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US considers splitting immigrant children from parents in immigration jails

The *Washington Post*, citing unnamed government officials, reported Friday that the Trump administration is considering a proposal to tear immigrant children from their parents when families are captured crossing the US-Mexico border. A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official told the *Post* that “People aren’t going to stop coming unless there are consequences to illegal entry.”

According to the newspaper, the proposal to separate children from their parents is one of a series of measures under consideration targeting, in particular, Central American families and unaccompanied children entering the country. They include a crackdown on undocumented immigrants living in the US who send for their children. Data collected by the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is to be used to deport parents who seek to regain custody of their children from child internment facilities operated by HHS.

The *Post* writes: “The proposals, which have been presented for approval to new DHS (Department of Homeland Security) Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, were developed by career officials at Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other DHS agencies, administration officials said.”

The proposal comes as the number of young people and families crossing from Mexico into the US increases, with 7,018 families arrested attempting to cross the border in November, up 45 percent from October. The *Post* reports that the number of children crossing on their own (labeled “unaccompanied alien children” in government newspeak)

was also up 26 percent. Tens of thousands of immigrants will spend Christmas in immigration jail, with DHS officials reporting that detention centers for both adults and children are at near maximum capacity.

The Trump administration has also implemented a number of other cruel measures against immigrants in recent weeks. Immigration officials fought to deny a young pregnant immigrant's request for an abortion after she was raped while crossing the border, though a court forced the government to honor her request for medical attention. Eighty percent of women immigrants crossing the US-Mexico border are raped along the way.

The Trump administration has quietly rounded up hundreds of Cambodian refugees, including many who fled the Khmer Rouge and who have lived in the United States since they were children. DHS transported many immigrants and moved them to remote detention facilities thousands of miles away from their families and lawyers in an attempt to intimidate them and prevent them from receiving legal representation.

Some 1,400 Iraqi immigrants arrested this summer remain locked up in detention centers across Michigan and Ohio, even though federal judges have repeatedly blocked their deportation on the grounds that many prospective deportees will be killed upon removal to Iraq.

All the while, the Trump administration is fanning the flames of far-right anti-immigrant chauvinism by portraying them as dangerous criminals. On Thursday, the Department of Justice and DHS published a report asserting that one fifth of federal prisoners are immigrants, of which more than 90 percent are undocumented. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said, "At the border and in communities across America, our citizens are being victimized by illegal aliens who commit crimes."

A number of university and non-profit studies show that immigrants are far less likely to commit crimes than non-immigrants. Fifty percent of all federal criminal arrests are for immigration-related crimes, mostly for merely attempting to cross the border, which can mean years in prison. In 2004, only 28 percent of federal criminal arrests were for immigration offenses, but such prosecutions increased dramatically under the Bush and Obama administrations.

As the Trump administration ramps up its attacks on immigrants, opposition is growing to the Democratic Party's agreement to postpone debate on protecting 800,000 recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The Democrats have pledged their willingness to provide added funding for "border security," which

Republican leadership has accepted as the framework for negotiating an extension of the DACA program, which will expire in March per Trump's decision in September.

DACA recipients voiced their anger that the Democratic Party is using immigrant youth as bargaining chips and trading away the safety of other immigrants, including those crossing the border, in exchange for temporarily preventing their own deportation. One DACA recipient, addressing his remarks to Democratic Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, said, "Total lie and thank you for turning your back on us, sir, along with [Democratic House Minority Leader] Nancy [Pelosi]..."

Another said she "would be extremely upset" if the Democrats reached a deal to make it harder for family members to petition for their parents and relatives to gain legal status, a proposal that may become a part of a deal on DACA. "I wouldn't want to leave my mom hanging and I know plenty of parents waiting for their kids to turn 21 to petition them," she said.

In a major political victory for the Trump administration, the Supreme Court unanimously blocked a lower court from demanding that the administration release internal documents relating to its decision to rescind the DACA program. The case involves a challenge to the legality of the DACA rescission. The Trump administration has released only 56 pages of internal documents in a clear effort to steamroll the lawsuit. The Supreme Court decision was without any dissent, meaning Democratic justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan are all helping the Trump administration block the challenge.

Breitbart News praised the decision as a "victory," writing "the unanimous decision threw out orders by a federal trial judge and the Ninth Circuit appeals court requiring disclosure of sensitive government documents—papers which may include communications with President Donald Trump about the decision to end the amnesty program."

If the political fate of immigrants is left in the hands of the Democratic Party, the lives of millions will remain at risk in the next round of horse-trading. Socialists reject the reactionary framework of the immigration "debate" and demand immediate citizenship for all DACA recipients and permanent protection from deportation for their families. All immigrants have the right to live wherever they chose without fear of harassment or deportation.