

Massive ICE workplace raid jails 280 immigrant workers in Texas

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Agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided an Allen, Texas business on Wednesday morning and arrested 280 undocumented workers. The business, CVE technology, employs 2,100 workers who repair cell phones and other electronic devices. The business is the third largest employer in that city.

Some 200 law enforcement officers participated in the raid, rounding up the entire workforce and separating them into groups based on immigration status. Agents then forced workers to wear wristbands, labeling employees in green if they had legal status and yellow if they were suspected of being undocumented.

Yessenia Ponce, an employee of CVE, described the raid to NPR: “Man, it was crazy, “ she said. “We were working like a normal day. ... We just heard screaming, you know, people screaming and stuff. We went out and an officer just said 'follow my voice, follow my voice.'”

Those deemed by ICE to be undocumented were then transported to detention centers in four busses as helicopters flew overhead and local police patrolled the area. All of those arrested now face deportation.

Many will also face indefinite detention, including those with a prior criminal conviction. The US Supreme Court officially recognized this authoritarian rule in a recent 5-4 decision.

Protestors gathered outside of CVE to defend the immigrant workers as news spread of the police action. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, at least 100 people, including some relatives and friends of those arrested, gathered to demand the workers' release. Workers inside the facility began frantically calling and texting their family members as the raid unfolded, fearful of being separated from their loved ones forever.

Edgar Arrubala was among the worried family

members. A US citizen originally from Colombia, he said that his fiancé was among those detained. He told *Bizjournals.com*, “I was at home and she called me from somebody else's cell phone, She's probably going to be detained and they're going to try to deport her. I'm feeling really sad. I'm scared to think what's going to happen to her.”

Hilda Ramirez Duarte, a representative from the League of United Latin American Citizens, described the conditions under which immigrant workers at CVE labor to the local NBC affiliate:

“Some of these people have family members that have been working here for 10 and 15 years. So, these are not people who have not just arrived. These are people who have been with this company for years and have been in this country for years. It's sad because I understand that most of the people here are women and they are leaving behind their children... I talked to a young lady who is a teenager and she says, 'My mom is leaving myself, my brother, and two younger babies.' She's the only breadwinner in the household, so what's going to become of this family of four? We have similar situations all across the board.”

Wendy Armas, a worker from Guatemala, was among those detained but was later released. She told NBC, “These are hardworking people. These are not criminals, rapists or anything of that nature. They are hardworking people earning a living. The hardest thing was when the bus started taking off. It reversed out and then there was a long moment of silence, people crying, people saying, 'I'm going to leave this country and go back to my own.’”

One protestor, 19-year-old Luis Martinez, who was holding a sign saying “No human is illegal,” told the *Dallas Morning News*, “It's just something drastic, something you don't see every day in Allen, in Collin

County.”

According to media reports, ICE had been tipped off that CVE employed some workers with fraudulent I-9 documents. Over the course of the past year, the agency had been auditing the company’s files to search for irregularities.

The mass arrest of workers on Wednesday by ICE is the largest of its kind since a 2008 raid by that agency on an Iowa slaughterhouse that resulted in 398 arrests. It also follows a similar raid in the northeastern Texas city of Sumner at a trailer manufacturing plant in August of 2018 that saw 159 immigrant workers arrested.

A January 2019 ICE statement bragged that mass roundups of immigrant workers is the “new normal.”

The WSWs reported in March, “The number of businesses targeted for worksite investigations has increased by over 300 percent in the last year alone. In 2018, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) opened 6,848 worksite investigations compared to 1,691 in 2017, according to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement news release. Newsweek reported that since 2016, there has been a 650 percent surge in workplace arrests by ICE.”

The latest terror operation by ICE marks an escalation of the Trump administration’s assault on the immigrant population. In February of this year, 77,000 people were detained attempting to cross the southern border, the most in any month since 2009. Most of those detained were from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, including many unaccompanied minors.

Immigrant workers detained by ICE will face imprisonment without due process, deportation to countries devastated by US imperialism and ruled by criminal regimes, the separation of children from their parents, concentration camp style detention centers, abusive guards, and other arbitrary forms of punishment. This horror show is carried out with the support of both Democrats and Republicans.

Last week, President Trump cut off foreign aid to El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala in retaliation for the supposed failure of those countries to stem the tide of immigration to the US. This was followed by a threat to close the US border with Mexico.

The Trump administration is whipping up anti-immigrant xenophobia to fuel his far-right base, including in the police and military.

These far-right forces are being mobilized to take the police state infrastructure that has been erected to terrorize the immigrant population and turn it upon the working class as workers increasingly enter into struggle against the capitalism.



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