

Mass Deportation 2025: A Legal and Ethical Analysis of Proposed Immigration Policies and Actions

1. Executive Summary:

The specter of mass deportation in the United States has re-emerged as a significant point of concern and debate, particularly in the context of policies proposed for 2025. Fueled by the agenda of a potential conservative administration and articulated in documents like "Project 2025," the notion of large-scale removals of undocumented immigrants raises profound questions regarding legality, ethics, practical feasibility, and the potential for widespread societal disruption. This report delves into these critical areas, analyzing the policy proposals, examining their legal and ethical underpinnings, assessing the actions undertaken in early 2025, and exploring the controversies and challenges associated with such an endeavor. Initial analysis reveals a determined push towards stricter immigration enforcement and mass deportations, driven by specific ideological objectives. These plans carry substantial legal and ethical implications, potentially infringing upon fundamental rights and causing significant social and economic upheaval.

2. Understanding Project 2025 and its Immigration Agenda:

Project 2025, a comprehensive policy blueprint crafted by the Heritage Foundation and over 100 other conservative groups, serves as a roadmap for a potential conservative administration. This extensive document, exceeding 900 pages, reflects a far-right ideology rooted in extreme Christian nationalism and aims to fundamentally reshape the federal government¹. The overarching goal of Project 2025 is to significantly enhance presidential power, embed ideologically aligned individuals within the civil service, and dismantle many of the advancements achieved by the civil rights movement over the past seven decades¹. When examining its stance on immigration, Project 2025 outlines proposals that would profoundly impact immigrant communities, weaken the national economy, and undermine established principles of due process and fundamental fairness¹. The agenda's immigration proposals are designed to align the federal government with the interests of white nationalists, the wealthy, and those driven by religious bigotry¹.

A central pillar of Project 2025's immigration agenda is the establishment of a "Nationwide Deportation Machine"¹. This involves expanding the use of "expedited removal," a process that bypasses typical judicial proceedings and is usually limited to areas near the border, to apply to immigrants anywhere in the country¹. This expansion raises serious concerns about due process, as individuals could be

deported rapidly without adequate opportunity to present their case. Furthermore, this policy could enable ICE raids in sensitive locations such as schools, hospitals, and religious institutions, creating a climate of fear and disrupting essential community services ¹.

The agenda also calls for "Militarizing the Border," advocating for the deployment of military personnel and hardware to prevent border crossings ¹. This approach includes the construction of more walls and the implementation of stricter laws to effectively shut down the border, including imposing higher hurdles for asylum seekers ¹. Such measures could lead to humanitarian crises at the border and potentially violate international obligations related to the protection of asylum seekers.

Project 2025 proposes "Expanding Immigrant 'Detention' Centers," aiming to more than double the number of immigrants detained while awaiting deportation, potentially reaching 100,000 individuals on any given day ¹. The plan also calls for making deportation mandatory for more immigrants, irrespective of whether they pose a flight risk or a threat to public safety ¹. This expansion of detention raises significant human rights concerns and would incur substantial financial costs.

Another key aspect of the agenda involves "Eliminating Popular Relief Programs and Visa Categories" ¹. While not directly stated, Project 2025's proposals would likely end protections for over half a million Dreamers and 176,000 Ukrainians. More directly, it calls for Congress to repeal all Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations, which could affect nearly 700,000 immigrants who have lived and worked in the U.S. for years ¹. The agenda also seeks to curtail or eliminate numerous categories of temporary and permanent visas, limiting legal pathways to immigration ¹. This could have detrimental effects on various sectors of the economy that rely on immigrant labor.

Project 2025 also advocates for "Mandating Misguided Work Verification Programs" by expanding E-Verify ¹. This system, intended to verify employees' eligibility to work in the U.S., has been shown to be error-prone and has disproportionately affected eligible workers, particularly people of color ¹.

Furthermore, the agenda promotes "Entangling Local and Federal Enforcement" by calling for the expansion of state and local police involvement in enforcing federal immigration laws ¹. It also proposes penalizing states and localities that do not fully cooperate with federal immigration authorities, potentially including the sharing of motor vehicle and voter registration databases ¹. This could lead to racial profiling and

erode trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement.

