



Expanding the Dragnet: Trump's Threatened Crackdown on "Antifa," the Dangerous Mandate of NSPM-7, and the Impending Militarization of Government in the U.S.

Released on 23 October 2025

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security condemns the Trump Administration's recent executive order designating "antifa" a domestic terror organization as well as its dangerously broad and sweeping national security presidential memorandum, Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence, known as the NSPM-7. The Lemkin Institute is particularly alarmed by these presidential actions given the Administration's rhetoric at the recent emergency meeting of generals at Quantico and the ramping up of plans to deploy the National Guard to U.S. cities like Chicago, Portland, and Memphis, in addition to Washington, DC, where they are already stationed as part of the federal "D.C. Safe and Beautiful" mission. The Trump Administration's sweeping yet ill-defined conception of "antifa" lends itself to constant reinvention and radicalization and will provide a mechanism for the Administration to criminalize any category of "out group" that may emerge within MAGA ideology. The looming implementation of this crackdown on "antifa," especially combined with the threat to use the military against civilians, serves as a red flag for the genocidal process underway in the U.S. and further jeopardizes fundamental human rights and democracy.

In recent weeks the Trump Administration has invented capacious categories that it calls "antifa," "anti-fascists," and the "radical left," which it defines as being "anti-American," "anti-capitalist," "anti-Christian," "in support of the overthrow of the U.S. government," "extremist on migration, race, and gender," and "hostile towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality." As the journalist Ken Klippenstein has pointed out, these "common beliefs" have now become indicators of terrorism. The categories of "antifa," "anti-fascists," and the "radical left" do not of course designate any specific groups; to the extent that they exist at all, they are broad social movements and ways of thinking. Nevertheless, the Administration speaks of these things as groups and views them as the key drivers of political violence and terrorism in the United States, despite the fact that all studies

have [shown](#) that domestic political violence is committed overwhelmingly by people associated with the American right. This apparent resurrection of McCarthyism has an even more sinister and radical set of foundational principles than the original. While the McCarthyism of the 1940s and 1950s was tied to a paranoid form of anti-communism that had imperialist, racist, and anti-LGBTQ+ dimensions, the goals of the new McCarthyism are tied to an extremist ‘cleansing’ ideology within the Trump Administration that has direct roots in genocidal thinking.

The apparent [esteem](#) shown by Administration officials for National Socialist ideas and symbols should be of immense concern to everyone in the world by now. There is a tendency to brush off the stark [similarities](#) in the language used by Trump’s close advisors, such as Stephen Miller, and Nazi leaders, but ideologues in the Administration are very serious about their strategies and commitments. National Socialist ideology blamed Germany’s defeat in World War I on the Enlightenment and what were perceived to be its wholly negative consequences that supposedly weakened Germany, such as the emancipation of European Jews, the granting of citizenship to people of color, incipient women’s liberation and gay rights movements, and what was called “miscegenation.” Similarly, the Administration’s new Nazi McCarthyites seek to (re)create a patriarchal white ethnostate within a very diverse America that will require forced displacement (“[remigration](#),” as noted by the Department of Homeland Security in a recent tweet), revocation of citizenship, denaturalization, removal of constitutional rights, imposition of second-class citizenship, and other violent policies in order to bring America into conformity with its historic white patriarchal system. This system was ruled by and for wealthy, white, cisgender, and heterosexual men, and long sustained through genocide, slavery, and Jim Crow. This is MAGA’s vision for American society, and it was one of the most important external [precursors](#) to Nazism in Germany.

The Lemkin Institute has [already protested](#) the Trump Administration’s weaponizing of legal status to target, detain, remove, and otherwise systematically deny the fundamental rights of people deemed undesirable within MAGA ideology. The Institute has highlighted groups that have been particularly targeted, such as [Black and Brown noncitizens](#), [critics of the U.S. and their allies](#) (both noncitizen and citizen), and the [transgender community](#) (both noncitizen and citizen). This recent crackdown on “antifa” is yet another escalation in the Administration’s effort to cleanse the United States of unwanted groups. It broadens the scope of ‘legal’ persecution by the state and narrows the boundaries of the “in-group” in Trump’s America. It is fully in keeping with the Trump Administration’s steady radicalization of its authoritarian powers.

