

NBC's *Today*
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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Fallout Over 5-Year-Old in ICE Custody]

CRAIG MELVIN: Also this morning, we are following new developments out of Minneapolis where anti-ICE protests are now entering a third week. Vice President JD Vance visited the city yesterday, blaming local Democratic officials and agitators for the ongoing tensions there amid new arrests, and the growing backlash after federal agents detained a five-year-old boy. NBC's Maggie Vespa has been following all of it from the very beginning. She is on the ground for us once again in Minneapolis. Maggie, good morning.

MAGGIE VESPA: Craig, good morning. The spotlight on the story of this preschooler now in DHS custody is growing rapidly this morning with the Vice President during his trip here to Minneapolis not shying away. In Minneapolis amid the mayhem surrounding President Trump's immigration crackdown, the story of one little boy now drawing nationwide attention. DHS confirming five-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos and his father have been taken to a detention facility in Texas, saying his father, Alexander Arias is in the U.S. illegally from Ecuador. DHS saying he ran, abandoning his son, and that his mother who was inside the house refused to take custody. Vice President JD Vance, in Minneapolis, defending the officers.

VICE PRESIDENT JD VANCE: Are they supposed to let a five-year-old child freeze to death?

VESPA: The family's attorney saying the boy and father entered the country lawfully and are seeking asylum.

MARK PROKOSCH: This family was not eluding ICE in any way. They were following the protocols.

VESPA: School officials says another adult begged to let them take care of the preschooler, but was refused and say multiple children have been detained in their district recently.

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT ZENA STENVIK: The onslaught of ICE in our community is inducing trauma and taking a toll on our children.

VESPA: Tensions continuing to rise in the city, in that appearance by the Vice President, acknowledging some officers make mistakes but blaming local politicians for stoking protests.

VANCE: Because of a few far-left agitators, a lot of these guys are unable to do their job.

VESPA: We followed up. [TO VANCE] What do you say to people here in Minnesota who say it is the overwhelming presence of officers and ICE officers and their tactics that make them feel

less safe?

VANCE: Well, one thing I would say is, first of all, in 2025 we saw the biggest one-year drop in murders in the history of the United States of America.

[SCREEN WIPE]

VESPA [TO VANCE]: Are you saying they're not perceiving it correctly?

[SCREEN WIPE]

VANCE: I'm sure people are seeing a lot of things that would make any member of our national community feel upset — [SCREEN WIPE] — but this is the inevitable consequence of a state and local government that have decided they're not going to cooperate with immigration enforcement at all.

VESPA: So, another headline getting a lot of attention this morning is the Department of Justice arresting three demonstrators who were part of the high-profile protest at a local church, and this doctored photo of one of them on the right posted by the White House that appears to show her face altered to make it look like she is crying. You see the original posted by DHS on the left. A senior White House official confirming the image had been altered and an official white house account writing, "Enforcement of the law will continue. The memes will continue." A lawyer for that protester, who is herself a civil rights attorney, blasting the arrest, saying the demonstration was peaceful, Craig.

MELVIN: Maggie Vespa for us there in Minneapolis. Maggie, thank you.