

ICE and Tennessee police terrorize Nashville immigrants in mass raid: Community fights back

Published May 10, 2025

On the night of May 3, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement worked in collaboration with the Tennessee Highway Patrol to arrest and detain approximately 100 people in a massive crackdown on Nashville's migrant community. The coordinated operation took place in the city's immigrant neighborhoods and began at the exact intersection where members of the Party for Socialism and Liberation and allies rallied on March 1 to demand dignity and justice for immigrants.

The operation involved around 150 traffic stops, clearly targeting drivers based on racial profiling and minor violations. Eyewitnesses report community members being held at gunpoint. Dozens were pulled from their vehicles, many on their way to work or returning home. Children were separated from their parents. In at least one case, a person with valid asylum documentation was detained simply for not carrying their papers. Even two days later, detainees have been denied all communication with loved ones. Officials who were involved in carrying out the raids have not responded to requests to disclose the location of the detainees. An officer reportedly told a Nashville resident they could speak to their loved one from the Louisiana detention center.

On May 4, families and protesters gathered outside of the ICE detention facility for a vigil. Amid a sea of uniformed officers and through a chain-link fence, community members were seen emerging from the facility in a single file line, shackled. Several appeared to be teenagers or even younger. When the bus began to leave, an officer guarding the vehicle ignored a wife who was searching for her husband.

The terror did not end there. Metro Nashville Police Department cruisers were seen stationed at ICE headquarters, and multiple community members reported being pulled over not by THP, but by MNPd officers. Despite this, Mayor Freddie O'Connell publicly claimed that MNPd had no role in the operation. He



insisted local police only arrived *after* crowds gathered on May 4 – but dozens of photos, videos, and firsthand accounts prove otherwise. MNPd officers were present *before*, *during*, and *after* the raid and even attended the press conference.

This is not just political cowardice – it is a deliberate cover-up. The mayor's hollow gestures to “support” the families pale in comparison to the solidarity shown by our communities and the strength of the people resisting.

State Representative Justin Jones, whose district includes many of the affected neighborhoods, stated: “My office will be continuing to press Governor Lee's administration, including the Commissioner of Safety and the Colonel of the Tennessee Highway Patrol, about these racist stops, the names of those detained, and the role racial profiling played in targeting immigrants commuting home.”

In the face of this brutal repression, the people have responded with strength. Organizers immediately launched a community

info@pslweb.org • [@pslnational](https://twitter.com/pslnational)

Party for Socialism and Liberation - www.LiberationNews.org

relief fund for impacted families and began holding virtual trainings to coordinate a broader response. A special called Metro Council meeting was held on May 7, and the people were there to demand accountability.

Initially, the agenda only had eight minutes allotted for public comment, but later it was extended to 30 minutes due to public outrage. The community asked many questions and provided evidence that should lead metro officials and MNPd to *at least* investigate further. Community members articulated that children have been visibly trembling in their seats at school and families have been asking if they are safe to leave their homes. A member of the Muslim American advisory council articulated Nashville's pride in a historically large Kurdish and Egyptian community, but posed an important question to Metro officials: What does it mean to celebrate diversity if you can't keep us safe?

MNPd and Metro officials, including Metro's legal director Wally Dietz, denied any knowledge or involvement from MNPd and claimed that videos sent in by members of the community were "debunked," without providing further explanation. Many questions were left unanswered. Why were THP officers conducting traffic stops on roads that are not in their jurisdiction — and wouldn't MNPd have to be notified of such stops? In what ways have the videos that clearly show MNPd present at these stops been debunked? How can MNPd deny knowledge or involvement when the timeline — released by Wally Dietz himself on May 7 stated that MNPd received a call on Thursday, May 1, in which DHS agent Jackson Sanders told MNPd officers on Sunday, May 4, at 10 a.m., to prepare for possible "retaliation from families"?

This was a coordinated act of white supremacist state violence meant to instill fear in working class Nashvillians. In the days following May 3, further detainments have taken place across the city, escalating an ongoing war on working-class immigrant communities. These acts are not about "public safety" — they are about control, surveillance, and terror.

These raids aren't just about immigration — they're about power. They're part of a system that uses violence and fear to protect the interests of the billionaire class. By targeting immigrant communities, the state expands its police and surveillance machinery and keeps workers divided and afraid. ICE, the police, and the rest don't keep us safe. They exist to protect profit, not people. When millions of migrants are forced to live in the

shadows, it drives down wages and working conditions for everyone. This is by design. As socialists, we believe in a world where all people — no matter where they're from — can live and work with dignity, stability, and freedom. But we're clear-eyed: Capitalism will continue to create crisis, displacement, and repression. The system is not broken — it's working exactly as intended. That's why we fight for socialism. Because only through collective power can we end the raids, end the cages, and build a world rooted in justice, not exploitation.

People in Nashville are horrified and outraged, but we are not surprised. These attacks are part of a broader pattern of racist, extreme right-wing warfare being waged across the South and beyond. But our movements are strong. We are organizing, resisting, and preparing for the struggle ahead. The PSL is joining with local organizations to rally next Saturday, May 17 at 1 p.m. — at the corner of Nolensville Pike and Harding Place — the same spot as the rally we held on March 1! We will not stop until every one of our community members is home, safe, and free.

Donate to the [Nashville Unidos community fund](#) to support immigrant families targeted by ICE.

Feature image: Nashville community rallies in support of immigrants. Credit: Lindy Drolsum

info@pslweb.org • @pslnational

Party for Socialism and Liberation - www.LiberationNews.org