



# Speak Out Now

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@sonsocialists

speakoutsocialists.org

mail@speakoutsocialists.org

(510) 343-9105

## Texas Tragedy: A Glimpse of What's to Come

Last week, torrential rainfall ripped through Kerr County, Texas, causing catastrophic flooding. More than a summer's worth of rain fell on the region in a few hours, raising the water level of the Guadalupe River from 3 feet to 30 feet in just 45 minutes during the middle of the night.

People were not adequately warned about the storm and weren't evacuated in time. The flooding has killed at least 129 people, including many young girls from a camp near the river. Many more would have died if it weren't for heroic rescue efforts. Despite this, at least 150 people are still missing from the flooding and are likely dead. And now, emergency crews searching for missing people had to stop due to new floods in the region.

This tragic loss of life was not the result of a random act of nature, but an act of violence — the violence of a system that prioritizes profit over lives, and the violence of politicians that have done everything in their power to cut the very programs that can help prevent and respond to tragedies like this one.

On his first day in office, Trump issued an executive order revoking a set of federal flood protections known as the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. The protections were designed to improve the infrastructure of areas with high risk for extreme weather events. Prior to being revoked, the standard made it so the construction or rebuilding of critical infrastructure such as schools and highways after natural disasters could only receive federal funding if it was built with enhanced flood protections. Trump revoked the standards that were meant to protect against disasters exactly like this one.

These cuts were on top of years of denied requests by local agencies to install a better flood warning system. Since 2017, various local agencies had made repeated requests to the state government to install a flood warning system, but state officials never used the funds available for this to do so. This was a disaster that many officials knew was coming.

The Trump administration also cut important emergency response programs designed to notify communities ahead of dangerous weather events, and to coordinate the rescue response in the aftermath. Early in this administration, Trump and Elon Musk's DOGE gutted staffing levels of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS), laying off thousands of employees or

forcing them to quit. These agencies have staff across the country that issue flood warnings and communicate with local officials to coordinate a response and necessary evacuations. Many important positions at these agencies responsible for the area where this flood happened have been vacant because of Trump's cuts.

Also, to cut costs, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem, whose department oversees the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), issued a new rule this year requiring all contracts and grants costing over \$100,000 to be personally approved by her. This caused huge delays, and Noem failed to respond to such requests during the flooding, taking four days to approve spending that could have saved lives.

This tragedy happened the same day that Congress passed the latest budget by the Trump administration, which imposes greater misery on the population, and only guarantees that more tragedies like this one will keep happening. It is a devastating bill that rams through enormous cuts to vital social services, especially for poor and working-class people, while offering tax cuts for the super-rich and dumping huge sums of money into the military and to massively expand ICE's terrorism on immigrant communities.

Unfortunately, this horrible tragedy in Texas gives a glimpse of what's to come. We live in a system that has no regard for human life. And this administration is doing everything in its power to remove whatever small protections and government support won over the years that remain. Corporations are being handed even more freedom to destroy the planet for profit, while programs to prepare for emergencies like these are being destroyed, leaving us to fend for ourselves. Medicaid, food stamps and many other programs are being gutted, leaving millions without healthcare or access to food or essential services. All the while, ICE and the Department of Homeland Security are being expanded to further terrorize immigrants and suppress all forms of dissent.

This is a clear example of the kind of future this system has in store for us. Those who run this system are prepared to throw our lives into chaos and misery to enrich themselves and reinforce their power. This is a future we cannot accept. If we want to see a different future, if we want to stop these attacks, it depends on us.