



The Department of Justice is stepping up its involvement in the detention and deportation machine. On March 30th, Attorney General Sessions announced an [expansion of the Institutional Hearing Program](#). On April 11, he [announced plans](#) to devote even more resources to criminally prosecuting people for immigration-related offenses. Both are part of a larger effort to criminalize immigrants and the fight for immigrant rights—to create concrete policies to match Trump’s nativist anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Increased Prosecutions:

This week, AG Sessions directed federal prosecutors to “increase [their] efforts” to prosecute people for several categories of offenses including: harboring and transporting immigrants, improper entry and re-entry, identity theft, document fraud or “assaulting, resisting or impeding officers” doing immigration enforcement.

Things to know:

- This is on top of already [astoundingly high numbers of prosecutions](#)—in 2016, 52% of all federal criminal prosecutions were for immigration-related offenses.
- Most of the improper entry and reentry prosecutions are completely devoid of due process. For example, in Operation Streamline, people appear before a judge as a group without a chance to consult with an attorney ahead of time.
- “Border Security” goes national: Every single District, regardless of its proximity to an actual border, is directed to name a Border Security Coordinator
- The specific attention on “harboring and transporting immigrants”, and on “impeding” officers conducting immigrant enforcement is likely meant to have a chilling effect on growing community defense efforts.

Institutional Hearing Program (IHP):

IHP moves someone’s removal proceedings forward while they are still serving a criminal sentence, in order to deport them more quickly. AG Sessions has been explicit about this; he does not describe the program as expediting someone’s immigration proceedings, but rather as expediting their deportation.

Things to know:

- Many people processed through IHP will have viable claims for relief from deportation; this number will increase as more and more people (including asylum-seekers) serve time for improper entry.
- But winning the relief is, *by design*, almost impossible. [Only 9% of immigrants in IHP had legal representation](#), compared to 37% of all adults facing deportation.
- Transparency is going to be an even bigger problem than it was already. So far, DOJ has refused to name the 20 facilities to which the program is being expanded.

How increased prosecutions and IHP work together:

In order to justify violent and unconstitutional immigrant enforcement tactics, suppress dissent and score political points, the Trump Administration is telling the American public that immigrants are criminals. Then, they are pursuing criminal prosecutions against those individuals in order to manufacture statistics out of thin air to support their claims. After being convicted in speedy, due-process-free proceedings, immigrants will undergo removal proceedings while they are serving their criminal sentence through IHP in order to meet the Administration’s other goal of deporting as many people as quickly as possible. In this way, each recent DOJ announcement deepens the impact of the other.