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Trump Administration’s Mass Deportation Operations: Update February 2026

March 19, 2026

Lemkin Institute

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security believes that the escalation of hyper-militarized mass deportation operations targeting Black and Brown communities coupled with ongoing threats of national guard deployment from the Trump Administration is evidence of normalization of using military force against civilians and a red flag for the genocidal process underway in the U.S. (See our previous [Red Flag Alerts](#) and [statements](#) for the U.S.). Cities across the U.S. continue to face armed mass deportation operations as the Trump Administration deployed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers along with agents from other federal agencies to carry out enforcement operations under the guise of protecting public safety (See [January Brief](#)). However, these enforcement operations have resulted in human rights violations committed by the federal agents against noncitizens and citizens alike, including racial profiling, unlawful arrest, excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, and denial of due process. In an effort to better document the tactics and abuses of federal agents during these state-sanctioned operations, the Lemkin Institute is providing an analysis of key insights and incidents during the month of February 2026.

Mass Deportation Operations

Internal Documents Reveal ICE Tactics

In February, [American Oversight](#) released information obtained from ICE internal documents through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with DHS. These documents [show](#) that DHS was aware of a “353 percent increase in use of force incidents involving officers” including incidents “of agents shattering car windows, deploying chemical agents, and using extreme physical force to detain individuals.” According to a [Politico report](#), the documents “challenge the administration’s assertions and efforts from its backers in the wake of the Minneapolis shootings to downplay incidents involving ICE’s use of excessive force by arguing that such cases were infrequent.” Documents also contain details of the fatal shooting of a U.S. citizen, [Ruben Ray Martinez](#), by an ICE officer in March 2025 in South Padre Island, Texas which ICE had been lying about for over a year. Despite reports of a significant increase in violent incidents committed by federal agents, documents reveal that the head of ICE’s Office of Firearms and Tactical Program Use of Force Analysis Unit [focused](#) on prosecuting assaults on federal agents rather than assaults and murders committed by them.

American Oversight Executive Director Chioma Chukwu explained, “What’s more, these records demonstrate a stark disconnect between the constitutional standards on which ICE claims to train its officers and the abusive and deadly enforcement practices we see detailed in these incident reports and on the streets of American cities in places like Minneapolis.” The documents contain training materials for ICE officers which state that I-205 administrative warrants issued by ICE “do not permit them to enter private areas like homes and businesses.” However, a memo from May 2025 by ICE chief Todd Lyons instructed ICE agents that administrative warrants can be used as justification to enter homes and to tell anyone who asks that the “policy is ‘under review.’” Director Chukwu commented, “This suggests ICE knows its practices are deeply problematic — and is deliberately hiding the ball to avoid public scrutiny.” A January 2026 memo stated that federal agents can arrest anyone they suspect to be undocumented without needing an administrative warrant. According to the National Immigration Law Center, this violates federal law and shows “an agency pushing officers to ignore our laws and to prioritize unjustified arrests.” In addition to unlawful arrests, court records reflect a pattern of unlawful detention carried out by federal agents. Reuters determined that judges have “ruled more than 4,400 times since October that President Donald Trump's administration is detaining immigrants unlawfully.”

Reports of Increasing ICE Surveillance

Reports from February outline the Trump Administration’s increasing use of surveillance technology and data to target noncitizens and citizens alike. According to the American Immigration Council (AIC), “Facial recognition, biometric scanning, and social-media monitoring — once justified for tracking noncitizens — are now being used to identify and investigate U.S. citizens. This is mission creep, a military term for a shift in objectives that gradually turns a limited mission into something far larger. And it’s happening right now.” With little to no oversight, DHS has invested millions into artificial intelligence, including Palantir’s ImmigrationOS for “granular tracking” of immigrants, B12 Technologies’ iris-scanning smartphones, and Clearview AI facial recognition. This is in addition to facial recognition applications, such as Mobile Fortify, which ICE has already been using to determine the citizenship status of people they encounter in the field during operations. According to the AIC, Mobile Fortify “draws from over 200 million images stored in the databases of DHS, the FBI, and the State Department. It also appears to tap into super query tools, systems that aggregate data across multiple government databases for deeper access into personal networks.”

