



TRUMP II: AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE WHITE HOUSE REPORT

## Los Angeles: Despite the presence of the army, the mobilizations continue

**In the Californian city, hundreds of people have been protesting daily for the past week against the arrests of undocumented workers. Mostly young, and themselves immigrants, they speak out for those who have no voice: their parents.**

Patricia Neves - June 14, 2025 at 3:07 p.m.

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Los Angeles (United States). It was almost noon on Thursday, June 12, when the first resident sounded the alarm. A police car, its lights flashing, drives into the small shopping center in the central Huntington Park neighborhood. At that moment, a resident takes a photo of the vehicle from the sidewalk across the street. He immediately sends the photo to a friend, Ana, with the officers' precise location.

Ana, a store employee, works right next door. She risks being arrested at any moment: she doesn't have papers. "That's *why I'm scared*, " she confides. "That's *why my son is scared*."

For several days, operations by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) have accelerated in Los Angeles and surrounding small working-class towns, including at immigrant workplaces, spaces that have so far been relatively untouched by the authorities. In Huntington Park, home to a large Latino community, and elsewhere in Los Angeles, particularly in the Fashion District, these operations have sparked immense anger and successive waves of protests.



Protesters during a demonstration under a freeway in Los Angeles, California, on June 8, 2025. © Photo David Pashae / Middle East Images via AFP

President Donald Trump may have sent thousands of military personnel, the National Guard , and Marines to the scene, but nothing has changed: for the past week in Los Angeles, hundreds of people have been protesting daily, for several hours a day, against the arrests of undocumented workers. In the crowd gathered Thursday in front of City Hall, many young people are marching peacefully under a beautiful blue sky. Some are barely out of high school.

They surrounded various federal buildings, particularly the Metropolitan Detention Center, where undocumented immigrants were held. A large proportion of the young protesters were from the Latino community. On their signs, written in marker, simple sentences – in Spanish – perfectly sum up the situation: *“My family fought for my future, now it’s my turn.”*

#### Strange closed-door meeting

In the crowd is Paul, an amateur photographer in his twenties who is covering the protests for a Mexican Instagram account based in Tijuana. He explains that he wants to document police violence. *“Look, I have a*

*huge bruise, there on my arm and on my back, the other day an officer shot me six times with rubber bullets.*

Paul's story, born in the United States, is similar to that of many others.

His father, a Mexican, "*worked hard*" to raise him. Ironically, he was undocumented, but a city employee. "*His job was to prune the palm trees, emblems of Los Angeles,*" the young man says. "*It was necessary to avoid the risk of fire. The city employed my father because it was cheaper. At the time, there was a difference of about a hundred dollars between the daily wages of the employees. Those who had a residence permit were paid more, those who didn't were paid less.*"

Before his father died of COVID-19 at 54, Paul lived "*in fear all the time.*" Now he's protesting. In front of him, a large number of local police officers stand stoically, wearing black uniforms and carrying batons or shields. Their names, written in capital letters on their helmets— "*Munoz,*" "*Garcia,*" "*Morales*" —are disturbing. The police officers are also immigrants.

" To deport, the administration goes everywhere today. "

Stephen Yale-Loehr, former law professor.

In Los Angeles, paradoxically, this closed-door situation, which on some days led to violent clashes before the implementation of a curfew, could almost go unnoticed. Outside of the Downtown district, where the federal complex is located, life goes on peacefully. Only the sound of helicopters and police car sirens seem to betray the youth's mobilization.

On television, on the contrary, protests are everywhere. People are talking *about "crisis" and "chaos,"* especially on conservative news channels. It is in this strange atmosphere, very calm and very tense, that the new phase of Donald Trump's anti-immigration policy is taking place across the Atlantic.



Protesters and a sign reading "Abolish ICE" outside Los Angeles City Hall, Thursday, June 12, 2025. © Photo Patricia Neves

*"The Trump administration, which made immigration control a priority of its campaign, is now trying to deport a million people a year. To achieve this figure, it is using every tool imaginable,"* Stephen Yale-Loehr, a former law professor at Cornell University, explained to Mediapart.

*"The administration is going everywhere today,"* he continues, *"including places previously considered sensitive—churches, courtrooms, schools, etc.—and is mobilizing other federal agencies, such as the FBI and local police. At the same time, it is trying to collect information from its various agencies in order to build a database to facilitate the identification of undocumented citizens."*

## **Crackdown on a “sanctuary city”**

The fact that Washington is focusing its efforts on California is no coincidence. This southwestern state, bathed by the Pacific Ocean, is the one with the largest number of undocumented immigrants in the country: 1.8 million residents without residence permits.

stay, according to figures from the Pew Research Center. The city of Los Angeles alone is home to almost half of them (800,000 people). The fact that President Trump is encountering strong resistance there is also no surprise.

Left-leaning California and Los Angeles have adopted "sanctuary city" status, limiting the sharing of information and resources between local authorities and federal immigration enforcement. California Governor Gavin Newsom, a potential Democratic presidential candidate in 2028, has quickly emerged as a leading voice of opposition.

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“ **For** weeks after the arrests, families are left without news. ”

A protester

He has already challenged the deployment of military troops in court, which ruled in his favor on Thursday in the first instance, and earlier this week he delivered a ten-minute speech that attracted much discussion, especially on left-wing news channels. *"What we are witnessing is not police repression, but authoritarianism,"* he declared. Gavin Newsom deplores the use of the army, a pretext aimed at creating a crisis and restricting public freedoms: *"What Donald Trump wants above all is your [...] silence."*

On the streets of Los Angeles, the battle of images and narratives leaves young protesters indifferent. They now come equipped with plastic bags, freezer bags, filled with water bottles, masks—for tear gas—and earplugs. *"The administration is watching us, but we're also watching it,"* explains a young protester whose family is originally from Mexico.

*"We take photos of ICE and police raids, and we post them on social media and anywhere else available to alert people,"* he adds. *" Because there are fathers and mothers who disappear. They are kidnapped. For weeks after the arrests, families are left without news."*

In Huntington Park, however, the streets of modest homes, lined with factories, are eerily empty. On Thursday, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem came to personally witness an immigration enforcement operation.

This one took place a few hundred meters from Ana's workplace, the *store employee*. *"Sometimes I feel like my children are more stressed than I am. They say to me, 'My [mom – editor's note] is staying home today.' But I have to work. I work for my family. Everything I do, I do for my children."* The children of the town hall, in fact, met on Saturday, June 14, for a new demonstration.

**Patricia Neves**

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