Attempts to label “antifa” a terror organization are not new. In 2020, during Trump’s first term and in the wake of mass protests against police brutality following the [murder of George Floyd](#) by Minneapolis police, Trump claimed on [social media](#) that he was labeling “antifa” a terrorist organization. It did not matter that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, which he blamed on

“antifa,” were overwhelmingly peaceful; instances of violence at these protests stemmed from violent police response and individual actors – some of whom ended up being linked to rightwing extremists – carrying out acts like car rammings, looting, and vandalism. Nevertheless, the Trump Administration used these instances of violence to push the narrative that the country was being overrun by “domestic terrorists” and “antifa” in an effort to demonize and discredit protestors and the BLM movement as a whole. At the time, the exact definition of “antifa” and Trump’s legal basis for labeling an amorphous group a terrorist organization was unclear, with several experts declaring that the move was most likely unconstitutional and in violation of First Amendment rights. Still “antifa” became the “catch all” term referring to “left leaning,” “alt left,” or “radical left” views that existed outside of the Democratic Party’s platform.

Building upon previous 2020 rhetoric, the Trump Administration has now capitalized on the fallout from the recent assassination of Charlie Kirk and other cited instances of violence against Republicans to fuel its crackdown on “antifa” and the “radical left.” An important shift in the conceptualization of “antifa” presently is that while the term is still ill-defined, new specifics within the Trump Administration’s definition intentionally target all political and civic activity that is not MAGA, including the Democratic Party. By explicitly including “anti-American,” “anti-capitalist,” “anti-Christian,” “extremism on migration, race, and gender,” “hostility towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality” in its definition of “antifa,” the Trump Administration has instrumentalized the category to characterize almost all critique of current Administration policy as a looming existential threat to “American” society and values while further drawing boundaries between MAGA’s “in-groups” and “out-groups.” The category also has the potential to criminalize any way of thinking that exists outside of MAGA ideology. As if to underscore exactly how broad the “antifa” category is, Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller has called out various NGOs, including the Soros Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Southern Poverty Law Center, as “a vast domestic terror movement.” Senator Elissa Slotkin noted on the floor of Congress that the Administration was already drawing up “secret lists of terrorist groups inside the United States,” which American citizens will never see. The overly broad conceptualization of “antifa” has the potential to further demonize and criminalize groups already targeted by the Trump Administration while fast-tracking the demonization and criminalization of many more.

This recent demonization and attempted criminalization of MAGA critics was of course foreshadowed by the Trump Administration’s measures earlier this year to crack down on people who were critical of Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza and of the U.S.’s complicity in genocide. Trump’s January executive order, Additional Measures to Combat Antisemitism, utilized Israel’s deliberate mischaracterization of genocide prevention advocacy in the case of Gaza as “antisemitic,” “pro-Hamas,” and “supporting or sympathizing with terrorism” to justify revoking the legal status of noncitizens under 8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3) for suspicions of “engaging in or endorsing terrorist activities” and “associating with terrorist organizations.” The measures taken

to implement the January executive order went hand in hand with the Administration's crackdown on noncitizens (predominately Black and Brown people), fast tracking their criminalization. Implementation led directly to the unlawful targeting and detention of individuals like Mahmoud Khalil who is now facing potential deportation. This mischaracterization of anti-genocide advocacy also put U.S. citizens at risk as the Administration announced it was prioritizing denaturalization efforts for naturalized U.S. citizens "who pose a potential danger to national security, including those with a nexus to terrorism." A recent bill introduced in the House of Representatives also attempted to revoke the passports of U.S. citizens critical of Israel. Both noncitizens and citizens in the U.S. are at risk of criminal sanctions if they are found to make "any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services" to or receive any such contribution or provision from any individuals or organizations designated by the Trump Administration's ICC sanctions.

