

Locking Children in Metal Cages—The Fascist Regime Expanding Its Ability to Torture Immigrant Kids: This Nightmare Must End!

An infant lying face down in the Rio Grande, dead in the arms of her father. Crying, hungry children locked in metal cages. Pregnant young women penned in frigid concentration camps that line the U.S. Mexico border. Impoverished people traversing Mexico in caravans, being met at a border bristling with weaponry, and heavily armed military and police.

For the past several years the news has been filled with heart-rending images of people who risk everything to try to make it to the U.S. border. The lives of millions of people are in upheaval and life-threatening crisis. What is driving people to risk everything to try to make their way across Mexico to the U.S.? Trump has snarled that the U.S. is under “invasion” by immigrants from Central America and Mexico trying to “break into” the U.S. Accounts in the major media always stay on the surface, speaking of the poverty and gang violence that plagues the countries of Central America, but never getting at the roots and sources of those conditions.

A Cascade of Horrors, Made in America

The reality is that for decades the U.S. has inflicted a cascade of unending horrors upon the people of Central America.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S., under Democratic and Republican leadership, funded, directed, and waged counter-revolutionary, genocidal wars in [Guatemala](#), [El Salvador](#), and [Honduras](#). Hundreds of thousands of people were murdered in these wars, millions of others were impoverished and displaced. In the years since the U.S. has [orchestrated coups](#) and imposed punishing “trade agreements” on these countries that devastated farming and made people’s very survival dependent on expensive exports from the U.S. exports. The U.S. supports and funds Central American governments that preside with unchecked brutality over some of the most violent and unequal societies on earth.

Mexico and Central America are in great crisis and turmoil. Millions of people are desperately impoverished. They are plagued by violence from the police and militaries of their countries, and from criminal gangs that have sprung up on the soil created by imperialism and are often in league with the governments. Environmental destruction driven by capitalism-imperialism has ruined much of the remaining farmland.

The refugee crisis and the horror at the border was created by imperialism and the dynamics driving it will only get worse in the years to come.

Besides the sheer inhumanity of the horror being done to innocent and desperate people, the fact that this suffering is absolutely unnecessary makes it all the more infuriating. The *Constitution of the New Socialist Republic in North America*, written by Bob Avakian, states clearly that “The



Oscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his 23-month-old daughter, Angie Valeria, drowned trying to cross the Rio Grande. Photo: Screen grab from AP video

orientation of the New Socialist Republic in North America is to welcome immigrants from all over the world who have a sincere desire to contribute to the goals and objectives of this Republic, as set forth in this Constitution and in laws and policies which are established and enacted in accordance with this Constitution.” Read/download a PDF of the *Constitution* at www.revcom.us.

Laying the Legal Groundwork, Preparing the Concentration Camps

The Democratic president Barack Obama deported more people than any president ever, and actually set up the system of detaining families. And the liberal *New York Times* has said that every president, of whatever party, will always be deporter-in-chief. Whether people are allowed into this imperialist country has nothing to do with concerns about humanity, but only about what benefits *this* system. Nobody who sits atop this system, Republican or Democrat, has any answer to the horrors of the lopsided world that it has created and must perpetuate.

But the fascist answer of the Trump/Pence regime has been taking the atrocities inflicted on the peoples of these countries to entirely new levels of criminality. It is preparing to massively expand and extend its torture of immigrant children and youth within the U.S. in the name of “defending America’s borders,” and “ending catch and release.”

For over a year the regime has been systematically pushing ahead with plans to arrest, imprison, and deport tens of thousands of immigrant families, including infants and children. In the past month, those efforts have gone into high gear. The government’s own data show that this year 69,550 migrant children were held in U.S. custody at some point, an all-time high. **Now the fascist juggernaut is preparing, and in fact already beginning to implement, roundups in this country that could escalate rapidly and enormously.** And they are preparing for global upheaval caused by crisis in the

capitalist-imperialist system that compels countless more desperate people to seek refuge in this country.

