arrested and 152,000 deported](#) . At that rate, a little more than half a million will be deported in 2025. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the average deportation cost of one immigrant is \$17,121.

The most flagrant and absolutely illegal mass deportation flights to El Salvador's maximum torture prison stand as the most shocking spectacle of those first 100 days.

Defying the Constitution's Fifth Amendment provision that "no person" shall be "deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law," Trump complained to NBC News "Meet the Press" moderator Kristen Welker that following it would prevent him from carrying out the rapid deportations he had promised. Once again he claimed that it was necessary to remove immigrants because thousands are "murderers and some drug dealers and some of the worst people on Earth....I was elected to get them the hell out of here, and the courts are holding me from doing it."

Although the United States is touted as "a nation of immigrants," both political parties have passed anti-immigrant legislation, militarized the borders and increased surveillance over the last 150 years. A majority of U.S. citizens have come to accept the idea that "controlling" the borders is necessary but want a system that is "fair," however hazy that concept is to define.

The underlying reality is that immigration is necessary for the U.S. economy. Yet immigrants face a barrage of laws requiring immigrants to jump through hoops to achieve and maintain legal status. This has been true since Chinese men were recruited to build North America's railroads only to face restrictions and lynch mobs. Researchers report that to maintain the U.S. economy, it is necessary to bring in more than one million workers a year, yet immigration is capped at 650,000.

Immigrants who apply for U.S. citizenship must fit into one of four categories: needing to reunite with family, having valuable skills, asking for humanitarian relief (asylum is capped at 125,000) or helping meet the country's diversity goal. Given the backlog, the process takes years. In fact, 3.6 million asylum seekers who are waiting for their court date, are living and working here.

Of the 11 million Trump calls "illegals" from "shithole" countries, many have temporary legal status: 3.6 million are seeking asylum, one million have been given protection because their country is suffering from a natural catastrophe or war, half a million are young people temporarily protected by a special program (DACA) and more than a million

are stateless, having lost their legal claim but unable to return to their country of origin. The greatest number of immigrants come from Mexico, India, China, the Philippines and El Salvador.

The other three to four million crossed the border undetected or arrived on a visa and overstayed. As they developed roots, they built families — often “mixed status families” in which some are citizens and others are not. Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who the Trump administration deported back to El Salvador through clerical error, found work, married a U.S. citizen with two previous children, and they had a child together.

A NY Times article [recounted his story in detail](#), including the not-so-pretty details of his domestic abuse. Yet the couple sought counseling, and what one remembers of his journey is his ability to find a way forward. The reader learns of the tenderness he has for his disabled son, and how that son attempts to deal with his father's absence by smelling his T-shirt.

Even while the U.S. public believes there are too many immigrants, when the media report the stories of immigrants — what it took for them to make it to the country, how they have built lives here — unlike Trump and his team they are not convinced that deportation in a range of cases results in a just solution. No one accepts border czar Tom Horman's cynical remark that instead of causing family separation, when one member is deported, the others are “free to go.”

Additionally, economists at the Peterson Institute for International Economics estimate that deporting 1.3 million immigrants would raise prices by 1.5% by 2028; deporting 8.3 million would raise prices by 9.1%. The far-right's solution, to increase the birth rate, seems far-fetched. No industrialized country, even with generous social programs that the United States lacks, has developed a replacement rate.

Temporary Status

Workers are desired by the high tech industry as well as by employers in the construction, agriculture, industry and service sectors. Given tight borders regulations, businesses have worked with the government to find work arounds. One method is to sponsor workers that binds them to their employers, as Elon Musk and many farmers do.

Other businesses recruit immigrants who have temporary (and renewable) status Congress set up for those fleeing countries suffering from natural catastrophe or war. Currently almost a million people from 16 different countries have been granted Temporary Protective Status (TPS). This program allows them the legal right to live and work in the United States, but only as long as that status continues to cover them.

But during the 2024 campaign, Trump and his vice presidential candidate JD Vance incorrectly called Haitians protected under TPS “illegal.” The Trump/Vance duo dehumanized 15,000 Haitians living and working in Springfield, Ohio, claiming they were depriving citizens of their livelihoods and “eating their cats and dogs” to boot.

Trump repeatedly promised to have the Springfield Haitians deported. Since inauguration day he has canceled TPS for 200,000 Haitians as of August 3rd. He has also cancelled the status for 242,000 Venezuelans as of September 10th. While this order may be challenged in court, Trump continues to threaten 180,000 Salvadoreans, 54,000 Afghans and 50,000 Ukrainians with revoking their status as well.

Many, like the Haitians in Springfield, have established community roots. April 2017 statistics reveal that 94% of those covered under TPS are in the labor force, with 130,000 labeled “essential critical infrastructure workers.” While

most are never able to use the benefits their taxes contribute to Social Security and Medicare, [they contribute over a 10-year period more than \\$6.9 billion](#).

Another category with protected status is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA). It was created a decade ago by president Obama for those who came to the United States sometime before their 16th birthday. Many only learned they lacked protection against deportation as they were preparing to go to college or into the army and found themselves at a dead end.

Under DACA 580,000 are eligible to work or study. However, given legal challenges the program is closed to an additional 400,000 eligible youth and faces an uncertain future. According to United We Dream, an immigrant youth network, the average DACA recipients have lived in the country for more than 16 years. Now in their 30s, nearly half are married and 50% have at least one child.

