

Trump pushes drive toward dictatorship, as Democrats block opposition

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The new administration of President Donald Trump escalated its fascist attacks on the democratic and social rights of the American people Wednesday, while Democratic Party leaders wrung their hands, warned against a too-aggressive response to the Trump onslaught and even claimed that Trump had already begun to retreat.

The list of substantive actions announced, taken or threatened by the Trump White House requires daily updating. Wednesday's list includes some actions taken Monday night or Tuesday but only confirmed by the White House on Wednesday:

- Asserting Trump's absolute authority across the federal government, regardless of law and precedent. This includes firing Democratic appointees on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB); forcibly removing the inspector general of the US Department of Agriculture from her office after she defied her firing by Trump as illegal; firing career Justice Department lawyers who were employed in the office of Special Counsel Jack Smith, who brought charges against Trump over the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol and the illegal retention of classified documents; and shutting down the prosecution of two Trump employees, his valet Walt Nauta and Carlos De Oliveira, a property manager at Mar-a-Lago, for their roles in the documents case.

- Reaffirming a ban on the use of federal funds for any program that does not meet the definitions laid down in a previous Trump executive order against diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs, while requiring schools to engage in "patriotic education" that glorifies how "the United States has admirably grown closer to its noble principles throughout its history." Four top cabinet officials, including, ominously, the Secretary of Defense, are mandated to provide a plan within 90 days for "eliminating Federal funding or support for illegal and discriminatory treatment and indoctrination in K-12

schools, including based on gender ideology and discriminatory equity ideology..."

- An executive order that incorporates as official government policy the witch-hunting demands of the House committee that investigated campus protests against the Israeli genocide in Gaza. The order requires all federal agencies to report within 60 days what authority they have to strike back against protests "arising from post-October 7, 2023, campus anti-Semitism." This would include "recommendations for familiarizing institutions of higher education with the grounds for inadmissibility ... so that such institutions may monitor for and report activities by alien students and staff relevant to those grounds and for ensuring that such reports about aliens lead, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to investigations and, if warranted, actions to remove such aliens." In other words, foreign students identified as opponents of the Gaza genocide and other crimes of the state of Israel will be deported. This from a president who in 2017 said neo-Nazis, who marched and chanted "Jews will not replace us!", were "very fine people."

- A memorandum to Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem to "take all appropriate actions to expand the Migrant Operations Center at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay to full capacity to provide additional detention space for high-priority criminal aliens unlawfully present in the United States, and to address attendant immigration enforcement needs identified by the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security." Guantanamo Bay is to become a concentration camp for detained migrants, particularly those from countries like Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua that refuse to accept US deportation flights.

The dictatorial character of these actions, and particularly the last two, hardly needs explanation. Trump arrogates to himself the authority to decide which laws he

will obey and which he will ignore, orders the transformation of K-12 education into a system of patriotic brainwashing—with the Pentagon given an unprecedented oversight role—and extends the persecution of immigrants to include those legally studying in the United States if they express political views opposed by the White House. And finally, the fascist president demands establishment of a vast concentration camp, run by the US Navy, where detained immigrants can be imprisoned indefinitely.

In the face of this rampage against democratic rights and constitutional and legal precedent, the Democratic Party congressional leadership is prostrate. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries issued a call for a “comprehensive three-pronged counteroffensive,” which appears to consist of “see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil.” Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer held a press conference on short notice, after the White House rescinded the memorandum issued Monday ordering a pause in all federal grants and transfers, claiming ludicrously that Trump was now “feeling the heat,” supposedly generated by the Democrats.

In reality, after a federal judge issued a temporary stay of the memorandum issued by the Office of Management and Budget, the White House withdrew the order while reaffirming the policy outlined in it, citing “confusion” created by the order’s sudden and haphazard implementation.

More importantly, Trump has continued to gather Democratic Party support for his reactionary attacks on the working class. He first mentioned the Guantanamo Bay plan—elaborated later in the evening in a formal message—at the White House ceremony for the signing of the Laken Riley Act. This is a vicious anti-immigrant measure, requiring detention for the purpose of deportation of any undocumented person charged with any offense, even a minor traffic citation. The bill was backed by dozens of House Democrats and enough Senate Democrats to overcome a filibuster. Pennsylvania Senator John Fetterman, one of its Democratic supporters, was in attendance at the bill signing, and Trump made repeated references to the bipartisan character of the bill and thanked those Democrats who voted for it.

The Democrats claim that they are “shocked” at the speed of Trump’s actions, and their media apologists claim that the Democrats are “powerless” to do anything to stop it. Both contentions are lies. Trump had said repeatedly that he would be “a dictator from day one,” and the Democrats cited these threats during the 2024

election campaign. How can they be surprised, let alone “shocked,” that Trump is doing what he said he would do?

Rather than being “powerless” to oppose Trump or “biding [their] time until public sentiment potentially turns against Trump,” as *Politico* claimed, the Democrats have made far different political calculations. They do not fear Trump’s supposed support in the population. Their main fear is the opposite: that popular resistance in the working class will erupt as Trump’s class war policies begin to take effect. There have already been protests over Trump-ordered round-ups of immigrant workers and their families. These protests will grow exponentially as it becomes clear that the entire working class is under attack.

The measures announced on Monday as a consequence of the funding pause—and only delayed slightly by the court order—will impact tens of millions of working people. Every family that has a child who is in Head Start or is receiving school lunches and breakfasts; everyone on Medicaid and other federal programs that involve grants to state and local governments or charitable agencies, will be devastated. A political explosion is inevitable.

The role of the Democratic Party, as one of the two main political instruments of the financial oligarchy, is to suppress this political opposition or divert it into safe channels that do not threaten the profits and wealth of the super-rich. The *Politico* commentary cited the concern of one Democratic strategist that “there’s a space out there for someone to fill.”

Indeed there is, and it can and must be filled by the revolutionary socialist party, the Socialist Equality Party. There is an enormous political vacuum in the United States, and internationally, between the official capitalist political system, careening towards the right and empowering outright fascists like Trump, and the vast majority of the population, the working class, which is moving into great struggles to defend jobs, living standards and democratic rights and opposing the mounting threat of global war.



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