In June 2018 Trump's Department of Homeland Security announced its intention to quintuple the capacity of its concentration camps for immigrant children. About a week later Trump's "Justice Department" (DOJ) petitioned a federal court to allow children to be held in detention for longer than 20 days, and to be kept in facilities that don't require state licensing. In addition, at about the same time, the Pentagon began evaluating at least four military bases for use as "sites to house as many as 20,000 unaccompanied immigrant children, including three in Texas and a fourth in Arkansas," as the *El Paso Times* reported.

Last month a federal judge rejected arguments by Trump's lawyers that would have put an end to a 20-year-old agreement intended to prevent the government from imprisoning children and their families indefinitely. But four things are important to understand about this. One, Trump's DOJ is fighting the ruling, in a case that could soon go to a Supreme Court packed with fascists that will almost certainly decide in favor of his regime, or taken to another of the many courts now dominated by fascist Trump appointees. Two, the government is expanding its ability to hold tens of thousands more immigrants, including children, with or without a court decision. Three, Trump has vowed to round up "millions" of immigrants, and in fact ICE has already begun extensive arrests and deportations of immigrants across the country. And four, as the Associated Press reported on November 12, 2019, "About 4,000 [immigrant children] are still in government custody, some in large, impersonal shelters. And more arrive every week."

Institutionalized Torture

Separation of children and infants from their parents is a universally recognized form of torture. It can cause permanent brain damage to children. Dr. Claire McCarthy wrote in the journal *Harvard Health Publishing* that "there is an important scientific fact that we need to be aware of as the political drama at the border unfolds: when children are separated from their parents, they can be damaged for the rest of their lives." Dr. McCarthy explained how children forcibly separated from their parents are inflicted with emotional and physical traumas and stresses that not only can trigger severe depression and other psychological damages, but harm to the body's organs and functions. She concluded, "[W]hat is happening at the border goes beyond using children as pawns. The science is clear. We are literally ruining their lives.... This is more than wrong. It's unconscionable."

The conditions at the concentration camps where children have been held are squalid, disease infested, and overcrowded. A lawyer who spent about a week at a concentration camp in Dilley, Texas, this summer reported in the *Nation* that "Nearly every one of the almost 500 people that I saw in the detention center was sick.... [A]gents take



them in their wet clothes, at first, to the 'hielera,' the "icebox," a refrigerated building ... where they had to try to sleep on the concrete floor or sit on concrete benches under mylar blankets, prodded by agents all night and day, deliberately kept awake. Bathroom breaks are frequently not granted, or not in time, so both women and children often soil themselves.... [T]wo bologna sandwiches for four days, for a mother and two children, was standard. Sometimes they missed food for a day. Sickness was not treated.... After the Hielera, they went to the 'perrera', or doghouse, a place where families were put in cages, cyclone fencing between them as though they were animals."

The standards that institutionalize this sadistic abuse of infants, children, and young women are not brutal enough to "send the message" the fascists want. Lawsuits they've filed, and a law they are putting before Congress, would remove any level of government oversight to the concentration camps they intend to fill.

Many protests have been launched against the imprisonment of children across the country, and future protests are planned. Lawyers and medical professionals have provided support for the immigrants. All efforts like these are important—but much, much more is needed. The atrocities continue, and they are about to get far worse. They need to be STOPPED!

The Time to Act Is NOW

Relentless attacks on immigrants are a battering ram through which the Trump/Pence regime is advancing and consolidating its entire fascist program. Fighting to put an end to the horrors this regime is already inflicting on immigrants, and the even greater ones it is preparing, must be part of the one unifying demand #OUTNOW!

Now is the time, including over these holidays when the contradiction of families separated and children locked in cages is all the more glaring, to step into this fight and to struggle with others to do the same. Get copies of this article to distribute, as well as the fact sheet on www.revcom.us. And join with Refuse Fascism in the month of activities it has called for this January.