

A federal judge in Los Angeles ordered the Trump administration to stop carrying out immigration sweeps in which she said federal agents have been indiscriminately arresting people across southern California without reasonable suspicion that they're in the country illegally.

Since early June, agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Border Patrol and other federal agencies have been roving Los Angeles and surrounding counties arresting thousands of people in what civil rights lawyers characterized in a lawsuit last week as an unconstitutional and "extraordinary campaign of targeting people based on nothing more than the color of their skin."

In [her order](#), Judge Maame Ewusi-Mensah Frimpong, of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, said there is "a mountain of evidence" to support the claim that agents are arresting people solely based on their race, accents, or the work they're engaged in, in violation of the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable government seizure.

"The seizures at issue occurred unlawfully," Frimpong wrote.

She issued two temporary restraining orders — one prohibiting immigration agents from stopping people without reasonable suspicion that they're in the country illegally, and the other requiring agents to give people they arrest immediate access to lawyers. The orders, which apply to Los Angeles and six surrounding counties, are temporary while the case moves forward. But they could severely restrict the Trump administration's ability to continue carrying out the raids that have sown fear and terror in immigrant and Latino neighborhoods since they started on June 6.

"It's an extraordinary victory," said Mark Rosenbaum, a senior lawyer with Public Counsel, one of the legal advocacy groups that filed the suit. "It is a complete repudiation of the racial profiling tactics and the denial of access to lawyers that the administration has utilized, and it means that the rule of law is back in Los Angeles."

In a statement, Department of Homeland Security spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin criticized the ruling.

"A district judge is undermining the will of the American people," McLaughlin said. "America's brave men and women are removing murderers, MS-13 gang members, pedophiles, rapists — truly the worst of the worst from Golden State communities. Law and order will prevail."

But the ruling is the latest potential roadblock for President Trump as he escalates his immigration crackdown by [focusing on large, Democratic-run cities](#) whose leaders he's accused of trying to sabotage his efforts to carry out his mass deportation plans.

It came a little more than a week after Public Counsel, the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups filed an emergency [class action lawsuit](#) alleging that ICE and Border Patrol agents are engaged in widespread racial profiling, arresting people they encounter in public solely because they have brown skin or because they're doing work often done by immigrants.

Since early June, agents have repeatedly raided known hubs for Latino workers, including car washes, day laborer gathering spots, and street vendor corners. They've also pulled people who appear to be Latino out of their cars, and picked them up from bus stops and on sidewalks. They've arrested immigrants without legal status and U.S. citizens alike. Many of the arrests [have been filmed](#) by bystanders and posted to social media.

In a sworn declaration, the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit, Pedro Vasquez Perdomo, said that on June 18, he and co-workers were sitting at a bus stop waiting for their ride to a construction job when armed, masked agents in plain clothes poured out of several unmarked cars and ran toward them. Vasquez Perdomo said he was afraid and tried to move away. The men grabbed and handcuffed him before ever asking for his identification, he said. He was arrested, detained for three weeks, and while now released, is facing deportation.

He said he was never told why he was being arrested or informed of any warrant against him.

"I think that I was arrested that day at the bus stop because of how I look," he said. "I was sitting with other workers and we all look Hispanic and were wearing construction work clothes."

In a hearing at a downtown federal courthouse on Thursday, ACLU attorney Mohammad Tajsar argued that pressure to drive up immigration arrests has led agents to disregard legal and constitutional limits on their authority. In order to stop someone in public and arrest them without a warrant, an immigration agent must [at least have "reasonable suspicion"](#) that they're in the country illegally. Federal courts have ruled a person's appearance alone is not enough.

But Tajsar pointed Judge Frimpong to numerous videos of recent immigration raids, press reports, and sworn declarations from Vasquez Perdomo and other people swept up that he said prove federal agents are detaining people who look Latino on the assumption that they're immigrants, even though they know nothing else about them.

"They're engaging in roving patrols in which they're stopping people first and asking questions later," Tajsar said. "They're not going to admit this, but the evidence is clear. They're looking at race."

Sean Skedzielewski, an attorney for the U.S. Justice Department, denied that.

"There's no documented evidence of agents deciding to ignore the law or just pick people up because of race," he told the judge. "That kind of conduct is just not happening."

Skedzielewski said agents out on patrol are instead trained to consider "the totality of circumstances," which can include considering someone's appearance along with other factors like the location of a stop, their workplace, or whether a person gets nervous when encountering an agent.

"What might seem like an arbitrary stop that comes out of nowhere," he said, "agents are performing work in the field all the time before these interactions occur. Prior surveillance of the area, of that person, of their interactions – that

the person being stopped might be totally unaware of – are informing the agents' decisions to approach in the first place."

Judge Frimpong said during Thursday's hearing that she was skeptical of the government's general assurances that immigration agents are not stopping and arresting people arbitrarily.

"What they are considering should be things that give them reasonable suspicion that this person does not have status, and I'm not seeing that," the judge said. She said the government could have been more convincing by explaining the specific reasons that agents arrested Vasquez Perdomo or several other plaintiffs in the case. But it chose not to do that.

In their own declarations, four other plaintiffs, including U.S. citizens, described similar encounters with hard-charging agents who they said detained or arrested them before asking any questions.

Whether immigration agents will scale back their aggressive tactics in response to the judge's order is unclear. Attorneys for the civil rights groups have said it will be the government's responsibility to ensure its agents are following the law and the Constitution as they continue their immigration enforcement operations. But lawyers also said they'll aggressively enforce the judge's order in court if they think the government is failing to comply.