GM workers denounce ICE operation outside Factory Zero in Detroit

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Detroit residents recorded masked agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) stopping and detaining motorists Monday morning outside the General Motors Factory Zero assembly plant. The factory is located on the border of Detroit and the heavily immigrant enclave of Hamtramck.

In a video posted on Reddit, at least four unmarked vehicles can be seen boxing in a white van on the service drive just outside one of the main driveway exits at the GM plant. Masked agents can be seen in front of and on the side of the van. A witness posted: "I saw ICE today at 9:35am outside Factory 0 on Grand Blvd. No uniforms, vests marked ERO for Enforcement and Removal Operations."

The action by federal agents in the industrial center of Detroit, just outside a factory with more than 2,100 autoworkers, is a major provocation against the working class. It is part of the rapid expansion of ICE operations in Detroit and cities across the country, as Trump's paramilitary squads are redeployed after "Operation Metro Surge" in Minneapolis.

"I condemn the deployment of ICE agents in Detroit and surrounding communities and call on workers to prepare collective action to defend our immigrant brothers and demand the removal of ICE from Detroit and every city," Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker from Pennsylvania who is running for UAW president, said in a statement issued Monday.

"After the mass kidnappings of immigrant workers and children in Minneapolis and the murders of Renée Good and ICU nurse and union brother Alex Pretti, Trump is expanding the use of paramilitary forces nationwide. This assault is aimed not only at immigrants but at the entire working class."

On February 2, ICE agents arrested two Amazon Flex workers in the Detroit suburb of Hazel Park. Two Venezuelan men—Edwin Vladimir Romero Gutierrez and Angel Junior Rincon Perez—were taken by ICE agents after entering the Amazon delivery facility, where they were reporting for work.

On February 8, ICE agents seized 23-year-old Alcides Caceres who came from Honduras to Detroit at the age of four, graduated from Cass Tech High School and attended Wayne State University. ICE operations in Minneapolis and around the country have provoked high school walkouts across the Detroit metro area.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has purchased a 260,000-square foot vacant commercial building in Romulus, near the Detroit Metropolitan Airport, and plans to convert it into a 500-bed detention facility. Over the last year, ICE operations in Michigan saw a 230 percent increase in arrests in 2025 compared to 2024, with nearly three-quarters of those arrested having no prior criminal history.

"This is not the US I know," a veteran GM worker told WSWS reporters, who informed him about the ICE operation just outside the plant earlier that day. "We don't need ICE here. Trump is trying to frighten us. Look what happened in Minneapolis with the killing of two US citizens. They're not just going after immigrants; they're going after all of us. Now, they're building a detention center in Romulus.

"This is definitely connected to the elections. Trump is targeting the blue states. He doesn't even want us to vote in an election. The UAW should be protecting workers at GM, Ford and Stellantis from this. All any of us are trying to do is to work and earn a living. This has to stop."

"ICE is being sent to factories in Detroit?" a young worker asked with shock and concern. "People who shouldn't have anything to worry about, both immigrants and citizens, now have something to worry

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about. Their everyday lives can be disrupted at any point." He connected this to Trump's threats to cancel or manipulate the midterm elections. "He's saying they're going to check everybody's IDs at the election booths because he wants to stay in power. It's like they want to stop you from voting."

Asked what he thought of the call for a general strike that emerged from Minneapolis, he said, "That would be a huge hit to the billionaires that back Trump. If you think about everybody that's unionized doing it, that's a lot of people. You got hospitals, us as autoworkers, construction and stuff. It's a lot of people."

His friend added, "I feel the same way. We have to stop all that stuff they're doing. Killing people in cold blood in Minneapolis. When you don't do anything, you're pretty much just letting them win."

"The fact that ICE is right in front of us, that's horrible," another veteran worker said. "How are you going to come take people on stolen land? Trump is just trying to create fear. Look what they did in Minneapolis. What's going on right now is unnecessary. You saw Trump give that worker at Ford the middle finger because he said the truth, and when you do that in front of everybody it hurts. The elites they have an agenda. They're trying to keep us divided.

"Trump already said that Detroit is one of the cities, along with Philadelphia and others, that he plans on occupying. You saw how he seized the ballots in Atlanta. They're trying to terrorize people. I hope that more and more workers will begin talking and educating each other. The only way we can stop this is by coming together."

The operation by ICE agents occurred only a few miles from the United Auto Workers "Solidarity House" national headquarters. But the UAW has not issued any statements opposing this provocation or defending its members at Factory Zero. Earlier this year, the UAW bureaucracy was also silent when GM laid off 1,100 workers at the factory.

"To defend their wealth and power, the corporate and financial oligarchy is determined to destroy our jobs, public schools and social programs and launch new wars—and it knows this requires suppressing what it calls the 'enemy within,' the working class," Will Lehman continued in his statement.

He concluded:

UAW President Shawn Fain recently said, "Fascism is back on our doorstep," and warned that workers are "fooling themselves" if they think what happened to Pretti "could not happen on a UAW picket line." But beyond voting for Democrats in the midterms—who are functioning as Trump's enablers—Fain proposes no action.

The real way to fight dictatorship was shown by autoworkers in Detroit, Flint, Toledo and other cities in the 1930s. They used their collective strength against Hitler-admirer Henry Ford, anti-immigrant demagogues like Father Coughlin, and the Black Legion and other fascist gangs used by GM. Led by socialist militants, they united workers of all races and nationalities in struggle against the corporations and both big business parties.

Today, such a fight requires breaking the grip of the UAW bureaucracy, which backs Trump's chauvinist campaign against our brothers in Mexico, Canada and beyond. Workers must build rank-and-file committees in every factory, workplace, school and neighborhood to link the defense of jobs and living standards with the defense of democratic rights. That means taking up the call from Minneapolis for a general strike to end Trump's reign of terror, remove ICE from every city, and hold accountable those responsible for violating our constitutional rights.

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