

Dedicated to Abolishing War, Establishing Justice, and Fighting Climate Disaster
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The Machinery of Terror

Chris Hedges' essay below, published four days after Renee Good was brutally murdered by ICE agents in Minneapolis and two weeks before Alex Pretti was shot in the back by ICE agents of terror lays out the stark choices facing us. Neutrality is not an option. — The Editors

By Chris Hedges Jan 11, 2026

I have seen the masked goons who terrorize our streets before. I saw them during the “Dirty War” in Argentina, where 30,000 men, women and children were “disappeared” by the military junta. Victims were held in secret prisons, savagely tortured and murdered. To this day, many families do not know the fate of their loved ones.

I saw them in El Salvador, when death squads were killing 800 people a month. I saw them in Guatemala under the dictatorship of José Efraín Ríos Montt. I saw them in Augusto Pinochet's Chile and in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. I saw them in Iran under the rule of the ayatollahs where I was arrested and jailed twice and once deported in handcuffs. I saw them in Hafez al-Assad's Syria. I saw them in Bosnia, where Muslims were herded into concentration camps, executed and buried in mass graves.

I know these goons. I have been a prisoner in their jails and spent hours in their interrogation rooms. I have been beaten



The Missing Link - by Mr. Fish

by them. I have been deported, and in several cases banned, from their countries. I know what is coming.

Terror is the engine that empowers dictatorships. It eliminates dissidents. It silences critics. It dismantles the law. It creates a society of timid and frightened collaborators, those who look away when people are snatched off streets or gunned down, those who inform to save themselves, those who retreat into their tiny rabbit holes, pulling down the blinds, desperately praying to be left in peace.

Terror works.

The iron doors have not yet shut. There are still protests. The media is still able to document state atrocities, including the Jan. 7 murder of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent Jonathan Ross. But the doors are closing fast. ICE has deported over 300,000 people and detained nearly 69,000 others — as well as been involved in 16 shootings, including four killings — since Trump began his campaign against immigrants.

ICE, our Americanized Gestapo, is being birthed.

Resistance must be collective. We must assert not only our individual rights, but economic, social and political rights — without them we are powerless. Resistance means organizing to disrupt the machinery of commerce and government. It means preventing arrests by patrolling neighborhoods to warn of impending ICE raids. It means protesting outside detention facilities. It means strikes. It means blocking streets and highways and occu-

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A First Lady in a New York Cell

By Medea Benjamin and Michelle Ellner

On International Working Women's Day in 2025, Cilia Flores, the wife of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, read a poem she wrote highlighting the historic role played by Latin American women in the fight against imperialism.

*We're not flowers the wind can pluck,
we're roots of rebel and loyal land,
we're grandmothers, mothers, daughters, grand-*

daughters;

we are woman.

*Our blood pulses with the Manuelas,
Luisas, Josefás, Juanas, Cecílias,
Apacuanas, Bartolinas, Eulalias,
Martas, Anas Marías, Barbaritas
and so many others who legacy inspires,
commits, and strengthens us
to continue walking and traveling our path.
And in our hands and chests
a light is on that nobody will ever turn off:
love, peace and liberty.*

—Cilia Flores, International Working Women's Day 2025

One year later, she languishes in a cell in New York City, having been dragged out of her room and kidnapped by U.S. forces on the Jan. 3 attack on Venezuela. The first images after her abduction showed her face bruised. We later learned she had broken ribs, 23 stitches in her forehead, and deteriorating health inside U.S. custody.

Flores is no ordinary first lady. She first rose to prominence in 1992 as a defense lawyer for a group of Venezuelan military officers who rose up against the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez, which had massacred thousands of people in the Caracazo of 1989—nationwide riots following the imposition of neoliberal austerity measures. Key among those officers was Hugo Chávez, the founder of the Bolivarian Revolution.

In 1993, Cilia founded the Bolivarian Circle of Human Rights and aligned herself with Chávez's revolutionary movement. In 2000, having helped Chávez win consecutive presidential elections, she was elected to the legislature. By 2006, she became the president of the National Assembly, the first woman in Venezuela's history to occupy the post. Flores held important positions in the United Socialist Party of Venezuela and became the country's Solicitor General in 2012, a post she left to run

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Cilia brought feminism to the Bolivarian Revolution: 'Our women are patriots ... and in the next scenario, whatever it may be, we will be victorious because women will be at the forefront of any battle.'