ICE-ing Out Immigration

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Artur Rath and Melody Schmidt



ICE-ing Out Immigration: Analyzing US Policy
By Artur Rath and Melody Schmidt

Introduction

The January re-election of Donald Trump and his aggressive approach to immigration has fueled heartfelt debate and controversy. In 2016, Trump's immigration campaign was defined by his promises to 'Build the Wall,' ban Muslim immigrants, and crack down on illegal immigration. In 2025, his policies have grown increasingly more invasive, even drawing contempt from some of his strongest MAGA supporters. Former President Joe Biden also faced criticisms on his immigration policies with a mixed legacy on

his handling of the issue. Critics on the right argued his administration had been too lenient, while those on the left said his promises to reform and modernize the system left much to be desired.

Currently, the policies of Trump's second term reflect an intensified focus on enforcement. The Trump administration claims to have deported 139 000 people since January, 2025. According to a top White House official, the administration is aiming to arrest 3000 people per day suspected of violating immigration law and are increasingly targeting people with no criminal convictions. This drastic uptick in immigration policing and other policy initiatives have sparked significant outrage amongst human and civil rights groups leading to a wave of legal battles and social unrest. On June 6, protests erupted across Los Angeles in response to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids in the Paramount region where more than 82% of the population is Hispanic. Similar protests have followed in San Antonio, New York, Chicago, and other cities nationwide with Trump deploying marines and the National Guard with the intent to restore order. This article will thus analyse the immigration policies of the second Trump administration and their domestic and regional impacts.

The Domestic Impact of the Trump Administration's Immigration Policies

The legal and political implications of Trump's immigration policies have broad implications. Executive Order 14159 has expanded the scope of immigration capabilities, changing the definition of 'removable aliens' and authorizing raids in previously protected spaces like schools, churches, and hospitals. Executive Orders 14160 and 14161 further impact immigration by calling for an end to birthright citizenship and for enhanced screening and vetting of non-citizens. Public opinion is split over Trump's administrative actions, with 49% opposed to using state and local law for deportation efforts versus 50% who approve.

The Department of Justice's support for ICE's expanded powers has triggered bipartisan condemnation and a multitude of lawsuits such as *J.G.G. v. Donald J. Trump (2025)* which is currently pending before the Supreme Court. This lawsuit is against another contested policy of employing the 1798 Alien Enemies Act to deport those suspected of being members of the transnational, Venezuelan-based gang, Tren de Aragua. The ACLU and other civil liberties organisations allege that this undermines decades of more precedent which guarantee fair hearings and protection from arbitrary detention.

Additionally, Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem, has drawn condemnation for photo shoots in front of a high-security El Salvadoran prison and for threatening immigrants with incarceration. According to human rights lawyers and civil rights organizations, due process rights were systematically violated by the administration for the sake of political propaganda. The Trump administration maintains that those deported to El Salvador were members of Tren de Aragua or other violent offenders, albeit

without taking the cases to trial. Trump's immigration policies thus potentially pose a risk to political and institutional stability with the ignorance of democratic procedures.

The legality around Trump deploying the National Guard is also being questioned. It marks the first time since 1965 that the National Guard was activated in California without

request of the Governor. California Governor, Gavin Newsom, and LA Mayor Karen Bass strongly condemned the move, saying that local police could manage the protests. Newsom also launched a lawsuit arguing Trump's actions violated the Tenth Amendment, which protects states against overreaches of federal power, calling the deployment "illegal." However, on June 19th a US Appeals Court allowed Trump to retain control over the Guard while Newsom's lawsuit progresses.

Many Americans also face daily consequences as a result of the administration's immigration policies. Family separations have surged, especially in border states like Texas and Arizona. ICE facilities are overwhelmed with children held without access to legal counsel or contact with their families. Advocates warn that thousands of American-born children are at risk of being separated from undocumented parents. Additionally, Trump's termination of relations with the Acacia Center for Justice puts thousands more children at risk by leaving hundreds of migrants without legal aid. Many migrant families were reliant on these services in order to navigate the legal uncertainty their status was placed in during Trump's first term. Furthermore, studies show that Latinos are disproportionately affected by deportations, with 42% of Hispanic adults fearing deportation happening to them or someone they know versus 19% of Black and Asian adults, the next highest demographic. These cases exemplify how immigration is not just a policy field, but significant to domestic and social stability.