Like measures taken against people who have voiced criticism of the U.S. and Israel or who have engaged in genocide prevention, advocacy, and accountability related to Gaza, future measures to implement NSPM-7 and Trump's "antifa" crackdown have the potential to cause serious harm. Along with a broad definition of "antifa," the Administration uses equally vague language in its recent executive order and NSPM-7 to define "politically motivated terrorism." The executive order, Designating Antifa as a Domestic Terrorist Organization, calls on "all relevant executive departments and agencies" to "utilize all applicable authorities" to investigate, prosecute, disrupt, and dismantle all illegal operations – whatever those are – carried out by "antifa" or anyone acting on their behalf or providing "support" and funding. Similarly, NSPM-7 directs the National Joint Terrorism Task Force to "investigate, prosecute, and disrupt entities and individuals" engaged in vaguely defined acts like "political violence" and "intimidation designed to suppress lawful political activity or obstruct the rule of law." NSPM-7 further expands the notion of domestic terror by prioritizing the investigation of "politically motivated terrorist acts" which it defines as "organized doxing campaigns, swatting, rioting, looting, trespass, assault, destruction of property, threats of violence, and civil disorder." These acts, most of which normally would be considered misdemeanors, are now being equated with terrorism. Further expansion of the Administration's definition of domestic terror is built into NSPM-7. The memorandum grants the Attorney General a key role in identifying any groups that may meet these new qualifications for domestic terror organizations and in identifying "any behaviors, fact patterns, recurrent motivations, or other indicia common to organizations and entities that coordinate" what they consider "politically motivated terrorist acts." Like the conceptualization of "antifa," the Administration's definition of domestic terror is sweeping yet vague – and a blatant attempt by the Administration to criminalize to the harshest degree any act they perceive as dissent.

In addition to expanding the definition of domestic terror, both the recent executive order and NSPM-7 expand the dragnet of who could be investigated and prosecuted under this newly

expanded definition. As previously mentioned, Trump's recent executive order focuses not only on acts directly carried out by "antifa" but also those the Administration deems to be acting on behalf of or "supporting" "antifa," including those considered to be funding "antifa." NSPM-7 includes similar language by mandating the investigation of individuals or institutions that "are responsible for, sponsor, or otherwise aid and abet the principal actors" engaged in domestic terror. What the Administration would consider to constitute "support," "sponsoring," and "aiding and abetting" is unclear by design to allow the Administration a broad mandate to target whomever they consider to be remotely connected to anything they claim is "anti-American," "anti-capitalist," "anti-Christian," "in support of the overthrow of the U.S. government," "extremist on migration, race, and gender," and "hostile towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality." This list could easily include the vast majority of the American people. Additionally, the Memorandum names not only perceived acts of domestic terror, but also anything that could somehow be argued to lead to or foment terror. For example, NSPM-7 highlights investigating crimes relating to "recruiting or radicalizing persons" for the purpose of "political violence, terrorism, or conspiracy against rights" or "the violent deprivation of any citizen's rights." This brings the country's security apparatus into "precrime" (or "predictive policing") territory, where people are investigated based on their political beliefs or on their support for individuals and institutions that the Administration deems to be somehow related to its new perception of "domestic terror." All of this language grants the state and its agents a broad mandate to spy on, intimidate, harass, and potentially charge, try, and incarcerate U.S. citizens engaging in constitutionally protected thought, speech, and assembly.

It is worth noting, like previous attempts by Trump to designate "antifa" a terrorist organization, experts argue that there is absolutely no legal basis for the president to do so unilaterally. First, "antifa" or "antifascist" is a loosely organized movement or ideology, not an actual organization that can be designated as a terror organization. Second, unlike in the case of foreign organizations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, there is no existing legal framework to designate domestic organizations as terrorist organizations. Third, only Congress can pass legislation that would allow the Department of State or Treasury to designate domestic groups as terrorist organizations. Trump cannot unilaterally designate groups or create a framework to investigate or prosecute groups as domestic terror groups through executive orders or memorandums like NSPM-7. However, as demonstrated by the Trump administration's measures to combat alleged antisemitism and punish the alleged terrorist sympathies of anti-genocide advocates in the case of Gaza, these presidential actions can have real-world consequences even if their legal basis or authority is unclear, especially given that the U.S. Supreme Court is sympathetic to and enabling the Administration's policies. While the implementation of and legal basis for Trump's recent executive order and NSPM-7 are yet to be seen, this sweeping investigative and prosecutory mandate has the potential to undermine fundamental constitutional and human rights (particularly First Amendment rights) of noncitizens and citizens alike. Americans must be prepared for this eventuality.

