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Photos and videos available here

Secret Service Arrests 33 People After Undocumented Immigrants and Allies Block White House for Several Hours, Protesting Biden's "First 100 Days" Without Sufficient Action on Immigration

Undocumented immigrants, who risked arrest and deportation during to participate in the demonstration, were not among the 33 ultimately arrested.

Washington, DC — On Friday, April 30, starting around 9:00 AM undocumented immigrants and allies rallied in front of the White House, obstructing traffic in the northern and western sides of Lafayette Square for over six hours, to protest broken promises from Biden administration in its first 100 days. Beginning at approximately 2:15 PM, 33 participants in the action were arrested; several undocumented immigrants, who risked arrest and potential deportation, were ultimately not among those arrested.

"This week, President Biden ended his first 100 days in office with broken promises and insufficient action for the immigrant community," said Gema Lowe, an undocumented immigrant from Michigan who initially risked arrest participatingin the action. "Biden promised a moratorium on deportations—but now he has already deported over 300,000 people. He committed to a pathway to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented immigrants—but now he has endorsed a 'piecemeal' strategy, prioritizing bills like the Dream and Promise Act that would exclude me and millions of others who have lived in this country for decades. For so many years, Democrats have said, 'That's just the way it is.' They want us to keep our heads down and be grateful. But the truth is we deserve better. That is why today I was willing to risk arrest, detention, and deportation to demand papers, not crumbs."

For several hours, the group blocked H St and and 17th St around the northern and western sides of the White House. When Secret Service agents responded on the scene, the undocumented immigrants participating in the direct action chose to move to a more secure location, given the increased risk.

While the action was still happening, Ahilan Arulanantham of the UCLA Center for Immigration Law and Policy directly asked DHS Secretary Mayorkas about the possibility of retaliation against Cosecha's undocumented activists for their participation in the direct action against President Biden, as part of a prescheduled virtual discussion. Secretary Mayorkas deflected, saying that was an "easy" question and "of course" they should not be retailed against — despite many documented cases of ICE retaliation against activists. In response, Lowe commented: "At the end of the day, we recognized that being arrested by Biden's Secret Service represented an even more extreme level of risk for the immigration participants in our action. We remained nearby while our citizen friends and

supporters continued to obstruct the space, with 33 of them being arrested to support our message of 'Papers, not crumbs!' I woke up this morning knowing that today, because I am fighting for protection and dignity for my community, I could be ending the night in jail. I woke up knowing that I could even be deported and separated from my family, because I am fighting for that protection and dignity. Even though today I made the choice to not be arrested, the truth is I still face this same risk, just like all 11 million undocumented immigrants do every day, even under Biden. That is why we took action today and said enough is enough. We can't wait another 30 years of empty promises. We need permanent protection for all, NOW."

Tomorrow, Saturday, May 1, thousands of undocumented workers and families with Movimiento Cosecha and partner organizations will mobilize to demand "Papers, Not Crumbs" from President Biden and the Democratic Party. The mobilization will begin at 10:00 AM at the ICE building (500 12th St SW #5600, Washington, DC 20536). Undocumented workers and family from across the country are expecting, with 30 buses transporting participants from 25 cities.

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Appendix: Profiles of action participants
Interviews available upon request

Participants arrested in today's action



Dorothee Benz, 55, New York, legal permanent resident from Germany

"I came to this country when I was two, during an era when legal immigration was possible, from a European country (Germany) whose immigrants don't threaten the foundational white supremacy of

the U.S. But there's no difference between me and hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients who have no path to citizenship, whose families – unlike mine – are constantly at risk of separation and were left out of the covid relief bill even though they disproportionately are essential workers who have literally kept people like me safe and fed during the last year. This is fundamentally unjust: criminalization/legalization are arbitrary and illegitimate tools of social control and, crucially, of the white nationalist project that *is* America. I can't stand by as Biden has abandoned his promise of a deportation moratorium, abandoned his promise of legislation to legalize 11 million undocumented Americans, and counsels immigrants to be patient and wait for bipartisan action and piecemeal reforms. Justice delayed is justice denied. Basta."

Gabriela Alcazar, 33, Michigan



"I am here today for my brother-in-law, for my sister and my nieces and nephews whose lives have been upended by this unjust system. I am here for all 11 million undocumented immigrants. Biden, your first 100 days are up and our community isn't going anywhere!"



Mandy Leigh, 28, Michigan, organizer with Detroit Will Breathe

Statement: “There are thousands of families in Detroit that live in perpetual fear of violence at the hands of ICE and the police. When immigrants are subjected to violence, their voices suppressed, and their families broken up it damages our whole community. I, along with the organization I work with, Detroit Will Breathe, stand with the 11 million undocumented people to demand permanent protection and the removal of the terrorist organization, ICE, from our community.”

Immigrants who risked arrest early in action



Gema Lowe, 49. An undocumented immigrant living in Michigan for almost 30 years. Community organizer, mother and grandmother.

Statement: “President Biden ended his first 100 days in office with broken promises and insufficient action for my community. Biden originally committed to a pathway to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented immigrants. Now he is ready to pursue a ‘piecemeal’ strategy instead that would exclude me and millions of others who have lived in this country for decades. We deserve better. That is why today I am willing to risk arrest, detention, and deportation to demand papers, not crumbs.”



Hector Morales, DACA recipient, 25, Indiana

Statement: “The current legislation the Democrats are pushing only focuses on a small portion of undocumented immigrants. Even though I would qualify under the current Dream and Promise Act, I am risking arrest today to tell President Biden that I won’t accept piecemeal bills that exclude and criminalize my own community members. I won’t accept these crumbs. We need permanent protection for all.”



Idalia Tinoco, 43. Formerly undocumented immigrant, now a legal permanent resident. A mother and business owner in Michigan.

Statement: “I did this action with fear, but I want to show my community that even with fear, we should fight and demand our rights.”



María del Rosario, 53. A legal permanent resident in Michigan.

“I am tired of bearing witness to the inhumane treatment that the immigrant community lives every day. We deserve to be treated justly, with dignity and respect like any human beings.”

[Not pictured]

Wendy, 24, DACA recipient

“My father was a victim of immigration system. He was deported in 2018, two weeks after my graduation. The system I believed was going to save us didn’t. Now, I am putting my body on the line and fighting for what we deserve.”