The Project 2025 immigration agenda is described as particularly harmful to asylum seekers and children². It aims to reinstate policies like "Remain in Mexico," which has left asylum seekers vulnerable to dangerous conditions². The agenda also advocates for ending the *Flores* settlement agreement to allow for the detention of children in jail-like conditions². Additionally, it proposes barring mixed-status families from federally subsidized housing and denying federal student loans to non-citizen or non-green card holding college students, and potentially all students attending schools offering in-state tuition to undocumented students². The long-term goal includes shifting away from family unity in the immigration system, favoring instead a focus on the "nuclear" family and highly-educated immigrants from wealthier countries².

Beyond these specific policies, Project 2025 seeks to consolidate power within the Executive branch by placing ideologues in high-ranking "Acting" positions within DHS from Day One, bypassing Senate approval². There are also concerns about potential future actions, such as invoking the Insurrection Act for military involvement in immigration enforcement and deploying CBP roving patrols and checkpoints in many major U.S. cities². The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) has highlighted ten specific ways in which Project 2025 would disproportionately and negatively impact Latino civil rights, including the establishment of a unitary executive branch and the implementation of mass deportations⁴. The proposal to reclassify civil servants as political appointees could lead to partisan implementation of public services, further increasing disparities⁴. The planned repeal of parts of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and the mandatory detention of unauthorized migrants caught within the U.S. interior are also highlighted as particularly harmful⁴.

3. Legal Challenges and Due Process Concerns:

The implementation of mass deportations on the scale envisioned by Project 2025 and discussed in 2025 faces significant legal hurdles, particularly concerning due process rights and international obligations. The 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, ratified by the U.S., and the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980, which incorporated the Protocol into domestic law, establish the country's commitment to protecting refugees fleeing persecution⁵. Mass deportations that do not adequately screen for asylum claims and potentially return individuals to countries where they face a well-founded fear of persecution could violate the principle of *non-refoulement* enshrined in these legal instruments⁵.

The Supreme Court has consistently affirmed that even immigrants who have entered

the U.S. without authorization are entitled to due process in deportation proceedings⁶. This generally entails the right to an individual hearing before an immigration judge where they can present their case and seek any available forms of relief. The expansion of "expedited removal" under Project 2025 and the policies enacted in 2025 directly challenge this fundamental right¹. By allowing for rapid deportation without a full hearing, this process significantly increases the risk of wrongful deportations, including those of individuals with legitimate asylum claims or other legal bases to remain in the U.S.⁷. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has criticized the expansion of expedited deportation, stating that it leads to the deportation of individuals without due process and without the opportunity to demonstrate their eligibility to remain in the country⁷.

The invocation of the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 in 2025 to expedite the deportation of certain groups, such as Venezuelan gang members, has also faced legal scrutiny⁸. This law, originally intended for wartime, grants the president broad authority over non-citizens deemed a threat during times of conflict. The application of this act to the situation at the border has been legally challenged, with a federal judge even issuing a temporary block on deportations carried out under its authority⁹. This judicial intervention underscores the legal questions surrounding the administration's interpretation of an "invasion" in the context of immigration and the extent of executive power in such situations.

Genocide Watch has raised the alarm that mass deportations could potentially constitute "crimes against humanity" under international law⁵. While this is a strong assertion, it highlights the extreme gravity of policies that aim to forcibly remove millions of people from a country where many have established lives and deep community ties.

Furthermore, legal challenges have been filed against specific immigration policies implemented in 2025, including those related to the presidential proclamation declaring an "invasion" at the southern border¹². These legal actions indicate a sustained effort to hold the administration accountable to existing immigration laws and constitutional principles.

4. Ethical and Human Rights Ramifications:

Beyond the legal challenges, the prospect of mass deportations in 2025 raises profound ethical and human rights concerns. One of the most significant ramifications would be the widespread separation of families². Millions of U.S. citizen children reside in households with at least one undocumented parent. The deportation of these parents would inflict immense emotional distress and economic hardship on

these families, potentially leading to long-term trauma for children ¹⁵.

The climate of fear and uncertainty generated by mass deportation efforts can severely impact the health and well-being of immigrant families, regardless of their legal status ¹³. Fear of detention and deportation can deter individuals from seeking necessary medical care, enrolling their children in school, or participating in other essential community activities, leading to adverse public health outcomes ¹³.

The targeting of sensitive locations like schools, hospitals, and churches for immigration enforcement, as enabled by the rescission of previous policies in 2025, presents serious ethical concerns ¹. These are spaces where individuals should feel safe and have unimpeded access to vital services. Allowing ICE agents to conduct enforcement actions in these areas undermines this principle and can create a chilling effect, preventing vulnerable populations from seeking the care and support they need ¹³.

