



Anti-ICE protesters jailed for decades

Description

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Posters with 'Free XYZ' line a wall and one woman is holding 'Free Rowan Gibson'. They are part of a protest outside an [Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#) (ICE) detention centre last July.

Journalist Mehdi Hasan called the sentences "insane" and noted the hypocrisy and authoritarian nature of the punishments.

Protesters Accused of Antifa Ties Sentenced to Up to 100 Years in ICE Attack
<https://t.co/7eMN3ohmDM> via [@NYTimes](#)

Insane sentences. Same people who protested at 5 or 10 yr sentences for Jan 6 rioters will say nothing about this. Oh, the hypocrisy. Authoritarian for thee, not me.

Mehdi Hasan (@mehdirhasan) [June 23, 2026](#)

A total of [eight people were sentenced](#) yesterday in Fort Worth, Texas, while three more defendants await their fate.

- Savanna Batten, Zachary Evetts, Autumn Hill, Meagan Morris and Elizabeth Soto each got 50 years.
- Maricela Rueda got 70 years.
- Daniel Rolando Sanchez Estrada got 30 years for hiding political literature, even though he wasn't at the protest.
- Benjamin Hanil Song got 100 years.

ICE protesters' families 'stunned' at harsh sentences

Support the [Prairieland Defendants](#) Group [wrote](#)

Family members and supporters, who sat stunned as US District Judges, Mark Pittman and Reed O'Connor, delivered sentences ranging from 30-100 years in prison, called the punishment cruel, callous and starkly disproportionate to the defendants' actions.

In a rally and press conference held after the sentencing, supporters expressed defiance and vowed to continue fighting for the Prairieland defendants' freedom.

The group explained that the Prairieland cases involve 22 people charged with both state and federal charges. The charges stem from a noise demonstration in solidarity with detainees at the Prairieland ICE Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas, on 4 July last year.

After the protest, an officer with the Alvarado Police Department became involved in an exchange of gunfire soon after arrival. The officer allegedly sustained minor injuries and was reportedly released from the hospital shortly afterwards, but authorities have never provided hospital records to justify these claims.

Alvarado police arrested 10 people that night. More were arrested over the following months.

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Song's statement

The most severely punished defendant, Hanil Song, received 100 years. He attempted to protect a fleeing protester from what they described as an imminent threat of being shot by law enforcement. In a [statement](#) Song wrote that he fired at an officer after watching them point a gun at the back of a fleeing, unarmed protester.

Song said he was "terrified" and used the minimum force possible to stop what looked like another imminent killing. He said he never intended to hurt anyone and was "grateful" no one died.

He also pointed to history, citing a speech by white supremacist, Senator "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman, from 1895, who bragged about taking power "by fraud and violence". A pattern, Song said, is repeating itself today as the US government uses injustice to silence dissent and make an example out of ordinary people.

Song said:

That history matters because injustice has always been dangerous. It does not only harm the person standing in court. It spreads. It teaches people to be afraid. It teaches people that the government can decide who is guilty first and look for reasons afterward.

First, they covered up and hid evidence.

Second, they banned every Black juror so that no one would question the police.

Third, they told me I had no right to protect myself or anyone else and they told me I wasn't even allowed to say the word: self-defense.

Poignantly, Song asked what kind of people would not oppose the hate, war, genocide, and concentration camps the Nazis brought upon the world.

Insane sentences for the sanest people, it seems.

Disparity with 6 January rioters

Alec Karakatsanis, an American civil rights lawyer, remarked that sentences given out to the Texas anti-ICE protesters were a threat to a democratic society.

He pointed out that 6 January rioters were not given such harsh sentences.

He said:

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One of the most dangerous and common forms of unconstitutional repression of the left is when the government takes one criminal act and exponentially expands liability for it through the unconstitutional targeting of peripheral people based on their political values using legal mechanisms designed to give the state maximum discretion to crush or to pardon whoever it wants.

The sentences handed down today are a huge threat to the possibility of a democratic society. The prosecution is rife with constitutional violations, but 30 years in prison (more than anyone for January 6) for moving some magazines? 50 years in prison even for those not involved?!

â?? Alec Karakatsanis (@equalityAlec) [June 23, 2026](#)

Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib said that the sentences were a travesty and totally unjustified.

She said:

Americans hate the fascist Trump regime, so the only way they can try to cling to power is brute force. NSPM-7 is a grave threat to all of us and more bullshit â??terrorismâ?? charges like these are coming.

[NSPM-7](#) is the National Security Presidential Memorandum-7, which President Donald Trump issued last year, explicitly targeting left-wing protesters and beliefs. The memorandum began being used this month.

Federal prosecutors have also [charged](#) 15 Minnesota activists for their participation in the struggle against ICE's violent occupation of the Twin Cities.

Featured image via [Matt Sledge/ The Intercept](#)

By [The Canary](#)

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