

Garbage in the White House, Somali resistance in Minneapolis

written by Gary Wilson
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Minneapolis, Dec. 3 — Demonstrators march behind a “Stop deporting our neighbors” banner, protesting Trump’s anti-Somali raids and deportations in the Twin Cities.

Trump's racist tirade and ICE raids aim to terrorize an oppressed community — and send a warning to the whole working class.

On Dec. 2, President Donald Trump used a White House Cabinet meeting to spit out a stream of racist abuse against Somali immigrants in Minnesota. He called Somalis “garbage,” claimed they “contribute nothing,” sneered that their country “stinks,” and said they should “go back to where they came from.”

This was not just another ugly performance for the cameras. The next day, Immigration and Customs Enforcement launched a major operation in the Twin Cities, sending teams of agents into Minneapolis-St. Paul to hunt undocumented Somalis. At the same time, the administration moved to strip Temporary Protected Status from Somalis and to freeze immigration and naturalization from Somalia and 18 other mostly African and Muslim-majority countries.

Trump's rant was the political cover for a concrete state offensive. His words from the Cabinet table were connected by a straight line to the raid teams pounding on Somali families' doors before dawn.

Scapegoating an oppressed nationality

Trump's attack on Somalis is not just personal bigotry. It's part of how the ruling class governs in a time of crisis.

Somalis in Minnesota are overwhelmingly working class. They drive cabs and trucks, work in warehouses and nursing homes, study in schools and colleges, and struggle with low wages, high rents, and debt like other workers. Many came as refugees from wars, invasions, and economic strangulation in which U.S. imperialism played a direct role.

Now, the same system that helped wreck their homeland brands them a “security threat” and a drain on public resources. Trump falsely links them to fraud scandals, crime, and “terrorism” – pure inventions used to justify raids, detentions, and deportations. The message to the rest of the working class is: Blame Somali immigrants, not Wall Street, not the Pentagon, not the billionaires.

National oppression under capitalism is not just a matter of prejudice. It is built into the way the state, the labor market, and the borders are organized. When the ruling class whips up hatred against an oppressed nationality, it is deflecting anger over unemployment and poverty, testing how far it can go in criminalizing a whole people, and refining methods of repression that can later be used against anyone who resists.

The targeting of Somalis, Afghans, and immigrants from 19 countries lays bare the cynicism of imperialism. People fleeing wars, occupations, and sanctions created by Washington arrive here, only to find themselves treated as suspect, surveilled, and disposable.

Toward second-class citizenship by nationality

What makes this moment especially dangerous is the way Trump’s campaign reaches beyond raids and deportations to the question of citizenship itself.

The administration is talking openly about “reverse migration,” mass removals, and re-examining the status of people who already have papers. Agencies are ordered to comb through applications, green cards, and naturalizations from people born in the targeted countries. At the same time, Trump threatens a “denaturalization campaign” that would strip citizenship from those the government decides should never have become citizens in the first place.

In practice, this means building a system in which some people’s citizenship is

permanent and others' is conditional. A white immigrant from an imperialist ally is treated as a full "American." A Black Muslim from Somalia or a refugee from Afghanistan is treated as always on probation, always one accusation away from being thrown out.

On paper, this country has seen formal citizenship rights expand over time. In reality, Black people, Indigenous people, migrants and refugees have always faced second-class status enforced by police, prisons, and the border regime. What Trump is doing now is trying to codify that inequality into new laws and procedures that divide the population into tiers, with oppressed nationalities forced to live under the constant threat of losing everything.

This is a warning. A state that claims the power to strip Somalis of their status today will claim the power to strip others tomorrow, as the crisis of the system deepens and resistance grows.

Omar and the community push back

The Somali community in Minnesota has not met this campaign with silence.

Rep. Ilhan Omar, herself a Somali refugee who became one of the most visible progressive figures in Congress, has called Trump's language racist and Islamophobic and has made it clear that this is not a "personal feud." She insists that his words are meant to pave the way for raids and deportations, and she has demanded investigations into the political use of ICE as a weapon against her community.

On the ground, Somali-led organizations, mosque networks, and youth groups in Minneapolis-St. Paul have moved into emergency defense. They are holding know-your-rights trainings, setting up hotlines so families can report ICE activity, and organizing legal teams to respond rapidly when people are detained. Community

leaders stress that most Somalis in the Twin Cities are citizens or legal residents, and they warn that Trump's blanket portrayal of them as criminal outsiders invites vigilante violence as well as state repression.

Neighbors are urged to document ICE raids, refuse cooperation with "voluntary" searches, and spread the word that people do not have to open their doors without a warrant signed by a judge. This is community self-defense in embryo: the first steps toward making it practically impossible for agents to operate in silence and secrecy.

Local and state officials have been forced, by pressure from below, to take a stand. Officials in Minneapolis and St. Paul have reaffirmed policies limiting local cooperation with ICE. The governor and attorney general have spoken publicly in defense of the Somali community and against discriminatory targeting. Schools, clinics, and social service agencies are being pushed to adopt "safe space" protocols so that ICE cannot freely turn everyday places into hunting grounds for deportations.

These measures are limited, and they are fragile. But they show that when a community organizes itself and fights back, it can force concessions even from officials who would otherwise stand aside.

From defense to street-level resistance

Alongside legal work and policy fights, people are turning to the streets.

In Somali neighborhoods and in downtown Minneapolis, multiracial crowds have gathered for rallies and vigils. Somali youth, Black community organizers, Latine immigrant groups, students, and faith leaders have come together to denounce the raids and the racist campaign behind them. They connect Trump's slurs against Somalis to the broader system of police terror, border violence, and mass incarceration that targets oppressed peoples across the country.

At Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, demonstrators have confronted deportation flights head on. Protesters have marched to the terminals used by charter companies that service ICE, demanding that airlines and contractors cancel removal flights. Union members have joined these actions, raising the question that goes to the heart of the matter: Will workers use their power to refuse to fuel, maintain, or handle planes used to haul families away in chains?

Here we see the beginnings of a front that can make the state think twice: organized labor linked to the self-defense of an oppressed community. When workers at airports, warehouses, rail yards, or docks say, “We will not move deportation cargo, we will not help ICE,” they begin to turn abstract solidarity into concrete power.