The potential for increased and prolonged detention of children under mass deportation scenarios is particularly troubling from an ethical standpoint ². Research has consistently shown that detaining children, especially for extended periods and in inadequate conditions, can cause significant psychological and physical harm ¹⁵. Proposals to end the *Flores* settlement agreement, which sets standards for the treatment and release of detained migrant children, raise grave concerns about the well-being of this vulnerable population ².

The rhetoric employed by proponents of mass deportation, often labeling all undocumented immigrants as "criminals," is ethically problematic ¹³. This characterization is inaccurate, as the majority of deportations are for civil immigration violations, not serious criminal offenses ¹³. This type of language serves to dehumanize immigrants, fostering prejudice and justifying harsh and discriminatory treatment ¹³.

From a religious perspective, particularly within the Catholic tradition, mass deportation plans raise profound moral concerns ²¹. These concerns include the undermining of human dignity, the violation of the right to seek asylum, the harm to family unity and the common good, and the risk of creating a police state ²¹. Pope Francis himself has spoken out against those who systematically work to drive away migrants, calling such actions a grave sin ²¹. Religious teachings often emphasize the moral imperative to welcome the stranger and uphold the inherent dignity of all individuals, regardless of their immigration status ²².

5. Mass Deportation in Action: Policies and Events of 2025:

The early months of 2025 witnessed a flurry of executive actions and policy changes signaling a strong commitment to increased immigration enforcement. President Trump issued several executive orders in January 2025, including a declaration of a national emergency at the southern border¹². This declaration allows for the allocation of federal funding towards border security measures and potentially the deployment of armed forces to the region¹⁸. Another significant executive order directed the Secretary of DHS to detain, to the fullest extent permitted by law, all aliens apprehended for violations of immigration law pending the outcome of their removal proceedings¹². This indicates a move towards a policy of mandatory detention for a broader range of immigration violations.

A directive issued by the Acting Secretary of the DHS in January 2025 rescinded the Biden administration's policy restricting immigration enforcement in or near "protected areas"¹⁷. This policy change granted ICE agents the authority to conduct enforcement actions in sensitive locations such as hospitals, schools, and churches¹⁸. This decision has been widely criticized for creating fear within immigrant communities and potentially deterring access to essential services¹⁷.

ICE activity in the interior of the U.S. saw a notable increase in the initial period of the Trump administration in 2025. During the first 50 days, ICE made 32,809 arrests²⁵. February alone accounted for approximately 18,000 arrests²⁵. These figures represent a significant escalation of interior enforcement efforts, likely leading to increased anxiety and disruption within immigrant communities across the country.

The practice of family detention was also resumed in 2025, with reports of ICE refitting detention facilities in Texas to hold migrant families with children²⁵. Advocacy groups have expressed serious concerns about this development, given the well-documented negative impacts of detention on the well-being of children and families²⁵.

The administration also implemented new registry requirements for undocumented immigrants and launched a "self-deportation" app in March 2025²⁶. The registry rule mandates that non-citizens who entered the U.S. without authorization register with the federal government or face potential criminal prosecution. The "self-deportation" app encourages voluntary departure as part of a broader advertising campaign²⁶. These measures suggest an attempt to increase the number of deportations through both mandatory registration and incentivized voluntary departures.

In a controversial move, the U.S. began using military planes to carry out deportation flights to countries such as Ecuador, Guatemala, India, and Peru in early 2025⁸. This

marked the first instance of U.S. military aircraft being used for deportation purposes. Some countries, like Mexico, have reportedly refused to allow U.S. military deportation flights in their airspace ²⁷.