Investigations by Minnesota Public Radio and the Guardian show that ICE has been employing AI surveillance tools to monitor U.S. citizens outside of their jurisdiction of immigration enforcement. ICE has purchased and employed AI-enabled “social media monitoring and location-tracking systems that allow agents to analyze the movements of large groups of people in specific locations.” This would allow federal agents to track and map the location of people and their connections without a warrant and poses a real threat to people attending protests or other large public gatherings. The AIC warns that monitoring of Palantir’s ImmigrationOS can easily be used to surveil any flagged group. In addition to tracking immigration cases, ImmigrationOS, “manages the immigration lifecycle process of individuals through predictive analysis, surveillance, and enforcement.” At the moment, the use of ImmigrationOS is being marketed as a way to make deportations “more efficient,” however, this justification could quickly be used to advocate for the surveillance of any group the Administration deems a threat, whether they are U.S. citizens or not, in the name of “efficiency” of law enforcement and national security. The AIC highlights that there lacks significant safeguards, such as the requirement

of a warrant, on the ability of federal agents to systemically deploy and rely on these AI-enabled surveillance technologies with access to vast caches of government and biometric data.

It is not coincidental that the “mission creep” that has resulted in ICE employing this surveillance technology against U.S. citizens comes in the midst of the Trump Administration’s crackdown on critics of its mass deportation operations and protestors. Reports indicate that DHS has been using administrative subpoenas to “to obtain personal data from technology companies, universities, employers, and social-media platforms” without oversight. The targets of these subpoenas include student protestors at Columbia University, Minnesota healthcare workers who protested ICE in their hospitals, and people who posted about ICE raids in Los Angeles on social media.

Minnesota

The Trump Administration’s Operation Metro Surge continued in the Twin Cities area in February. Early in the month, new Border Czar Tom Homan announced a “draw down” of federal agents in the state. On February 4, Homan stated, “we will draw down 700 people, effective today.” However, Homan explained that 2,000 federal agents would remain in the state to continue operations “until we get it all done.” Federal “fraud” investigators also remained to continue their investigations; the number, however, was not disclosed. Additionally, Homan commented that he thought the operation, which has resulted in the fatal shooting of two U.S. citizens, was a success, claiming, “I don't think anybody, purposely, didn't do something they should have done.”

Governor Tim Walz responded, “Operation Metro Surge is not making Minnesota safer. Today’s announcement is a step in the right direction, but we need a faster and larger drawdown of forces, state-led investigations into the killings of Alex Pretti and Renee Good, and an end to this campaign of retribution.” In a written statement, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey commented that it “isn’t a de-escalation” but a “step in the right direction.” Frey reiterated, “My message to the White House has been consistent: Operation Metro Surge has been catastrophic for our residents and businesses. It needs to end immediately.”

Despite claims of a “draw down,” federal agents continue to unlawfully arrest and detain people as well as employ violent tactics against their targets and witnesses observing ICE operations. On February 3, ICE agents detained two observers at gunpoint in the Midtown Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis. On February 5, Minneapolis Council Member Aisha Chughtai reported that a “couple dozen” federal agents broke into a Minneapolis apartment building without a warrant. On February 10, ICE agents smashed a car window and pulled a man from the vehicle in Uptown, Minneapolis. Witnesses report federal agents detained two people at the Hennepin County Government Center after “hanging out” for a few days in the Center’s lobby wearing plain clothes. Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty criticized federal agents targeting court hearings, claiming that this interferes with the justice process for suspects, victims, and witnesses.

In addition to wearing plain clothes, other reports show that ICE agents have begun disguising themselves “as construction and electrical workers, Uber drivers, and school observers” to avoid detection. On February 16, a father in Columbia Heights was “lured to assist two women posing as stranded motorists outside his home” after which three vehicles of ICE agents arrived and arrested him. Additionally the Minnesota Star Tribune reviewed more than 100 Minnesota license plates on vehicles used in

immigration enforcement operations and found inconsistencies. The outlet found that same sets of plates being used by multiple vehicles among other irregularities like “expired tabs from different vehicles or plates registered to a nonexistent business.” Nearly 60% of the plates “were not registered with the state of Minnesota, including the Chevy Tahoe that federal agent Jonathan Ross traveled in the day he fatally shot Renee Good in South Minneapolis.”

Federal agents continue to pose a threat to schools and have been reported circling “schools and neighborhoods across the Twin Cities, including outside the Columbia Heights.” The labor union, Education Minnesota, and Fridley and Duluth school districts have filed a lawsuit against several federal agencies and Trump officials to prohibit federal agents from conducting operations in or near Minnesota public schools. The lawsuit cites multiple incidents of “agents allegedly near school buildings, bus stops and dismissal areas.” City Council President Elliott Payne witnessed “ICE agents circling the block right around school dismissal” and claimed “they followed an observer...and then pointed at their home.” This suggests that federal agents are surveilling and tracking observers of ICE operations in addition to noncitizens.

