

Public outrage over ICE abduction of two Honduran immigrant workers in Indianapolis

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24 March 2025

Public outrage is growing over the forcible apprehension of two Honduran workers by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Indianapolis on February 28. In a cellphone video that was captured from the point of view of the two workers, Jose Montoya-Lopez and Amner Nunez-Vasquez, one can witness the interaction between the workers and the officers who approached their vehicle.

An officer in a plaid shirt with a police vest is standing against the open passenger-side door. The vest indicates that he is with Enforcement and Removal Operations, which is a division of ICE. The officer is shown gripping Montoya-Lopez's wrist with one hand while pointing a taser at his chest with the other.

Frightened and confused, the two men continue to ask in Spanish what they've done, only to be harassed by the agents yelling at them to show identification and open the door. Tensions begin to rise as officers from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are shown arriving on the scene.

That is when Montoya-Lopez attempts to break his hand free from the agent's grip and is forcefully removed from the vehicle and subsequently pinned to the ground. Nunez-Vasquez is seen getting forcefully removed from the driver's side and the video comes to an abrupt end as the officer reaches and grabs the phone.

The "arrest," which was far from a routine traffic stop, appeared to be a coordinated effort to target these workers and detain them for deportation. The video that the men were able to capture was later uploaded to the internet by a friend of Montoya-Lopez, Jeanette Kennedy.

Kennedy said in a video interview with wishtv.com, "The men who came to this van didn't read their rights to them." She continued, "They kept asking what they did and the officers weren't telling them anything. If anything, they should have said, 'We are pulling you over for such and such. This is what we need you to do.'"

"Neither of these men had weapons, I don't understand why they needed to have weapons drawn on them," Kennedy added.

Throughout the video, the officers never once provide a reason for the stop. Public records show that neither of the

workers face criminal charges from the traffic stop at this time.

News 8, a local new station, spoke to the wife of Montoya-Lopez, who said she had no idea why he was targeted. She also stated that she is hoping for his eventual safe return as he is the main provider for their family and supports the treatment for their handicapped 3-year-old daughter.

After the abduction, authorities report that the workers were transferred to an immigration holding facility in Clay County, Indiana, about 65 miles southwest of Indianapolis. Public records show that Montoya-Lopez was later transferred to Alexandria Staging Facility, a 72-hour hold detention site in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, near an airport used for deportation flights. Vasquez-Nunez still remains in Indiana at the Clay County Justice Center.

As of this writing, the men remain in these detention facilities. Lopez's family continues to try to unravel the reasons for his targeting. As reported in an article on WTHR.com, after examining some of the documents, immigration attorney John Broyles stated that it appeared that Lopez had an outstanding removal order and a warrant for his arrest and that he was served a notice to appear, which "starts or initiates the removal process."

However, friend-of-the-family Kennedy stated that the family claims he did go to his immigration hearing. In fact, the family has stated that both men had work visas with them in the van. The family is currently working with an attorney to reach Lopez, but is having difficulties. Lopez's wife fears that they could be deported at any time.

The WWSWS spoke to workers and residents in northwest Indianapolis at a local shopping center about the attacks on the two Honduran workers. One resident noted, "Indianapolis is home to some of the largest immigrant communities in the country, including Mexican and Burmese immigrants, as well as many others from South and Central America and Asia.

"The attacks on immigrants have already started, but they are not going to stop and they are only going to worsen. We need to unite the working class across political and ethnic lines to take control of our communities and make real, lasting change from the ground up."

Another resident said, "I will get these articles to my coworkers to read this. I am from Palestine, so I know exactly

what this is about.”

An older resident had a great deal to share: “We are doing the same thing at our church, speaking out against it. It’s not right. I’m old enough to remember the back of the bus and segregated places to eat. Places and schools I couldn’t go to.” He continued, “I know when some people hear ‘diversity,’ they think we’re taking. All we want is the same field and same opportunity.”

