

# Trump rally roars approval for call to “shoot” immigrants

By Eric London  
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At a campaign rally Wednesday in Panama City, Florida, thousands of Trump supporters laughed and cheered wildly when an audience member shouted that the US should “shoot” immigrants attempting to cross the US-Mexico border.

The interruption came as Trump lamented that the US could not “let [soldiers and border patrol] use weapons” against immigrants at the border. When the supporter shouted “shoot them!” Trump paused and threw his head back in laughter. “That’s only in the Panhandle you can get away with that statement,” he said in reference to the northwestern part of Florida.

Minutes earlier, Trump made a demagogic appeal to anti-immigrant sentiment in words crafted by his fascist adviser Stephen Miller:

“Democrats say they care about the poor, but their open border policies drive down wages, drain social services and hurt the poorest Americans more than anybody else,” he said, lying about the fact that his administration has slashed billions from social programs to boost the profits of American corporations. Immigrants are “rough people” who are “invading” the US, Trump said. They “bring in crime” and commit acts worse than “rape.”

This episode went almost without mention in the corporate media, with no reference in the *New York Times*. Those publications who did reference the comment downplayed it as a “joke.” In reality, the unnamed Trump supporter who called for executing immigrants was only repeating the president’s statement on November 1, 2018 that the military should shoot members of the migrant caravan if they attempt to cross the border.

At the Panama City rally, Trump also said he could stay in office for “10 or 14” years, echoing his Sunday tweet asserting the possibility he may cancel the 2020

election and extend his term another two years. The press also presented this serious threat against American democracy as a “joke.”

Trump’s efforts to encourage the development of a far-right movement against immigrants are a critical element of this extra-constitutional, authoritarian strategy.

Trump is mobilizing networks of outright fascists. *Young Turks* released police reports revealing the political views of those in the over 200 groups of vigilante border militias. Armand Delgado Gonzalez, a 52-year-old war veteran and militiaman, arrested a group of immigrants and said, “Why are we just apprehending them and not lining them up and shooting them? We have to go back to Hitler days and put them all in a gas chamber.”

Such elements not only work outside of the government, but within it. The immigrant rights non-profit RAICES filed a lawsuit this week showing that the government is blocking detained immigrants from visiting their lawyers at the detention center in Karnes, Texas. At the US-Mexico border, agents arrested an immigrant as well as the volunteer who accompanied the immigrant to the border to apply for asylum. When the volunteer told the border agents to call her lawyer, the agent said, “Tell your lawyer to come down here. We’ll arrest him too.”

The Democratic Party has remained silent on these horrors. In fact, Democrats were unable to advance even a moderate bill protecting immigrants brought to the US as children out of a Democratic-controlled House Judiciary Committee. The measure, which would have certainly failed in the Republican-controlled Senate, was voted down by Democratic committee members and could not reach the House for a full vote.

*Politico* wrote that the Democrats “blamed the delay in part on the panel’s focus on special counsel Robert Mueller’s report.” Maryland Democratic Congressman Jamie Raskin said, “Well we’re busy. We’re trying to restore law-and-order in America.”

These statements expose the right-wing impact of the Democratic Party’s obsessive focus on allegations of Trump’s ties to Russia. The anti-Russia campaign, which appeals to the same xenophobic fears as Trump’s immigrant bashing, drowns out all issues that impact the lives of millions of workers, immigrant and non-immigrant alike. Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi even told a *Washington Post* forum Wednesday that Trump’s “border wall is part of the immigration conversation.”

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is appealing to Congress for billions in emergency funds to expand the number of beds at immigration detention facilities, citing a “crisis” at the southern border.

The real crisis is the one from which millions of Central American and Mexican workers are desperately seeking to escape. This crisis is the product of extreme inequality, war and dictatorial regimes imposed on the impoverished workers and peasants by American imperialism.

The explosive social tensions building up across Latin America are exemplified in Honduras, where mass strikes and demonstrations by students, teachers and nurses have spread across the country in recent weeks. When tens of thousands of workers protested earlier this month against the International Monetary Fund’s plan to privatize public education and healthcare, President Juan Orlando Hernández deployed US-trained riot police who fired live rounds at protestors and injured dozens in a brutal crackdown. Hernández is the chosen successor of Porfirio Lobo Sosa, who was put in office after the 2009 coup d’état orchestrated by the Obama administration.

Workers who are beaten and detained by the government at home then travel through Mexico to face the prospect of detention and violence by the US government.

But conditions are so desperate that masses of people still make the dangerous trek north. Recent figures show the US arrested 100,000 immigrants at the US-Mexico border in April. This figure is the highest monthly arrest total since 2007, and the government is

on pace to arrest over 1 million immigrants in 2019.

The percentage of children and family apprehensions has skyrocketed. According to the Washington Office on Latin America, 60,000 of the 100,000 arrestees in April 2019 were traveling in families and another 10,000 were children traveling alone. In previous decades, 90 to 95 percent of those apprehended were adult men traveling alone.

This change shows that while immigrants in the earlier period may have been traveling in search of work, most are now traveling because they fear death or torture at the hands of US-backed death squads or transnational drug cartels. Some 40 years after the US-instigated civil wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, the region has been utterly devastated by American capitalism.

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