In February, federal judges clashed with federal agents over immigration detention while more details emerged of the inhumane conditions of immigration detention in Minneapolis. Early in the month, Third District Congressional Representative Kelly Morrison reported on the conditions she witnessed when she visited the Whipple Building in Minneapolis where ICE is detaining hundreds of people. She explained, “...during my visit yesterday I got confirmation that the facility has no specific medical policy and no medical care on site..There was not a nurse present ... there are no beds, no real blankets, minimal food, extremely cold temperatures, people are in locked cells in leg shackles.” Not only are detainees exposed to inhumane conditions in immigration detention centers, but the Trump Administration is refusing to cooperate with courts as people attempt to use what few legal avenues remain to challenge their detention. District Judge Jeffrey Bryan claimed that the “federal government continues to defy court orders to release unlawfully detained people or return their belongings” and scheduled a contempt hearing for more than a dozen of immigration cases.

Judge Bryan's order for federal agents to return the belongings of detainees refers to the disturbing emerging pattern of ICE agents refusing to return the documents “proving active immigration cases, pending visas, or even US citizenship” upon release. One Minnesota immigration attorney explained, ““It's more the rule than the exception that people generally are not given their stuff back...As far as I can tell, it's the practice of ICE to throw everybody's documents into a black box and then lose it.” Noncitizens are required to carry proof of their lawful status by federal law. As the policy director of the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota commented, “The government not returning these documents to folks is essentially forcing them to walk around without this document that the government itself says these folks are supposed to carry with them.” By withholding these essential documents, federal agents are intentionally making noncitizens even more vulnerable to getting swept up into ICE's dragnet by making it impossible for them to follow the law and more likely they will be rearrested.

Additionally, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction to protect refugees in Minnesota from arrest and deportation due to constitutional concerns regarding Operation PARRIS. Operation PARRIS was launched by the Trump Administration in 2026 to run in parallel with Operation Metro

Surge to reexamine the Green Card applications of 5,600 Minnesota residents.

Incidents from Other States

- **California:** In Los Angeles over February 1-2, federal agents targeted and detained people in the Escondido, Del Mar, Solana Beach, Alhambra, Monterey Park, Santa Maria, Ventura, and Fontana areas. In the Diamond Heights Neighborhood of San Francisco, an elderly nanny was detained by federal agents on February 13 while she was on her way to work. San Francisco Rapid Response Network reported, “When asked, agents did not present a warrant or show identification, and the vehicles involved had no markings or visible license plates.”
- **Oregon:** Portland Mayor Keith Wilson demanded that federal agents leave the city after agents tear gassed a peaceful protest outside of the South Waterfront ICE facility. Wilson wrote in a statement, “To those who continue to work for ICE: Resign. To those who control this facility: Leave...Through your use of violence and the trampling of the Constitution, you have lost all legitimacy and replaced it with shame.” On February 5, a U.S. district judge in Oregon issued a preliminary injunction in an ongoing class-action lawsuit which orders federal agents to stop making warrantless arrests “unless there is a likelihood of escape.” This will remain in effect while the lawsuit is being adjudicated.
- **New York:** On February 18, federal agents conducted a series of raids in Riverhead and Riverside in Long Island. ICE detained a man in the parking lot of the Arthur M Cromarty Criminal Court Complex while pepper spraying people observing. On February 19, Rohingya refugee Nurul Amin Shah Alam, who was blind and spoke little English, was found dead in Buffalo five days after he was released into CBP custody from county jail and abandoned by agents at a closed coffee shop in freezing weather, without shoes, and miles from his home (see full statement). Federal agents did not attempt to inform Shah Alam’s family or legal counsel that he had been released to CBP custody or notify his family of his location.
- **New Jersey:** At the beginning of February, federal agents racially profiled and detained multiple people in Jersey City, Hoboken, and New Brunswick. Jersey City Mayor James Solomon explained that federal agents detained people “at random on their way to work.” Hoboken Mayor Emily Jabbar reported that several people were detained on the NJ Transit light rail train and at Ninth Street station by masked federal agents in unmarked vehicles. On February 25, federal agents crashed into three bystander vehicles while engaging in a vehicle pursuit. Several people, including children, were sent to the hospital.
- **Texas:** On February 5, ICE officers forced their way into a home in San Antonio without a warrant. Agents searched the home and eventually left without making an arrest. Reports indicate that local police are using school security cameras to aid federal agents in enforcement operations. Texas school districts are granting federal agents access to license plate reader data for use in operations. By February 5, at least two cases of measles were confirmed at the Dilley Detention Center, a family immigration detention center in south Texas. The inhumane conditions at Dilley and for children in immigration detention across the country were brought to the forefront last month by protests demanding the release of five-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos who was unlawfully arrested in Minnesota and later transferred to Dilley (see full statement). ProPublica highlighted the verbal abuse and inadequate food, water, and medical care children are subjected to by guards at Dilley. The prospect of measles spreading in these conditions

would be deadly for children and families held there, the majority of whom have no criminal record.