Key Immigration Enforcement Actions in Early 2025

Date	Action	Key Provisions	Legal Challenges/Controversies
January 20, 2025	Presidential Proclamation: "Guaranteeing the States Protection Against Invasion"	Suspends entry of aliens at the southern border deemed to be part of an "invasion." Directs DHS to repel, repatriate, or remove such aliens.	Lawsuit filed on February 3, 2025, asserting violations of immigration laws and the Administrative Procedure Act ¹² .
January 20, 2025	Executive Order: "Securing Our Borders"	Directs the Secretary of DHS to detain aliens apprehended for immigration violations to the fullest extent permitted by law ¹² .	Potential strain on detention capacity and resources ¹⁶ .
January 21, 2025	DHS Directive	Ends Biden administration policy restricting immigration enforcement in or near "protected areas," granting ICE authority to enter sensitive locations ¹⁷ .	Concerns about creating fear in immigrant communities and deterring access to essential services ¹⁷ .
February 2025	Increased ICE Arrests	ICE made approximately 18,000 arrests in February, contributing to a total of 32,809 in the first 50 days of the	Potential for increased disruption and fear within immigrant communities ²⁶ .

		administration ²⁵ .	
March 2025	Reopening of Family Detention Facilities	ICE reportedly refitting facilities in Texas to hold migrant families with children ²⁵ .	Alarms raised by advocacy groups regarding the well-being of children and families in detention ²⁶ .
March 12, 2025	Interim Final Rule: Registry Requirement	Mandates that non-citizens who entered the U.S. without a visa register with the federal government using Form G-325R, facing potential criminal prosecution for non-compliance ²⁶ .	Concerns about potential coercion and the creation of a database for enforcement purposes ²⁶ .
March 2025	Launch of CBP Home App	Rebranded version of CBP One app includes a "self-deportation" feature, encouraging undocumented immigrants to voluntarily leave the U.S. as part of a \$200 million advertising campaign ²⁶ .	Seen as an effort to circumvent traditional deportation processes ²⁶ .
Early 2025	Use of Military Planes for Deportation	U.S. military aircraft used to deport individuals to countries including Ecuador, Guatemala, India, and Peru ⁸ .	Controversial move, marking the first time U.S. military aircraft used for deportations; some countries refused military flights ²⁷ .

6. Scandals and Controversies Surrounding Deportation Efforts:

The deportation efforts in early 2025 were not without significant controversy. In

January 2025, the President of Colombia barred two U.S. military planes carrying deported Colombian nationals from landing in the country²⁸. President Gustavo Petro demanded that the deportees be treated with dignity and transported on civilian aircraft²⁸. This action led to diplomatic tensions, with both Trump and Petro reportedly threatening each other with tariffs²⁸. Ultimately, U.S. officials had to assure Colombian authorities that the deportees would not be handcuffed or photographed upon arrival and would be escorted by DHS officials rather than military personnel, leading to Colombia agreeing to allow the planes to land²⁸. This incident highlighted the diplomatic challenges and human rights considerations involved in deportation flights.

The Trump administration's consideration of potentially reopening the Guantanamo Bay detention camp to incarcerate migrants sparked further controversy⁸. Guantanamo Bay has a history of alleged human rights abuses, and the financial cost of operating the facility is exorbitant¹¹. Legal experts also pointed out that migrants held at Guantanamo would likely be entitled to the same legal rights as U.S. residents, potentially negating any perceived advantages of using the facility for immigration detention¹¹.

Reports also emerged in March 2025 of the Trump administration transferring hundreds of immigrants to El Salvador and Honduras despite a federal judge's order to halt deportations under the Alien Enemies Act⁹. This raised serious questions about the administration's respect for judicial rulings and the protection of the rights of the individuals being deported¹⁰. The judge questioned the administration about its failure to act on the court order⁹.

Furthermore, reports detailed horrific and abusive conditions at migrant detention facilities in early 2025⁸. Overcrowding led to shortages of basic necessities such as food, clothing, and hygiene products²⁵. These reports underscore the potential for humanitarian crises within the detention system, especially if the number of detainees were to increase dramatically under mass deportation policies.

7. The Feasibility and Economic Impact of Mass Deportation:

Implementing mass deportations on the scale discussed in 2025 presents immense logistical challenges. Arresting, detaining, and deporting millions of undocumented immigrants would require a massive expansion of the existing immigration enforcement infrastructure⁶. This would necessitate a significant increase in the number of ICE agents, detention facilities, immigration judges, and support staff. Estimates suggest that carrying out over 13 million arrests could require between 220,000 and 409,000 new government employees and law enforcement officers¹⁶. Even deporting one million people per year would necessitate hiring tens of thousands

of new ICE agents ¹⁶.

The financial costs associated with such an undertaking would be staggering. Estimates for deporting all undocumented immigrants range from hundreds of billions to nearly a trillion dollars ⁶. A one-time operation to deport over 13 million people has been estimated to cost at least \$315 billion, covering expenses for arrests, detention, legal processing, and removals ¹⁶. These enormous expenditures could divert funds from other critical government programs and place a significant strain on federal and state budgets ²⁹.