Deportations to Third Countries

Immigration judges deny 56% of the asylum cases they hear. At that point, the asylum seeker loses legal status. Currently about 1.3 million face removal orders but cannot return to their country. While shutting down asylum applications in violation of federal and international law, the Trump administration has been busily locating third countries who are willing to take those unable to return home or other immigrants the government seeks to deport.

The Trump team has contacted a variety of governments, bullying some and providing others with financial incentives, in order to serve as a dumping ground. Several Latin American governments, including El Salvador, Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama have agreed, although Panama did so reluctantly.

- In February Washington deported almost 300 people to Panama. Many were fleeing civil wars or political or religious persecution in Iran, China, Afghanistan, Somalia and Cameroon. They told the media that they had been unable to apply for asylum. But once in Panama City they were locked up in a hotel and pressured to return to their countries. Those who did not were sent to a isolated camp on the edge of the Darien jungle. With intervention from human rights groups authorities bused them back to Panama City and informed them they could stay in the country for 90 days. Some are scrambling to find a country that might accept them.

Meanwhile they are [sleeping on mattresses in a gym](#).

- The most enthusiastic response came from Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele who was delighted to imprison over 238 men, mostly Venezuelans accused of gang membership, at a notorious supermax prison in exchange for \$6 million. After examining the records, Bloomberg News could only find 10 who had been charged or convicted of misdemeanors or felonies.

Hardly "the worst of the worst," these people are stuck. While the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that detainees must have the chance to make their case before a judge before they are deported, the Trump regime claims nothing can be done for those who are already in El Salvador.

The Washington Post reviewed government documents that revealed Washington, despite the Russian invasion, even approached Ukraine with a third-party proposal that went nowhere. Talks with Libya also fizzled. However, a DHS statement announced that at the end of April Uzbekistan received a [chartered flight of more than 100 deportees](#), not only Uzbeks but citizens of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The Post also reported that Rwanda, after receiving a one-time payment of \$100,00, agreed to take an Iraqi and 10 additional deportees of various nationalities as part of a “durable program.” In an April 27th interview on Rwandan television, Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe remarked that the conversations were only in “initial phases.”

Targeting Individuals for Deportation

Many people assumed that when Trump talked about deporting immigrants, he meant deporting people just arriving at the border or those who had committed crimes while in the country. But the Trump team, led by director Stephen Miller and border czar Tom Horman, have a much more expansive view, especially now that the southern border is effectively sealed.

Those who are awaiting an hearing can be nabbed when they show up for a scheduled yearly appointment. While 183,000 are tracked with ankle monitors, wrist bands, or phone apps, the plan is to expand the number under surveillance and have everyone report monthly or bimonthly.

Supposedly this will also give [ICE the space and time](#) to conduct mass raids.)

Since the administration has neither the financing or the staff to conduct raids at the magnitude they envision, they seek to terrorize as many immigrants as possible and force them to chose the “dignified” method of self deporting. This includes arresting and detaining high-profile individuals connected to social movements:

* Alfredo “Lelo” Juarez Zeferino (25), who came from Mexico as a child, was appealing deportation order when arrested. A founder of Families por la Justicia as a teenager, he is being held in ICE's Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma and has a November immigration hearing.

* Nearly a dozen workers organizing a union at local seafood processing plants in the New Bedford area have been detained, including Juan Francisco Mendez, who had applied for asylum, but ICE broke a back window of his car with a sledgehammer and took him into custody.

* Mahmoud Khalil (29), Mohsen Mahdawi (34) and Yunseo Chung (20), Palestine solidarity student activists at Columbia University were permanent residents.

* Rümeyssa Öztürk (30), who co-authored an opinion article in the Tufts University student newspaper, has a student visa; she grabbed by masked plainclothesmen.

* Momodou Taal (31), a Cornell University student who organized against Israeli genocide and U.S. complicity, was threatened with deportation and eventually left the country.

In early April Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced he was revoking more than 300 visas, stating:

“We gave you a visa to come and study and get a degree, not to become a social activist that tears up our university campus. We've given you a visa and you decide to do that — we're going to take it away.”

Yet no one had been charged with a crime.

Rubio was claiming that the very presence of political activists was a threat to U.S. foreign policy. But following coverage on these cases, with 1,000 international students discovering their visas were suddenly cancelled, the administration reversed course.

The Department of Homeland Security launched a million-dollar ad campaign urging immigrants to leave the U.S. voluntarily or face deportation with no chance of return. While reporting success with these ads, by May 2025, they [announced a campaign](#) to offer \$1,000 and travel assistance for those willing to return to their country and proclaimed one Honduran had already taken them up on the offer.

The Level of Deportations

Given the contradiction between needing workers and the harsh rhetoric Trump and Vance use, one wonders whether the Trump administration will manage to deport more than the Biden or Obama administrations.

Businesses will find the workers they need through various carveout programs. That section of the workforce, who because of their precarious status will feel insecure, are more likely to live in the shadows, working less secure jobs and living in less secure communities.

Despite the campaign for detention and deportation, the Trump administration fast-tracked asylum to white South Africans, mainly of Afrikaner heritage. The State Department arranged and paid for transportation for the first 49, who arrived on May 12. They will be aided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Trump has asserted that white South Africans, who on the average have 20 times the resources of a black South African, are racially discriminated against. (See Review of Political Economy) Meanwhile 20,000 refugees who have been vetted and approved for resettlement by the U.S. Refugee Admission Program remain in limbo.

With millions of people forced to leave their homes because of war, poverty or environmental catastrophe, categories for refugees largely exist to keep them out. They -- rather than borders -- will prove unsustainable.

16 May 2025

Source: [Solidarity](#).

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