- **Pennsylvania:** ICE officers pulled a man from a vehicle in Phoenixville and arrested him. Masked federal agents from multiple agencies conducted a raid in Montgomery County. Agents broke down the door and detained a man in front of his family. One witness saw 20 unmarked vehicles outside of the home and could hear children crying.

Immigration Restrictions and Policy Changes

February saw continuing immigration restrictions and procedure changes affecting U.S. immigration policy. Since January 2025, the Trump Administration has fired more than 100 immigration judges and reduced the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) from 28 members to 15, firing 9 members appointed by the previous Biden Administration. The BIA has instituted more than 70 new procedural decisions which have negatively impacted noncitizens facing removal. The BIA has made it easier to appoint temporary immigration judges with little immigration law experience. Many of these newly hired judges were previous military lawyers who received only a few weeks of training. The BIA has also pressured immigration judges to dismiss cases to fast-track the deportation process. Early this month, Bloomberg Law reported that newly hired judges were instructed by top immigration-court officials to only grant asylum in rare circumstances and to deny asylum without a hearing.

On February 6, the Department of Justice (DOJ) published an interim final rule which threatens the ability for people to appeal immigration judge decisions and further erodes due process protections and judicial safeguards in favor of fast-tracking removals. Under this new rule, noncitizens (with the exception of asylum cases) will now only have 10 days instead of 30 to pay the \$1,030 fee, find a lawyer, prepare the required paperwork, and file an appeal for their case. To ensure that they are not deported during this process, noncitizens must also file an emergency stay of removal. Even if a noncitizen is able to achieve this within the 10 day window, the new rule also establishes the default practice of “summary dismissal” where appeals will be immediately dismissed unless a majority of the BIA’s 15 members decide to review the case. Normally, a removal order does not go into effect until after the BIA has made its decision regarding the appeal, which could take years. Now, with the default practice of summary dismissal, removal orders could go into effect in a matter of weeks.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit sided with the Trump Administration and upheld mandatory detention without opportunity for a bond hearing for noncitizens who entered the country without inspection regardless of how long they have been in the country. This decision would apply to cases within the district, which includes Texas, subjecting a majority of noncitizens to mandatory detention while their immigration cases are being adjudicated. Challenges to mandatory detention have been filed in nine of 12 regional appeals courts. Non-citizens facing mandatory detention are able to file habeas petitions to challenge their detention in federal court. According to ProPublica, immigrants “filed more habeas cases in the first 13 months of the second Trump administration than in the past three administrations combined” with 6,745 filed in January 2026 alone. Over 300 judges have ruled in favor of immigrants and ordered the release of noncitizens or that they be offered a bond hearing to determine if they are eligible for release while their immigration case is adjudicated.

In February, the Trump Administration threatened the due process rights of unaccompanied minors by denying protections of a permanent injunction that has been protecting unaccompanied immigrant children in

U.S. custody since 1985. The permanent injunction in the case *Perez-Funez v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security* required the government “to advise children of their rights and ensure they can communicate with a parent, close relative, friend, or legal services organization before making life-altering immigration decisions.” The Trump Administration is taking advantage of the 72-hour window after children are taken into custody and transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement where they normally have access to legal counsel. During this window, Customs and Border Protection are threatening children with “prolonged detention” using a “UAC Processing Pathway Advisal” form if they request a removal hearing or express credible fear of being returned to their home country. In this coercive environment, reports indicate that federal agents are pressuring children to sign expedited return forms. Senior Special Counsel for Strategic Litigation at Public Counsel Mark Rosenbaum responded, “This is a cruel and calculated attack on children who are already among the most vulnerable people in our society...these protections have recognized a fundamental truth: the situation facing unaccompanied children is inherently coercive. The Trump Administration now seeks to eliminate those protections so they can coerce children into waiving their rights unknowingly and involuntarily.” The National Immigration Law Center’s Deputy Legal Director Peter McGraw added, “The Government’s new advisal document misleads, threatens, and intimidates kids into leaving the United States. The Trump administration’s attempt to keep this process hidden from the court and advocates shows a total disregard for the injunction and the basic due process rights of vulnerable children.”

