



Harsh Policing along the U.S. Borders

What is the issue?

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- Footages of undocumented immigrants being arrested and separated from their crying young children have generated a political storm in the U.S.
- While many of Mr. Trump's supporters have voiced against these actions, it is to be noted that the detention policy is nothing new.

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What is the situation in border detention camps?

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- The Trump administration has commissioned a zero tolerance immigrant policy and has tightened the southern border of U.S.
- This has led to heartening scenes of young children being torn from their parents and being held in cage like detention centres.
- Video and audio footages of these actions have already generated a storm and even unnerved even Trump's ardent supporters.
- Almost all senators (including from Trump's party), some major religious leaders have opposed the forced separation of kids from parents.
- The United Nations went one step further to state that these actions might amount to "psychological torture".

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Are such brutalities new?

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- Despite the current outrage, police brutality towards children and the separation of children from their parents is nothing new in the U.S.

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- **Foreigners** - Mr. Trump has merely unleashed the most comprehensive, vicious and crude manifestation the existing age old U.S. detention policy.

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- The increase in the number of detainees and the hard tactics of handcuffing undocumented migrants in front of their young crying children is what is new.

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- Notably, similar detentions have been going even in the previous regimes too, albeit away from the media light and tactful diplomatic cover-ups.

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- Many detainees in Guatemala Bay suffered the same fate, and some couldn't fight their cases due to the harsh legal conditions they had to meet.

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- **Poor U.S. children** - In low-income neighbourhoods, rather than providing an avenue for upward mobility, schools have become highly policed zones.

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- School authorities in several poorer districts routinely summon police officers to arrest children as young as six years old for misbehaviours.

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- This has strengthened racial inequality and distrust so much that the 'school to prison pipeline' has become a characteristic of social life in some areas.

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- **Bail Affordability** - Hefty fines for minor violations is also a routine affair, and the prevalent poverty implies that many violators land up in jail.

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- As bail fee is also exorbitant, poor tend to serve their entire pre-trial periods in jail - an open criminalisation of poverty.

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- Not surprisingly, there is a clear racial demography that spends more time in prisons than the others as economic divide has a racial correlation.

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- Strikingly, outrage against separation of children from parents seems missing when the poor US citizens are detained due to their inability to afford fines.

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Is the current tough crackdown on immigrants warranted?

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- Undocumented migration has continuously been reducing since 2008 and is presently at record low levels.

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- Hence, it looks like Mr. Trump is playing to his constituency by orchestrating a racial campaign through hard headed detentions.

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- Additionally, contrary to Mr. Trump's claim, the proportion of immigrants involved in crime is far lesser than native born U.S. citizenry.

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- We are in an era of increasing inequalities, which is being further aided by tax cuts for the rich and rapid automation taking away manual jobs.

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- In this context, the notion that immigrants are stealing jobs is a ploy to distract the mass fury away from the rich and affluent citizenry.

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- Nonetheless, this as a political strategy is unsustainable in the long run as the underlying economic strain is too strong to not be noticed.

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Source: The Hindu

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