The Regional Impact of the Trump Administration's Immigration Policies

Regionally, the administration's tough stance on immigration has so far had the most direct impact on Mexico. As the BBC points out, US-Mexico border fortifications have been heavily reinforced with army personnel aiding the Border Patrol in their operations. The large influx of deported immigrants arriving on the border is presently having the biggest impact on Mexico, with the potential for the problem to grow. In fact, border cities are already putting schemes in place looking to absorb arriving people. One example of this is in Ciudad Juárez,

where deported immigrants are offered shelter and food in tents. Mexican citizens are also taken in buses to return to their hometowns.

However, experts fear both in the US and Mexico, that bordering regions with the US will not be able to cope with the increasing number of deportees. Another issue is that many people who got deported from the US to Mexico were fleeing persecution and political turmoil in their country of origin, making it possible they could be forced to integrate into Mexico in

the long run. As the New York Times explains, the Mexican government partnered with local, grassroots organizations in part of a "Mexico Embraces You" programme that seeks to integrate previously deported foreign undocumented migrants.

When it comes to Canada, the Trump administration's main concern was the flow of illegal drugs such as fentanyl as well as weapons across the border. Other than imposing or threatening tariffs, border communities on the Canadian side have been heavily affected by Trump's strict immigration policies as well. For instance, as noted by The Guardian, the US decided to unilaterally block Canadian access to the Haskell Free Library which stands directly on the US-Canada border. Previously, Canadian citizens had unlimited access to the location, yet now citing concerns for unrestricted movement of people, the US hardened its policy forcing every Canadian citizen to go through a formal border check.

Moreover, the newly elected government of Mark Carney decided to mirror some of Trump's immigration policies in order to prevent further tariffs and provide reassurance in an attempt to restart the cross-border economy. According to the BBC and US Customs and Border Protection, border crossings between the two countries were down some 17% since the introduction of tariffs and tougher border measures. Therefore, the Canadian government implemented policies focusing on tightening asylum seeking rights and increasing surveillance on the US-Canada border. The new law increases the power of the government to further restrict the processing of new applications and expands their authority to inspect mail and restrict cash transactions. Critics of the bill have argued Canada could follow the US down the same heavy-handed path but it remains to be seen whether in practice this will apply.

Another country in the region that is affected by the new immigration laws is El Salvador, albeit in a very different way. Previously in March 2025, EPIS fellows Artur Rath and Jonathan Lott explored how the mano dura policies of the president Nayib Bukele provided an inspiration for some of the Trump administration's policies. Both countries sought to deepen cooperation regarding immigration and deportations. In February, El Salvador offered to lock criminals, including US citizens, in its notorious mega-prison, called CECOT (Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo). More recently, a deal was struck between the two countries which involved El Salvador receiving about 6 million dollars to imprison members of the Tren de Aragua gang who were deported from the US. Despite legal disputes and a US federal judge attempting to block the process, the deal went through.

However, it is not just regional states that feel the impact of Trump's immigration enforcement measures. Earlier in the year, two German nationals were detained at the border with one being sent to the Otay Mesa Detention centre for more than six weeks with a nine day stint in solitary confinement. These types of incidents have led states like the United Kingdom and China to publish travel advice encouraging their citizens to be aware of the US's

strict border policies. More recently, during the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, some fans actually decided to not attend matches due to fear of ICE operating in and around stadiums. This was reflected in meagre attendance numbers in some matches although it remains to be seen to what extent these fears are justified.

All in all, evidence suggests that regional countries are feeling the impact of the new immigration policies in different ways. The Trump administration is eager to push through its agenda regarding immigration with impacts both domestically and internationally.

Conclusion

The immigration agenda of Donald Trump's second term represents a dramatic escalation in the tone and substance of immigration policy with significant implications. Domestically, the administration has stretched the limits of executive power, triggering legal battles, public outrage, and a constitutional debate over states' rights. Social impacts, such as family separations and due process violations, have sparked fierce resistance from civil rights advocates and state officials alike. Regionally, Trump's hardline stance has placed significant strain on neighbouring countries with bordering states like Mexico forced to handle the brunt of mass deportations. Other countries like Canada and El Salvador have also adapted to the Trump regime, with Canada adopting a defensive stance and El Salvador cooperating with the US administration. Globally, there has also been a response to US immigration policies with an encouragement of increased caution when travelling to the US. As the Trump administration pushes forward with its aggressive immigration plans, it tests the boundaries of federal authority and raises questions about the balance between security measures and democratic norms.