

APRIL 2022

OPERATION LONE STAR: TEXAS' RACIST SCHEME TO CRIMINALIZE, JAIL, AND DEPORT MIGRANTS

A BREAKDOWN OF THE UNCONSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVE

WHAT IS OPERATION LONE STAR?

Operation Lone Star (OLS) is an unconstitutional and racist Texas law enforcement operation targeting migrants for arrest, jail, and deportation. Created in March 2021 by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and backed by nearly \$2 billion of state funds, this scheme is designed to criminalize and rapidly deport migrants, many of whom are seeking safety in the U.S. 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, thousands of 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. In 2021, the [Texas Senate approved nearly \\$2 billion](#) in taxpayers' money to fund OLS - all while Texans continue to suffer from the COVID-19 pandemic and power grid failures. Gov. [Abbott also ordered 10,000 Texas law enforcement officers](#) and National Guard troops to police and militarize Texas border counties participating in the OLS scheme, and OLS continues to expand into new border regions.

[OLS also takes away vital resources](#) from communities' real needs, like schools, housing, and medical care.



continued...

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.

Additionally, under the U.S. 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 reduce the prison population and 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. People of color living in these [Texas counties have reported being racially profiled by law enforcement](#).

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.

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 and [other resources](#) to fight harmful misinformation.

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