Mass deportations would also likely have severe negative impacts on the U.S. economy ¹. Undocumented immigrants play a vital role in various sectors, particularly agriculture, construction, and hospitality ¹⁶. The removal of millions of these workers would likely lead to significant labor shortages in these industries, potentially reducing output, increasing production costs, and raising prices for consumers ²⁹. For example, in agriculture, where a large percentage of farmworkers are undocumented, mass deportations could severely disrupt the food supply chain ²⁹.

Beyond specific industries, mass deportations could lead to a substantial reduction in the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) and tax revenues ¹⁶. Undocumented immigrant households contribute billions of dollars in taxes each year ¹⁶. Removing these individuals from the economy would not only reduce the labor force but also decrease the consumer base and overall economic activity ²⁹. Studies have estimated that mass deportations could shrink the U.S. economy by several percentage points ¹⁶.

The negative economic consequences would likely extend beyond immigrants themselves. Research suggests that past deportation efforts have harmed U.S.-born workers through job losses and lower wages ³⁰. The disruption of labor markets and reduced consumption resulting from mass deportations could negatively affect citizens and legal residents across various income and skill levels ³⁰.

8. Perspectives on Mass Deportation: A Polarized Debate:

The idea of mass deportation elicits strongly opposing viewpoints. Proponents often argue that it is necessary for national security and to protect American workers ²⁰. They believe that removing undocumented immigrants would open up job opportunities for U.S. citizens and drive up wages, particularly for working-class individuals ²¹. Some also argue that strict immigration enforcement is essential for maintaining the rule of law and preventing potential threats to national security ²⁰.

Conversely, opponents of mass deportation emphasize the significant economic

damage it would cause, the violation of human rights, and the ethical concerns associated with such policies ¹⁶. They point to the vital role that immigrants play in the U.S. economy and warn of the severe labor shortages and economic decline that could result from mass removals ¹⁶. Ethical arguments often center on the human cost of family separation, the potential for human rights abuses during enforcement, and the moral obligation to treat all individuals with dignity and respect ²¹.

Historical precedents for mass deportations in the U.S., such as "Operation Wetback" in the 1950s, offer a cautionary tale ⁷. While this operation resulted in the deportation of a significant number of people, it was also marked by human rights violations and failed to achieve its long-term goal of curbing irregular immigration ⁷. These historical experiences suggest that mass deportations are not only ethically problematic but also may not be an effective solution to immigration challenges ⁷.

Ultimately, the debate over mass deportation reflects fundamentally different perspectives on the role and value of immigrants in American society and the appropriate balance between border security and humanitarian concerns ¹⁶.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The analysis of proposed immigration policies and actions in 2025 reveals serious legal, ethical, and practical concerns surrounding the prospect of mass deportations. The agenda outlined in Project 2025 and the actions undertaken in early 2025 signal a strong push towards stricter enforcement and large-scale removals, which carry significant risks of human rights violations, economic disruption, and diplomatic challenges. The expansion of expedited removal, the invocation of wartime legislation for immigration enforcement, and the targeting of sensitive locations raise profound questions about due process and fundamental rights. The immense logistical and financial burdens associated with mass deportations, coupled with the potential for severe negative impacts on the U.S. economy, further underscore the impracticality and detrimental consequences of such an approach.

Given these findings, several recommendations are warranted:

- Policymakers should prioritize comprehensive immigration reform that includes pathways to legal status for long-term undocumented residents. This approach would be more economically sound and humane than mass deportations.
- It is crucial to uphold due process rights for all individuals facing deportation, ensuring access to legal counsel and fair hearings. The expansion of expedited removal should be reconsidered due to its inherent risks to these rights.
- The practice of family detention should be ended, and the rights and well-being

of migrant children must be protected in accordance with legal and ethical standards.

- The U.S. should reaffirm its commitment to international refugee laws and asylum protections, ensuring that individuals fleeing persecution have a fair opportunity to seek safety.
- A more humane and just approach to immigration enforcement is needed, one that respects human dignity, upholds community well-being, and considers the long-term social and economic consequences of immigration policies.

Moving forward, it is imperative that policymakers engage in a thoughtful and evidence-based discussion about immigration, moving away from divisive rhetoric and towards solutions that are both effective and aligned with the fundamental values of justice and human rights.

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