

# US illegals face deportation

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## Millions targeted after policy rewrites by Trump administration

**WASHINGTON:** Millions of people living in the United States illegally could be targeted for deportation – including people simply arrested for traffic violations – under a sweeping rewrite of immigration enforcement policies by the Trump administration.

Any immigrant who is in the country illegally and is charged or convicted of any offence, or even suspected of a crime, will now be an enforcement priority, according to Homeland Security Department memos signed by Secretary John Kelly.

That could include people arrested for shoplifting or minor offences – or simply having crossed the border illegally.

The Trump administration memos replace narrower guidance focusing on immigrants who have been convicted of serious crimes, are considered threats to national security or are recent border crossers.

Under the Obama administration guidance, immigrants whose only violation was being in the country illegally were generally left alone.

Those immigrants fall into two categories: those who crossed the border without permission and those who overstayed their visas.

Crossing the border illegally is a criminal offence, and the new memos make clear that those who have done so are included in the broad list of enforcement priorities.

Overstaying a visa is a civil, not criminal, offence. Those who do so are not specifically included in the priority list but, under the memos, they are still more likely to face deportation than they had been before.

The new enforcement documents are the latest efforts by President Donald Trump to follow through on campaign promises to strictly enforce immigration laws. He's also



**New future:** Erik Danialian, a 21-year-old immigrant from Iran, posing with his US citizenship certificate in front of a large US flag after a naturalisation ceremony at the Los Angeles Convention Centre. — AP

promised to build a wall at the Mexican border – he insists Mexico will eventually foot the bill – and Kelly's memos reiterate calls for Homeland Security to start planning for the costs and construction.

Trump's earlier immigration orders, which temporarily banned all refugees as well as foreigners from seven Muslim-majority countries, have faced widespread criticism and legal action. A federal appeals court has upheld a temporary halt.

Kelly's enforcement plans call for reopening a longstanding but obscure provision of immigration

law that allows the government to send some people caught illegally crossing the Mexican border back to Mexico, regardless of where they are from.

Those foreigners would wait in that country for US deportation proceedings to be complete.

This would be used for people who aren't considered a threat to cross the border illegally again, the memo says.

That provision is almost certain to face opposition from civil libertarians and Mexican officials, and it's unclear whether the United States has the authority to force

Mexico to accept third-country nationals. But the memo also calls for Homeland Security to provide an account of US aid to Mexico, a possible signal that Trump plans to use that funding to get Mexico to accept the foreigners.

Historically, the United States has quickly repatriated Mexican nationals caught at the border but has detained immigrants from other countries pending deportation proceedings that could take years.

Mexico's new ambassador to the United States, Gerónimo Gutierrez, called the policy changes "something very serious". — AP