ICE & Authoritarianism

How Deportation, Data & Fear Build a Strongman State

Use this zine to start a conversation

Authoritarian Rule

Authoritarian governments build two things:

1. A roving force of armed enforcers (Hitler'sGestapo, Saddam's Fedayeen, the Stasi inEast Germany) who answer to the leader, not the law

2. A surveillance system that lets them decide who is "dangerous" and crush opposition

They start with people it's easy to dehumanize: "criminals," "terrorists," "illegal aliens." If the public shrugs, they move on to dissidents, opponents, and eventually anyone who gets in their way.

What ICE has become

ICE was created in 2003 to enforce immigration and trade laws. Under Trump it has shifted toward something much darker.

Masked agents in unmarked vans have grabbed people off streets and out of car washes and day cares. ICE has stormed birthday parties and court check-ins, then moved people across multiple states so families and lawyers can't find them.

ICE is running 200+ detention sites. Overcrowding, disappearances from tracking systems, and family separation plague these modern concentration camps. Most people ICE detains have no criminal record.

Digital authoritarianism

Digital authoritarianism uses technology to build an always-on system of tracking, intimidation, and control.

- ImmigrationOS (built with Peter Thiel's Palantir) scoops up massive data sets so ICE can map relationships,workplaces, and addresses and fast-track deportations.

- Graphite, a phone-hacking platform similar to Pegasus, lets agents get into people's phones.

- Customs and Border Protection's CBP One app powers the data-driven deportation machine.

From immigration police to secret police

- Agents in masks and plain clothes, with noname tags, snatch people into unmarked vehicles.

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- Oversight offices havebeen gutted.

- People have been "disappeared" to distant prisons or even other countries with recordsof torture.

- U.S. citizens — including children — have been deported or jailed with no meaningful process.

- 2025 was ICE's deadliest year in decades.

This is what happens when an agency is told, "Push the limits; we'll protect you from consequences."

It doesn't stop with immigrants

Those who oppose ICE have been dragged out of events, detained, and even killed.

Attacks on immigrants are not just about immigration. They are a trial run for broader rule by fear, with ICE as a ready-made tool to go after anyone: protesters, journalists, political opponents, whole communities that "step out of line."

As the old warning goes: if we stay silent when they come for others, there may be no one left to speak when they come for us.

When authoritarianism comes for you

Many movements here and abroad have faced surveillance, raids, and assassination. Their responses offer a blueprint:

1. Name the power. ICE isn't "just doing its job"; it's being turned into a paramilitary control tool. Saying that aloud is step one.

2. Build community defense and care: rapid response to raids, jail support, mutual aid, food and housing help, know-your-rights trainings, mental health spaces.

3. Build coalitions. Connect immigrant-justice work with racial, labor, and democracy fights so ICE can't pick off one group at a time.

What you can do now

Show up. Join Indivisible. Get rapid response training. Donate to immigrant legal defense funds. Press your city to cut contracts with ICE. Demand your reps defund and dismantle ICE and surveillance tools. Use this zine to start conversations with neighbors, coworkers, and family.

Authoritarianism is not inevitable. Join us in fighting it.