



By: The Editorial Board

# Has the crisis in Los Angeles threatened American federalism?



The mass deportations initiated by federal immigration authorities in Los Angeles have quickly evolved from a local security issue to a crisis of state sovereignty and institutional stability.

At the heart of this escalation is a direct order from President Donald Trump to federalise the National Guard and deploy **additional** troops, including Marines, to the streets of an American city without the consent of the Governor of California.

On Friday, 6 June, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducted **raids** in several parts of the city. Particularly affected were work zones dominated by Mexican and Central American migrants, including fashion shops in neighbourhoods like Compton and the Fashion District.

Dozens of workers were **arrested**, including those with unregulated status but also people who are already in the process of obtaining a residence permit.

Protests broke out the very next day. Demonstrators blocked traffic in the city centre, set fire to containers, and clashed with local police. The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) used tear gas and rubber bullets. Dozens of people were injured, and some of the protest organisers were arrested.

## An unprecedented decision

The defining moment came when the president, without **consulting** California Governor Gavin Newsom, gave the order to activate the National Guard and deploy additional federal forces.

The president said he was considering **using** the Insurrection Act of 1807, but according to legal experts' analysis, federal authorities have formally **applied** 10 U.S.C. § 12406, a law enacted in 1903 that authorises the deployment of the National Guard without state consent.

## The last deployment of the National Guard without state consent was in 1965

This decision is unprecedented in modern American practice. The last time the National Guard was deployed without state consent was in 1965 during the civil rights protests in the state of Alabama.

Then-President Lyndon Johnson sent the military to protect African American protesters who were peacefully marching from Selma to Montgomery, demanding the right to vote.

Today's case in Los Angeles is of a very different nature. No federal facilities under siege, no large-scale violent uprising, and no out-of-control situation that would justify the deployment of the military.

It's about political disputes between federal and state authorities over immigration policy and the response to protests.

## Federal vs State

Governor Newsom has filed a **lawsuit** in federal court in San Francisco, claiming that the president has overstepped his authority and violated the Tenth Amendment of the US Constitution, which clearly defines the boundaries between federal and state power.

The lawsuit also refers to the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which restricts the use of the military in civilian affairs except in extraordinary circumstances and with a legal basis.

## Demonstrations have spread to other cities, indicating the crisis has gone beyond a single incident

The mayor of Los Angeles, Karen Bass, imposed a curfew and called for the withdrawal of the military.

Local politicians, non-governmental organisations and trade unions are warning about the erosion of democratic principles and the increasingly authoritarian approach to resolving social disagreements.

On the other hand, the federal administration points out that this is a necessary measure to protect public order and accuses the local authorities of being unable to ensure stability.

In the meantime, demonstrations have spread to other cities, including San Diego, San Antonio and Philadelphia, indicating the crisis has gone beyond a single incident. The questions raised are not only legal and institutional but also political and international.

## Safety concerns

The diplomatic missions of several **countries**, including Mexico, Indonesia, the Philippines and Nigeria, have issued warnings to their citizens about the situation in California.

Companies that rely on migrant labour, particularly in the textile and logistics sectors, have expressed concerns about the impact of such measures on labour dynamics and production stability.

Local businesses are suffering losses, and chambers of commerce are calling for a clear division between immigration policy and economic pragmatism.

**Any miscalculation on the ground could lead to tragic consequences**

The safety aspect also receives special attention. Hiring more than four thousand members of the National Guard and Marines, an unprecedented move in modern Los Angeles, not only represents an institutional shock but also carries the risk of a potential incident.

Any miscalculation on the ground could lead to tragic consequences that would further

shake citizens' trust in the rule of law.

## A new chapter?

Several key issues now dominate the American political scene. Could this potentially open a new chapter in the use of federal power in domestic affairs?

Can this model become a template for resolving future crises? And most importantly, how will the legal and political institutions react if the next incident is of a smaller but equally symbolic nature?

In the coming days, the trial will **begin** in federal court in San Francisco, where the constitutionality of the president's decision will be considered.

Independent legal experts are already pointing out several critical issues. The first of these is the question of assessing the extent of the danger.

For the application of the Insurrection Act to be justified, there must be a clear threat that exceeds the capabilities of the local authorities.

In view of the fact that the local police responded and restored order, the legal viability of this decision remains questionable.

**The Insurrection Act – a last resort, not an instrument to control political narrative**

The second issue is the political motivation. The Insurrection Act is by its nature intended as a last resort, not as an instrument to control political narrative.

If the court concludes that federal intervention is the result of political interest rather than legal necessity, this could weaken the White House's standing in the eyes of the international and national public.



The third issue concerns the interpretation of the military's role in society. Although the National Guard is often deployed in crisis situations such as natural disasters, its presence at civilian protests remains highly controversial.

The deployment of the Marines, a regular armed force, only reinforces the sense of militarisation of civilian space and could set a long-term precedent that will create fear and mistrust in the future.

## More than a city in crisis

The president's decision already has concrete international consequences. The Mexican government has **expressed** concern about the treatment of migrants and called for human rights and legal procedures to be respected.

Certain diplomatic missions, such as that of China, warned their nationals to avoid the central parts of Los Angeles in the evening hours and urged caution in view of the unstable situation.

Although most European and Asian embassies have not yet officially reacted, they are closely monitoring developments through security reports and diplomatic channels.

Within the United States, this decision could have serious consequences for the relationship between federal and state governments.



*Los Angeles is more than a city in crisis. It is a reflection of the constitutional order of the US and a potential turning point in the interpretation of the administration's position*

- Gavin Newsom

If the federal court upholds the legality of the president's decision, Republican states could see this as a precedent for similar action on their own territory. On the other hand, Democratic-leaning states could respond by strengthening local protection of migrants, the rights of protesters, and the use of force in civilian situations.

Public opinion polls indicate a deep polarisation—while some support a strong state security response, others warn of the erosion of constitutional principles and the risk of normalising military presence in civilian environments.

In analytical circles, the possibility of redefining the competences and control mechanisms of the armed forces in civilian affairs is being considered.

One of the proposed ideas includes the establishment of an independent body that would evaluate the justification for the activation of the Insurrection Act, instead of such a decision being the sole responsibility of the president.

The possible development of events can be reduced to three scenarios.

The court can confirm the legality of the intervention, albeit with restrictions. The court can challenge the legality of the intervention, which would weaken the position of the White House.

The third possibility, and the most dangerous, is judicial indecision. Such an outcome could potentially pave the way for future arbitrary use of force.

Los Angeles is currently more than a city in crisis. It is a reflection of the constitutional order of the United States and a potential turning point in the interpretation of the administration's position.

The outcome of this process will shape not only the country's political landscape but also

the way the world perceives American  
democracy at the moment of its domestic test.