The Administration itself disclosed the very real risks posed by its threatened crackdown on “antifa” and “domestic terror” at the September 30 meeting of U.S. military generals in Quantico, Virginia. During that bizarre gathering, during which speakers drew heavily on Nazi images, themes and phrasing, President Trump referred to the need to combat the “enemy from within” and argued that cities like Portland, Chicago, and Memphis could serve as “training grounds” for U.S. troops, effectively militarizing the state’s response to the fake category of “antifa.” In arguing that “antifa” constitutes a domestic terrorist threat, the Administration has cited as evidence the alleged “riots” occurring in Los Angeles and Portland and attacks on Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. The Trump Administration is actively pushing the narrative of this “uncontrollable violence” to justify a future military attack on civilians, especially during protests. The day before the generals’ meeting, in fact, Trump referred to Portland as “war ravaged” and claimed via social media that he was sending in “all necessary troops” to protect ICE facilities. Trump also made comments that he was “authorizing full force if necessary” to combat “domestic terrorists” there. Since 8 September 2025, armed federal agents have been deployed to Chicago alongside ICE officers to carry out mass deportations as part of “Operation Midway Blitz,” resulting in violent hyper-militarized ICE raids as well as violent clashes instigated by ICE agents targeting protestors, journalists, and bystanders. Now the Administration is planning to send 100 military troops to Chicago to protect ICE agents and facilities. This is after previous comments made by Trump in early September that “Chicago [is] about to find out why it [The Department of Defense] is called the Department of WAR.” On October 17, the Trump Administration also began mass spending on surveillance gear for ICE so they can expand their focus to find undocumented immigrants who they claim want to overthrow the US government.

The Lemkin Institute believes that the designation of the non-existent “antifa” as a domestic terror “organization” is an effort to consolidate state power within the hands of the President and loyalists in the MAGA movement. As Chicago Governor JB Pritzker explains, “This is about sowing fear and intimidation and division among Americans. It was about creating a pretext to send armed military troops into our communities. This is about consolidating power in Donald Trump's hands.” The state’s broad conceptualization of “antifa” makes it a capacious category, one which can include anyone the state deems threatening to its power or goals. Capacious categories like “antifa” are common during genocidal processes. Already the state has demonized transgender people as antifa extremists linked to domestic terrorism, which demonstrates the utility of the “antifa” category to already-existing genocidal processes. The Heritage Foundation, a rightwing organization behind Project 2025, has even requested that the FBI specifically add “violent transgender ideology” to the growing lists of “domestic terror” threats.

Coupled with the expanded notion of domestic terror being used by state authorities under President Trump and their sweeping investigatory and prosecutorial mandates as outlined in NSPM-7, the criminalization of “antifa” further empowers state agents to violate the rights guaranteed to Americans by the Constitution. President Trump’s ever more extreme language to refer to urban crime aka domestic terror aka antifa aka “the enemy within” follows the radicalizing logic of genocidal regimes, since they must incessantly stoke fears of “Others” in order to manufacture consent for their mushrooming violence. Using the threat of “antifa” violence and domestic terror to justify the military occupation of U.S. cities is a means to a much more extreme end: the suspension of the Constitution and the dismantling of democratic institutions. The Trump Administration has already identified a wide array of targets that it wishes to disappear, and it has left the door open to the addition of many more. It has crafted a narrative and a framework to demonize and criminalize its targets, and it has used this demonization and criminalization to militarize future crackdowns. Once domestic politics has become militarized as a “counterterrorism” project, the stage has been set for mass atrocity and there is nothing Americans will be able to do to stop it.

The Trump Administration’s bid for total power cannot be allowed to escalate further. The U.S. courts and ordinary Americans must challenge the legality of Trump’s recent executive order designating “antifa” a domestic terror organization. They must also challenge NSPM-7 and Trump’s troop deployments to U.S. cities. A federal judge ruled against Trump deploying troops to Los Angeles and another has temporarily blocked the deployment of troops to Portland. Legal challenges like these must continue, as must the efforts of civil society organizations and grassroots protest movements to voice opposition to rapidly growing totalitarianism. Silence is not an option in the wake of such a massive assault on fundamental human rights.