Referring to the attacks on immigrants, he said, “It worries me because I have grandkids, I wonder what they will have. It cannot continue to go in this direction. We’re over here to work together.

“I worked all my life and these guys are talking about eliminating Social Security. That’s all I’ve ever known. Now you’re telling me it’s not mine anymore? I’ve worked since I was 14 years old starting out in the potato fields and working with other crops. We couldn’t get a real job, so we had to go to the fields.”

He continued, “Things I’m seeing now feel like it was back then. I hear it when I watch the news, it feels like the 1960s. We can’t go back! One thing I know, if we sit around and don’t do anything, they win. We all have to speak out; it makes a difference. We can’t wait for the other guys. With these inequalities, the cavalry isn’t coming, we’re the cavalry, it’s going to be up to us.”

A woman and her son, while putting their groceries away, spoke about the need for actual opposition, “The Democrats are not doing anything at all, there is zero opposition coming from them. The pink clothes, the little signs, meanwhile people are having their livelihoods upended. We are the only opposition there is. Whatever this is [gesturing to the world at large], is not enough, we need more action.”

Highlighting how US officials can essentially use any excuse to kidnap immigrant workers, a young student stated, “I didn’t hear about the Honduras workers. But I know someone that was picked up for drunk driving and they used that to get picked up by ICE.”

Another young student remarked, “Thank you for doing this, someone has to do this, but it seemed like no one was. Thank you for bringing this news to everyone, it is very important for us to know the truth and to know that workers are the ones that need to fight this.”

An older gentleman also stated that “If we do not fight this, we stand to lose everything. All of the progress we’ve made.”

On March 9, at a small rally organized by the Indy Liberation Center, demonstrators spoke to the WSWS about the fascist attacks on immigrant workers by the Trump administration. One attendee said, “It’s just an illegal precedent for going after citizens.” Another attendee attacked the Democratic Party and said, “They were doing the genocide in Gaza before, so of course they won’t [oppose anything]. They’re never going to walk out of anything because they don’t want to give people the example that they could do that. They do not represent

workers.”

Another pointed out that the Democrats are “pathetic” and said, “Even the spending bill, they just gave up on it. We were talking in our family they’re so weak and so lame, but they have the same donors as Republicans. A lot of our kids were big Bernie Sanders supporters in 2016 and even 2020, but he never got anywhere. He wants to [reform] from within, and a lot of the Democrats wouldn’t even support Bernie probably.”

The detention of the two Honduran workers has sparked confusion and fear among the immigrant population. However, there is mass outrage and opposition to the assault in the working class and among young people throughout the country and around the world.

It is worth noting that Indiana has a history that is marked by intense labor struggles and the willingness of the working class to fight for what it deserves. One cannot mention the history of Indianapolis without mentioning the great working class and socialist leader Eugene Debs. Debs led a major 10-month strike against the CB&Q Railroad in 1888 and he was instrumental in founding the American Railway Union (ARU), one of the nation’s first industrial unions.

As the leader of the ARU, Debs was convicted of federal charges for defying an injunction against the strike and went on to serve six months in prison. It was in prison that Debs read many works of socialist theory and later emerged committed to the international revolutionary socialist movement.

The workers of Indiana have a rich history of class struggle and the fight for socialism. Workers and residents of Indiana, as well as workers internationally, must organize independently of the two capitalist parties and their paid agents in the union apparatus.

What is required is the building of independent rank-and-file committees for the purpose of mobilization of the enormous power of the working class against the capitalist system, which is the source of the attacks on immigrant workers and all previous gains workers have made in over a century of struggle. Workers and young people who want to fight must emphatically reject any attempt to subordinate their struggles to the corpse of the capitalist Democratic Party.

The way forward is through the development of a network of rank-and-file committees, under the umbrella of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), in workplaces, neighborhoods and factories to coordinate and organize a fight to protect democratic rights based on a socialist program.



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