

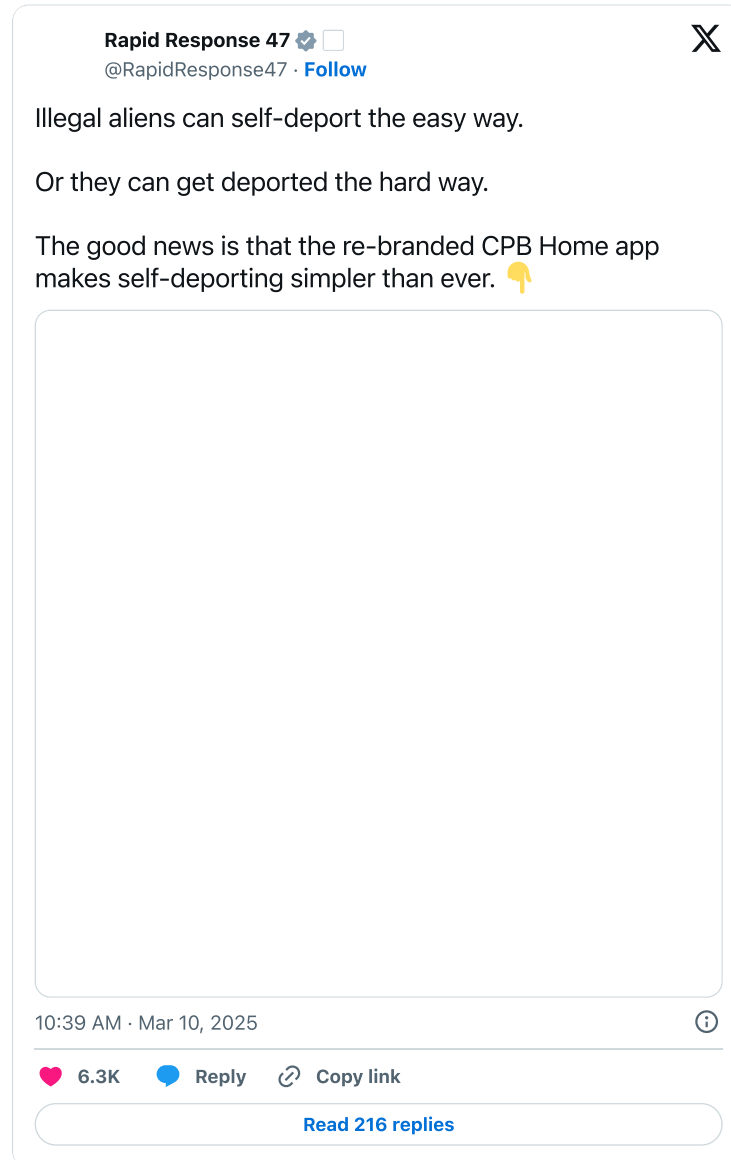
US rebrands immigration app to CBP Home with 'self-deport' function

A photograph showing two individuals from a high angle, holding up their smartphones. Both screens display the official seal of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The person on the left is wearing a dark shirt and a gold chain, while the person on the right is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt. They are standing on a paved surface, and the legs and feet of other people are visible in the background.

the zone with messaging that creates fear among immigrant communities while currying favor with his base.”

The app’s relaunch also raises privacy concerns, Rivera said. Experts had long warned that the original CBP One app, which collected biometric data and photos, had allowed for a massive expansion of government databases of noncitizens’ photos and other biographic information.

The rebranding of the app “is also a chilling example of how easily tools like CBP One, which collected photos and other sensitive personal information, can be weaponized to surveil and punish”, Rivera said.



Trump had built his presidential campaign on a promise of “mass deportations” of undocumented immigrants. His administration has already moved to cancel several legal pathways for immigrants to enter the US, categorically banning asylum at the US borders, terminating private sponsorship programs that allowed Americans to financially support certain people seeking to immigrate and suspending the US’s refugee resettlement program.

When the administration cancelled the CBP One app, about 30,000 people waiting in Mexico with scheduled appointments with US immigration officials lost them, and were left in limbo. The app was initially launched by the Trump administration during Trump’s first term, as a way to arrange a number of immigration services.

In 2023, Joe Biden's administration expanded the app's use. Seeking to limit the arrival of asylum seekers at the border, Biden made it all but mandatory to use the app to schedule appointments to make a claim for asylum - and allowed just 1,450 appointments a day, even though thousands more were arriving at the border daily.

Human rights groups and immigration lawyers had criticized the app, pointing to glitches, language issues and racial biases in its [facial recognition](#) features. Forcing migrants to use the app and wait in Mexico for appointments with immigration officials had the effect of stranding vulnerable groups in Mexico and enriching organized crime groups, a [report from Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW) found. But Trump and his allies had characterized the app as too permissive, conversely - and falsely - claiming it fast-tracked entry into the US, and promised to end the system.

At this dangerous moment for dissent

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When the military is deployed to quell overwhelmingly peaceful protest, when elected officials of the opposing party are arrested or handcuffed, when student activists are jailed and deported, and when a wide range of civic institutions - non-profits, law firms, universities, news outlets, the arts, the civil service, scientists - are targeted and penalized by the federal government, it's hard to avoid the conclusion that our core freedoms are disappearing before our eyes - and democracy itself is slipping away.

In any country on the cusp of authoritarianism, the role of the press as an engine of scrutiny, truth and accountability becomes increasingly critical. At the Guardian, we see it as our job not only to report on the suppression of dissenting voices, but to make sure those voices are heard.

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Betsy Reed
Editor, Guardian US

