

OCTOBER 2023

OPERATION LONE STAR: THE COST OF FUNDING HATE

A BREAKDOWN OF THE UNCONSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVE

WHAT IS OPERATION LONE STAR?

Operation Lone Star (OLS) is an unconstitutional and deadly Texas law enforcement scheme that wastes vital state resources to target migrants for arrest, jail, and deportation. Created in March 2021 by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and backed by nearly [\\$5 billion](#) of state funds, this operation is designed to criminalize and rapidly deport migrants, many of whom are seeking safety in the United States. OLS violates the Constitution, promotes racial profiling, fuels the mass incarceration of people of color, and encourages white supremacy rhetoric that is harmful to **ALL** Texans.

HOW IS OPERATION LONE STAR CARRIED OUT?

OLS illegally criminalizes migrants and people of color. Under OLS, Texas law enforcement officers and National Guard have militarized border communities, targeted and arrested Black and Brown migrants (many of whom are legally exercising their right to seek asylum), charged them with trespassing on private land, and then jailed those migrants in state prisons that have been arbitrarily converted into migrant jails. These state prison facilities are notorious for their inhumane conditions against defendants, such as inadequate medical care, unsanitary food, and abuse from jail staff.

OLS creates a separate criminal system that strips migrants of dignity, respect, and their constitutional rights. Many of the arrests under OLS are illegal - evidenced by numerous reports of law enforcement directing migrants to trespass on private property only to subsequently arrest them. Migrant defendants are also [forced to wait weeks or months in prison](#) before they have an opportunity to speak to a judge or resolve the [bogus charges](#) filed against them. Routinely, migrants are not even given basic information about their case or access to an attorney. As a result, they are often coerced to plead guilty in exchange for their release from criminal custody. However, following their release from criminal custody, migrants are often immediately transferred to immigration authorities for further detention and deportation.



HOW IS OPERATION LONE STAR FUNDED?

OLS misuses state resources. Since 2021, Gov. Abbott has forced the state to waste nearly 5 billion dollars to fund OLS. Texas has even diverted \$1 billion in federal [COVID-19 relief aid](#) to fund the OLS scheme. Abbott has transferred funds from state agencies, [many of which are already overwhelmed and under-resourced](#) and the amount wasted on OLS is expected to reach [\\$9 billion](#) by the end of 2024. OLS takes away [vital resources](#) from communities' real needs, like schools, housing, and medical care.



WHY IS OPERATION LONE STAR ILLEGAL?

Under the U.S. Constitution, only the federal government can create and enforce immigration laws and policies. Gov. Abbott has repeatedly stated that the purpose of OLS is to target, arrest, jail, and deport migrants, which violates the [Constitution's Supremacy Clause](#) that prohibits states from creating their own immigration enforcement policies.

Since 2021, the illegalities of OLS have only increased. In the summer of 2023, [state troopers began separating families](#). Gov. Abbott also installed deadly razor wire and river buoys along the border to prevent migrants from seeking asylum. These barriers have resulted in [numerous deaths and injuries](#). A federal judge ruled the buoy barriers unlawful but Gov. Abbott has fought to keep the deadly barriers in place.

Additionally, under the Constitution, all defendants in criminal proceedings (regardless of legal status) have certain rights. Under OLS, however, many of the migrant defendants' rights, like the right to proceed in criminal proceedings without delay and the right to an attorney, are routinely violated.

OLS also violates the [Civil Rights Act](#) because it intentionally targets Black and Brown migrants (majority men) based on their race and national origin.

WHY IS OPERATION LONE STAR HARMFUL TO TEXAS COMMUNITIES?

OLS expands the carceral system and undermines efforts to protect communities from the harms and cruelties within the criminal legal system overall. OLS encourages government officials to use racist and anti-immigrant language that incentivizes vigilante and militia groups to be violent against migrants. In many border regions, communities have been overtaken by military and law enforcement personnel. Texas [residents report being racially profiled by law enforcement](#) and communities have witnessed a significant increase in car fatalities caused by Texas state troopers. In other areas, [residents have spoken against the harmful buoy and razor wire barriers](#) that are endangering their peaceful communities.

OLS also wastes Texas taxpayer money. OLS [costs taxpayers 2.5 million per week](#)— all while the legitimate needs of Texans remain unmet. Texas lawmakers continue to [propose extreme bills](#) that would make the harms of OLS permanent and increase the waste and dangers against Texas communities.

HOW DOES OPERATION LONE STAR AFFECT COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE OF TEXAS?

If OLS is not stopped it can serve as a dangerous precedent for other anti-immigrant state leaders to create unconstitutional, state-led immigration enforcement schemes that target people of color, leading to further discrimination and harm to all people living in these states. [Governors from other states have also misused their resources](#) to send their National Guard to further militarize and harm Texas communities.

HOW CAN YOU JOIN EFFORTS TO STOP OPERATION LONE STAR?

Advocates are taking steps at the national, state, and local levels to protect migrants and people of color apprehended under the racist OLS scheme. Some of these actions include [challenging the illegal arrests](#), [filing federal complaints](#), and [calling for an investigation](#) of OLS.

Whether you live in Texas or elsewhere, you can support this important work by [calling your local congressional representative](#) and demanding an investigation into the racist OLS scheme or by sharing this



**Teaching, Interpreting,
and Changing Law**
Since 1979
www.ilrc.org

continued...

and other resources to fight harmful misinformation.

To learn more about how to get involved in ongoing advocacy efforts, please visit endlonestar.org or contact ILRC Senior Texas Strategist, Carolina Canizales, at ccanizales@ilrc.org or ILRC Policy Attorney and Strategist, Priscilla Olivarez, at polivarez@ilrc.org.



**Teaching, Interpreting,
and Changing Law**
Since 1979
www.ilrc.org

FOLLOW US TO REMAIN UPDATED & CONNECTED

