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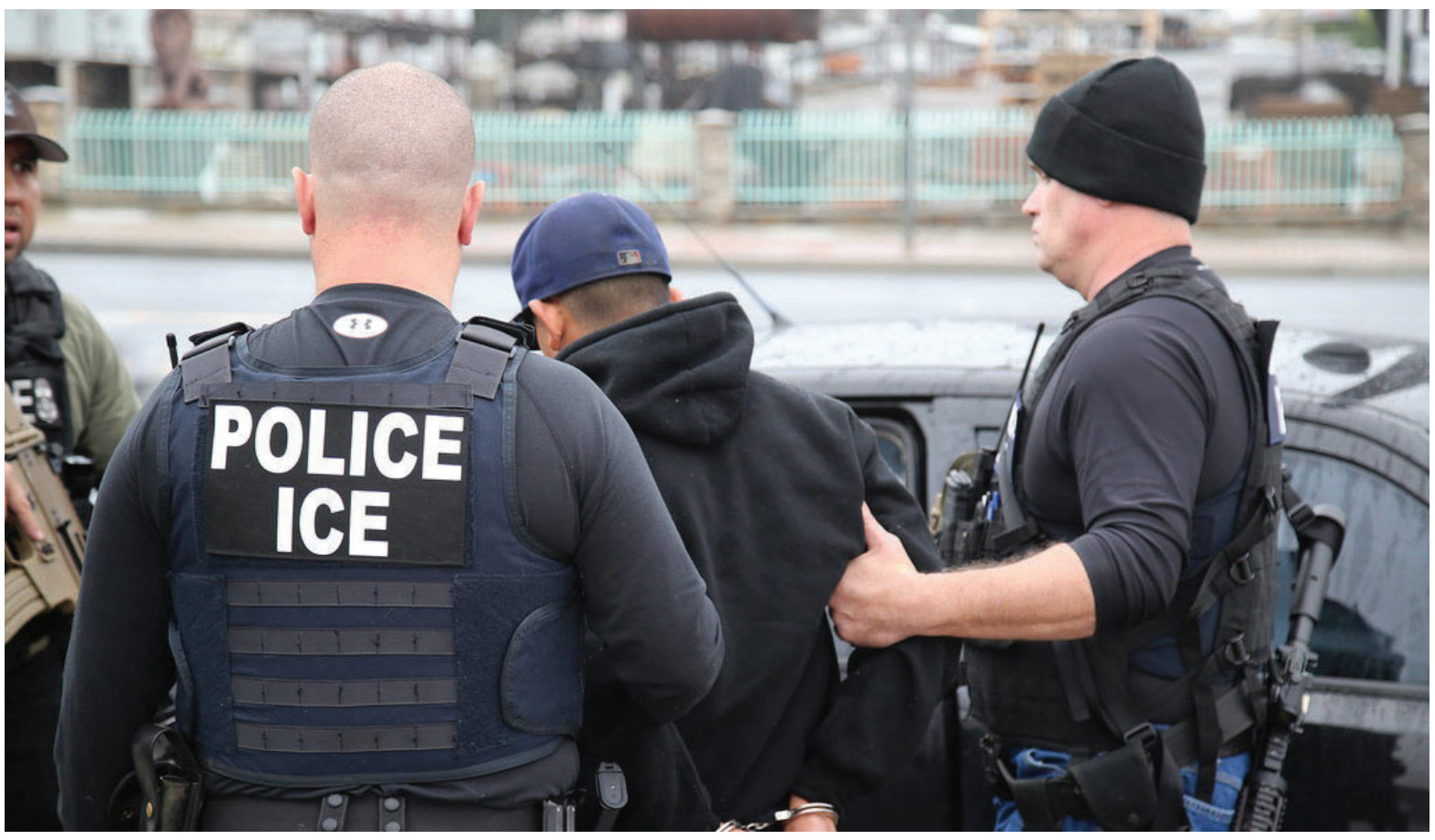


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Daily OPINION

Where accountability ends, constitutional rights die



A man is detained by two U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. In the first 500 days of President Donald Trump's second term, 52 people died in ICE custody, according to Human Rights Watch.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR.

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I'd hoped to begin this article by naming the people who have died at the hands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

But the number is too high for me to name every one of them.

In the first 500 days of Donald Trump's second term, 52 people died in ICE custody. 52 fathers, mothers, sons and daughters died in detention as of June. 52 people rotted away in detention centers. 52 people showed signs of illness and were denied medical care. 52 people died and had their deaths ignored. 52 people died in silence, and the people responsible faced no consequences.

Since Trump took office, the mortality rate in ICE custody has more than doubled. More people are dying in detention centers than ever before, and in almost every case, there is evidence of delayed care and negligence. Individuals often had worsening symptoms, a history of illnesses or were visibly succumbing to illness, and they didn't receive the medical care they needed

This is criminal negligence. This is purposeful ignorance. This is illegally ignoring the health of the people you are responsible for.

Soon it won't be 52 people. It will be 60 or 80 or 100. People are dying because ICE isn't following the law, and they are facing no repercussions.

It's not just people dying silently. It's not just people dying in the dark with no medical reports, no one notifying their families and no one giving them proper care or burial. It's also public killings.

Since the new age of immigration enforcement began, there have been at least 25 shootings involving ICE agents firing at civilians.

Just over a week ago, an ICE agent fired at a man, Oscar Belgal, with his 5-year-old son in the back seat. Almost a year ago now, ICE shot and killed Renee Good, a US citizen. They then refused to allow medical help through. Weeks later, Alex Perretti was shot and killed while attempting to help another person. They claimed he was brandishing a weapon. A few months ago, ICE shot and killed Johan Durán Guerrero, who was working here legally. They then excused the death, saying that he wasn't the target of their operation.

So, what justice has been served? In the age of technology, these deaths are videoed, posted and watched by millions. So, what justice has been obtained for the visible deaths? What comfort do the families who must watch their loved ones be shot, receive?

I say such things rhetorically, as I'm sure we all know the answer.

There are fundamental rights written into the Constitution, applicable to all who set foot into this country. There is due process. There is a right to a trial. There is a right to protest. There is a right to no cruel or unusual punishment. There is a right to no detainment without reasonable cause. If these rights are violated, there are consequences. If a death occurs at the hands of law enforcement, there is an investigation. There is justice for those who are treated unfairly.

These rights were written into the foundation of our country to protect us from tyrannical governments. You don't need to be an expert on American history to know our founding fathers were afraid of this very thing. People being denied their rights has and will always be the great threat to democracy, and that is what President Trump's administration is doing right now.

There should be consequences for this. We should expect consequences for this. Have we entered such a horrific era of American history that we have forgotten that there should be consequences for murder and corruption?

Every death that has occurred has been brushed off. Every death has been described as self-defense. Every death has been ignored.

These deaths never should have happened. These people should have been protected by the government, not killed by it. Not had their deaths covered up and excused by the state. Not been deprived of the dignity of an investigation into their killers by the same administration that claims to make their country great.

There are medical failings in the detention centers. There are ICE agents watching people die in their cells. There are shootings in the street. There are people dying in this country, documented and undocumented, and there have been no consequences.

This is illegal. This is unconstitutional. This should not be allowed to happen.

What have we become that even the most basic rights are no longer protected? What have we become that there are no trials and no due process? What have we become when government agents can murder someone in broad daylight and face no legal persecution?

A lost cause.