Additionally, the Trump Administration continued to eliminate legal pathways to lawful status and introduced new requirements for noncitizens which only serves to make noncitizens more vulnerable to the mass deportation dragnet. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem announced the termination of Temporary Protected Status for Yemen on February 13, claiming “Allowing TPS Yemen beneficiaries to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to our national interest...We are prioritizing our national security interests and putting America first.” On February 18, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) issued a memorandum, “Detention of Refugees Who Have Failed to Adjust to Lawful Permanent Resident Status,” which establishes a “detain-and-inspect” policy for “unadjusted” refugees. Under this new policy, one year after their initial admission to the U.S a refugee must return to DHS custody for inspection and admission as a permanent resident. If a refugee does not do this voluntarily, this policy allows DHS to arrest and detain them for the duration of this process.

Analysis

The continued state-sanctioned violence and erosion of constitutional and human rights for Black and Brown communities (both citizen and noncitizen) further demonstrates an unfolding genocidal process against these communities. Information gleaned from DHS, ICE, and CBP internal documents as well as the Administration’s investment in and use of AI-enabled surveillance technology is additional evidence that federal agents are being used as a state-sanctioned secret police to surveil and terrorize communities and target those the Trump Administration has deemed undesirable. The government was aware of the widespread and escalating violent tactics employed by federal agents against citizens and noncitizens and did not stop these practices. The Administration explicitly instructed federal agents to violate due process rights by permitting agents to arrest anyone they suspect to be undocumented without a warrant. Within the context of the Administration’s rhetoric labelling undocumented immigrants as “criminals” and state- and court-sanctioned racial profiling

tactics, this is permission for agents to target any Black or Brown person for suspicion of not being a U.S. citizen and therefore a threat to the U.S. government and its citizens.

The Trump Administration has also reshaped the immigration judicial landscape by putting in place immigration judges with little to no experience, instituting procedural changes that make challenging detention and removal more difficult, and imposing further restrictions on or eliminating remaining avenues for lawful status. The result is more people who have been unlawfully arrested and detained by federal agents remaining in detention in inhumane conditions and having their cases summarily dismissed and deportation expedited. The inhumane conditions and denial of access to legal counsel with little to no guarantee of due process, judicial review, or release demonstrates that immigration detention centers are functioning as concentration camps for Black and Brown people. Reports of federal agents refusing to return essential immigration documents to detainees upon their release are especially concerning because this makes it impossible for people to follow the law and increases the likelihood they will be rearrested and detained by federal agents. The elimination or further restrictions on legal avenues of immigration increases the probability that entire communities will be stripped of their lawful status and therefore vulnerable to the mass deportation dragnet. Additionally, the establishment of “detain and inspect” policies for adjustment of status makes the possibility of detention an official part of the pathway to legal status.

The Lemkin Institute continues to call for the dismantling of DHS, ICE, and CBP and the investigation of said agencies for their role in carrying out mass human rights abuses which could amount to crimes against humanity and an unfolding genocidal process. States must take measures to keep their communities safe and not collaborate with mass deportation operations. States must place restrictions on the government's use of AI-enabled surveillance technology in order to preserve the constitutional and human rights of their constituents. The Trump Administration's network of immigration detention centers must be dismantled and investigated as potential concentration camps. The Lemkin Institute renews its call for an end to childhood detention and demands for the release of children currently held in immigration detention centers in horrific conditions without effective legal counsel or due process. The Trump Administration and federal agents cannot be allowed to continue acting with impunity and must be held accountable.

As long as we're able, the Lemkin Institute will continue to monitor the genocidal process unfolding in the U.S. The Institute wants to stress that while we do our best to document incidents of state-sanctioned human rights violations committed by federal agents, we are only able to access information that is publicly available. The select incidents we are able to highlight are not exhaustive and the extent of these mass deportation operations and human rights violations is most likely underreported by open sources. Documentation of these incidents is key. We encourage those who are able to safely do so to document and report incidents to local grassroots community defense organizations monitoring ICE activity in your area.

Resources

- [Ice in My Area Tracker](#): Report and track ICE activity in your area.
- [Immigration Policy Tracking Project](#): Stay up to date on rapidly changing immigration policies.
- [National Immigration Legal Services Directory](#): Search for immigration services near you

The Lemkin Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. EIN: 87-1787869

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- [National Immigrant Justice Center](#): Provides legal resources and general information on current issues
- [Third Country Deportation Watch](#): Provides information on third country deportations and countries who have entered into agreements with the U.S.
- [ICE Flight Monitor](#): Human Rights First tracks and documents U.S. deportation flights

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