

ICE uses pandemic to terrorize migrants

written by Daniel G. Cardwell
March 29, 2020



Protest outside ICE detention center in Miramar, Fla., on March 13.

As the profit system spins into crisis, workers across the country are forced to remain at home due to layoffs and measures to slow the spread of Covid-19. But it's business as usual for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). That is — they're ramping up efforts to [detain and repress immigrants](#).

Despite its claims otherwise, ICE is expanding enforcement operations during the Covid-19 crisis. It has begun conducting 24-hour surveillance of the homes and workplaces of undocumented immigrants. According to the [New York Times](#), hundreds of additional ICE officers are being deployed in unmarked cars to arrest migrants in sanctuary cities.

During a global pandemic, ICE is taking advantage of the virtual lockdown to track down its targets and make arrests.

To help keep its agents safe during this latest racist crackdown, ICE has ordered 45,000 surgical masks for its field offices from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Meanwhile, a shortage of masks still exists for health care workers who, working on the front lines against the pandemic, are being instructed by the CDC to reuse their masks or use scarves for protection.

Now, U.S. border cops are bringing in [their own hand soap and disinfectant wipes](#) to sanitize their work areas. But just last fall, the U.S. government argued in court that [children in ICE detention facilities](#) are not entitled to basic sanitation, clean clothes, bathing or toothbrushes.

With mumps and measles outbreaks at ICE facilities in past years, and at least eight children dead from the heinous conditions of ICE detention centers, these prisons are proven hotspots for disease. As of March 28, there are just [two confirmed cases](#)

of Covid-19 among ICE detainees. They are now being quarantined, as are nine other at-risk prisoners around the country.

But given the national shortage of test kits for Covid-19, there is no way of knowing if this number is accurate.

There is no plan for the health and welfare of those detained now, let alone the current influx of prisoners. The people that ICE detains are not being checked for symptoms of Covid-19. Their temperatures are taken, and then they are released into the general prison population.

Prisoners are reporting holding rooms with up to 100 detainees being forced to share four bathrooms.

In protest of these inhumane conditions, prisoner cafeteria and janitorial staff in a South Texas processing center [have gone on strike](#). The prisoners are demanding release over the unsanitary conditions.

Detention officers responded by using pepper spray to disperse the 60-person demonstration, and they isolated the nine leaders of the protest, with extra disciplinary charges pending.

Over 3,000 medical professionals are also [demanding the release of all detainees](#) held in immigration facilities by ICE.

Prisoners cannot do social distancing, and the inadequate, inhumane conditions are leading to mass suffering.

Abolish ICE! Release all prisoners!

