

# *ICE raids seven food factories in Mississippi, arresting hundreds*

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Jackson, August 8 (RHC)-- U.S. immigration authorities arrested nearly 700 people at seven food processing plants across Mississippi on Wednesday in what federal officials said could be the largest worksite ICE raid to ever happen in a single state.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said in a statement they detained about 680 people who were working without proper documents. The agents said they also seized business records from the seven raided sites as part of an existing, year-long federal criminal investigation on the food factories, according to the Washington Post.

U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi Mike Hurst said the raids and subsequent arrests represented "the largest single state immigration enforcement operation in our nation's history."

Some of those detained will be released for "humanitarian reasons" and required to appear in U.S. immigration court, said Hurst's office that partnered with ICE in order to carry out the mass detentions. Others will be transported to an ICE facility in Jena, Louisiana, the state and federal entities said in a joint statement.

Acting director of ICE, Matthew Albence, told reporters during a news conference in Jackson, MS that the rest will be arrested for alleged, undisclosed crimes, and others will be swiftly deported.

A video released by ICE showed buses arriving at a Canton processing facility where agents searched workers and checked their identification documents. Some workers had their hands restrained with nylon ties.

ICE did not specify the nationalities of the workers arrested. However, the Mexican Consulate said it was traveling to the area to assist its nationals who may have been involved.

The unprecedented round up by immigration officials is another example of President Trump's two-year streak of xenophobic practices against immigrants from Mexico and other American countries under the guise of 'law enforcement'.

"To those who use illegal aliens for a competitive advantage or to make a quick buck, we have something to say to you: If we find you have violated federal criminal law, we are coming for you," said Hurst Wednesday.

Last month, a Republican measure was eventually shot down that would have reduced the number of allotted green card applications by half, roughly 500,000. At the same time, the president succeeded in cutting the number of eligible asylum seekers, most who are presently arriving from government-corrupt Central American countries. Legislation introduced this year by Democrats that would have helped around two of the nation's 11 million undocumented a path to citizenship is at a stand still.

During the administration of former President Barack Obama, ICE prioritized the arrests of recent border crossers, people who had previously been ordered deported and those supposedly a threat to public safety.

Among the facilities targeted in Wednesday's operation was a Peco Foods processing plant in Canton. On its website, Peco Foods says it is the 8th largest poultry producer in the United States.

At the press conference in Jackson, a reporter pointed out to Hurst the poultry farms were likely employing undocumented migrants for years. "Why now? . . . Do you feel like you're being directed by President Trump to do this?" asked the journalist. Hurst responded: "I feel like I've been directed to enforce the law."

ICE said it has made more than 2,300 criminal and administrative arrests related to workplaces in the 2018 fiscal year, which ended in September, compared to just over 300 in the previous year. Several Congress members made visits to ICE facilities in Texas last month that showed the inhumane conditions taking place inside the past-capacity detention centers.

Julia Solorzano from the Southern Poverty Law Center, said these large-scale workplace raids only serve to "terrorize" and "destroy" law-abiding communities, rather than protect residents, as the administration claims.

"For a lot of the cities where these raids occurred, it was the first day of school. We know from past immigration enforcement actions of this type, that there are going to be children who go home tonight and their parents will be gone," Solorzano told CBS News. "It's extremely disruptive to families. It's — in many cases — depriving the family of the primary breadwinner."

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