Trump’s New Executive Order Will Blow Back on PLHIV

Breakdown of how Trump’s recent Executive Order & militarization of our cities will impact PLHIV

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By: Elena Ferguson

This week, the Trump regime began deploying the national guard to Chicago and threatened the arrest of the Mayor of Chicago and Governor of Illinois. This comes in light of ramped-up violent immigration enforcement (ICE) operations that have prompted mass protest and outrage. It also builds on the recent string of occupations in Los Angeles and Washington D.C., the attempted and blocked deployment of national guard in Portland, Oregon, as well as the threatened occupation of Baltimore, Louisiana, New Orleans, New York, Oakland, and Tennessee.

The legality of using the National Guard to police U.S. cities has been challenged successfully with a California federal district court judge ruling it illegal, while the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit is due to consider a challenge regarding deploying the national guard to Portland as early as today. People have called these militarized crackdowns a “political stunt” and an “attempted distraction." Still they must be taken seriously as **overtly fascistic tactics**. The hyper-militarization of our streets is not new, and has been piloted in Black communities by Democratic and Republican lawmakers alike. Make no mistake, **the primary purpose of deploying the national guard is to intimidate our immigrant communities and subject residents to increased scrutiny and surveillance**. The rapid expansion under the Trump regime aims to further normalize the presence of armed federal law enforcement (marked or unmarked) as a relentless and unquestioned presence in our everyday lives and as arbiters of fear, silence, and apathy.

It’s all connected.

The weaponization of the National Guard, increased presence of ICE, and expansion of carceral public health practices are all connected under the Trump regime’s **white nationalist agenda**.

In early July, Congress passed and Trump signed H.R.1, aka the Big, Ugly Murder Bill, which supercharged Trump’s immigration surveillance, detention, and disappearance machine with an extra $170 billion dollars. Immigration enforcement has dramatically ramped up, particularly in Democratic-led U.S. cities and the Supreme Court recently gave roving ICE patrols permission to racially profile.

Later that same month, the Trump administration issued an Executive Order (EO), "Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets." It is framed as a response to "violent attacks" and "disorderly behavior," but in reality is a dangerous escalation of the policing and criminalization of unhoused folks and people who use drugs. The order encourages states to detain unhoused folks indefinitely under "civil commitment" provisions, coerces local municipalities to arrest and penalize people for public displays of poverty (sleeping outside, camping, loitering, etc.), and ensures that federal funds do not go to evidence-based housing and harm reduction efforts, such as Housing First and overdose prevention programs.

For people living with HIV, this order will be particularly detrimental as of the 1.2M people living with HIV, about 10% or 120,000 people, experience homelessness each year. Not to mention the harsh impact that this EO will have on trans people living with HIV who have been relentlessly targeted by the Trump regime and state legislatures in an attempt to criminalize, strip them of access to life-saving healthcare and services, and erase them from public life. According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) in 2021, 29% of transgender people living with HIV reported experiencing homelessness in the last 12 months. **Housing is healthcare and this order will only further impede the ability of people living with HIV to live free, healthy, and dignified lives.**

Furthermore, there is overwhelming evidence that harm reduction programs like syringe service programs and overdose prevention centers work! When asked about the impact of the Trump regime's EO on people living with HIV who use drugs, PWN Pennsylvania chapter member, Stephanie Knupsky, said, "I've been in recovery for 16 years now, and I've experienced homelessness. I wasn't lucky enough to have [harm reduction] service programs or OPCs (Overdose Prevention Centers)... Whether it's the Trump administration sweeping and spraying people [who use drugs] off the street, or Philadelphia Mayor Cherelle Parker doing sweeps in Kensington, it doesn't fix any problems... **When you cut access from people they don't magically find recovery, they die.** It doesn't make sense to avoid the problem."

Unfortunately, these attacks on unhoused communities and people who use drugs are reflected in state and local policies. We're seeing protections for unhoused Houstonians being further eroded and harm reduction services in Philadelphia being shut down by the local government. When asked about the impact of this EO on people living with HIV, PWN-Lousisiana chapter member, Xeena Ellison, stated that she saw this as "a way that the government **seeks to normalize the detentions of vulnerable people [including trans people] regardless of if there is a reason**." She also said that she "was not surprised [to hear about the EO] and knew this [kind of increased criminalization of unhoused folks] was coming because of what happened in New Orleans ahead of the Superbowl earlier this year. They did a grand sweep where they rounded up unhoused people, destroyed their encampments, put them on buses, and sent them to a warehouse."

These federal and state attacks are only made worse by an increasingly militarized state in which we all must now find ways to survive and create communities of care within. The Trump administration's militarized takeover of multiple U.S. cities and the increase in the presence of ICE

agents on the streets will only make people living with HIV more vulnerable to criminalization and detention. It is a clear abandonment of public health in favor of more carcerality, family separation, and stigmatization. We at PWN reject this order and will continue to fight for the health, safety, and dignity of women (trans and cis), trans folks, and gender diverse people living with HIV.

Act Now

As we descend further into authoritarianism, it will be even more important to build communities of care and increase vigilance around our communities and neighbors. Here are a few resources that might help as you begin to think about safety and protecting yourself and your community.

1. Check out Vision Change Win's various toolkits on safety planning, risk assessment, and community safety. They also offer safety planning workshops that you can attend by yourself, with your PWN chapter, or your community.
2. Read Interrupting Criminalization's toolkit on Mapping Community Ecosystems of Community Care. There are a number of ways we can break isolation, keep each other safe, and build up our practices of care, this resource will explore several of those options.
3. Watch New Disabled South Rising's webinar on Mapping Our Care Webs: Strategies for Imperfect Survival. We're all we got and no one is coming to save us. This webinar explores ways we can practice, build, and identify care networks that we need to survive.
4. Organizing to keep our communities safe can take a toll. If you're feeling burnt-out or stressed, call the Liberation Line and speak to a trusted volunteer who can help you debrief, process, and strategize.

Additional Reading

1. Center for HIV Law and Policy, From Ugly Laws to the Executive Order and Beyond--We Reject Defunding and Criminalization (July 31, 2025)
2. Free DC Coalition
3. Naomi Braine, Fighting Fascism through Solidarity, *In These Times* (Sept. 3, 2025)
4. Movement Law Lab, What You Need to Know if the National Guard Is Deployed to Your State by the Trump Regime (Summer 2025).
5. LA Taco, How to Document Raids, Abductions, and Arrests. (Sep 3, 2025)

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