



Local governments across U.S. signal they won't aid Trump migrant crackdown

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Brian Mann



Minneapolis police chief Brian O'Hara speaks at a press conference on June 16, 2023 at the U.S. District Court building in Minneapolis.

The Washington Post/Getty Images

A growing number of cities, states, police departments, school districts and other local governments are signaling they won't cooperate with what Trump administration officials are describing as the largest migrant deportation effort in U.S. history.

"The Omaha police department has no plans to participate in any raids," said Chief Todd Schmaderer, who heads the Omaha, Nebraska police department [in a video posted on Youtube](#). He added that local officers "do not and will not" stop people to check their legal status.

Officials with the Department of Homeland Security say they've launched efforts nationally to identify, detain and deport far more migrants without legal status, including some allowed into the U.S. by the Biden administration. DHS officials also say their agents are now free to conduct raids at churches and schools, canceling guidelines that made "sensitive" areas off-limits.

Appearing in the same video, Omaha's Republican Mayor Jean Stothert said threats of a nationwide immigration crackdown are causing "concern and fear" in her community. "Enforcing immigration law is the responsibility of federal law enforcement agencies, not the Omaha police department," she said.



POLITICS

Trump administration strips schools, churches of immigration enforcement protections

Omaha officials aren't alone. Leaders in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City and other communities have made it clear they'll [play no role aiding any round-ups](#) of migrants without legal status – and may actively oppose them with lawsuits and other efforts.

"It would have a very chilling effect on our ability to provide public safety in the city if people were afraid to call the Minneapolis police because they think we're going to call Immigration on them," said Minneapolis police Chief Brian O'Hara in an [interview with MPR News](#).

At an event last week in Grand Prairie, Texas, police Chief Daniel Scesney said his department also won't support immigration sweeps. "My officers would not be using their time efficiently if they were driving around trying to find people who might have been born in another place," [Scesney said](#).

Other cities publicly opposed some or all of the federal crackdown:

- Denver's city government [posted an editorial this week on its official website](#) describing the federal immigration crackdown as "a calamity." Mayor Mike Johnson, a Democrat, said it's likely the city will join lawsuits aimed at protecting migrant rights.
- The school district in Bridgeport, Connecticut issued a statement saying U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents will be denied access to school buildings, buses or events without permission from officials. "Every student... regardless of their immigration status has the right to feel secure and supported," said interim Superintendent Royce Avery.
- In November, the city of Los Angeles [passed an ordinance](#) that prohibited use of

city resources in immigration enforcement efforts while limiting information sharing with federal immigration authorities.

- At a [gathering Wednesday in New York City](#), Mayor Eric Adams, a former police officer, said city officials would "stand up for all New Yorkers, documented or undocumented" and "make sure you get the services you deserve."
- In El Paso, Texas, Mayor Renard Johnson, who describes himself as nonpartisan, criticized Trump's immigration plans to deploy U.S. troops along the southern border, which he described as "very safe." At a public meeting this week, Renard spoke to migrant families: "You can live in peace in our communities, you can go to the schools, you can go to the churches, and you're going to be okay."

Before President Trump took office, many local jurisdictions around the U.S. passed measures strictly limiting cooperation with U.S. immigration authorities. The Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for tighter restrictions on migrants entering the U.S., identified [13 states and more than 200 cities and counties](#) with some form of "sanctuary" law or ordinance protecting migrants.



NATIONAL

DOJ threatens to prosecute local officials for resisting immigration enforcement

Some cities have embraced Trump's migrant deportation plan. Huntington Beach, California, passed a measure this week declaring the community a "non-sanctuary city." [In a statement, Mayor Pat Burns](#), a Republican, blasted other California officials for "subverting our federal government's enforcement of our immigration laws."

Trump administration officials have made it clear they plan to pressure local governments that don't cooperate. A [Justice Department memo](#) distributed this week said state and local officials could face prosecution if they fail to aid enforcement efforts.

"Federal law prohibits state and local actors from resisting, obstructing, and otherwise failing to comply with lawful immigration-related commands or requests," the memo states, raising the possibility of charges for harboring immigrants without legal status or for failing to share information with immigration authorities.



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