

A week after ICE raid in South Burlington, Vermont, 1 detainee free, 2 remain in custody

Mike Ingram
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Dozens of protesters gathered outside the Burlington Federal Courthouse in Vermont on Tuesday, March 17, as 31-year-old Christian Jerez Andrade from Honduras appeared before a judge. The previous Wednesday, March 11, a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid in South Burlington swept up three individuals, including Jerez, who were not targets of the ICE operation.

District Court Judge William K. Sessions III said on Monday, March 16 that he was considering Jerez's immediate release but could not proceed because ICE claimed it had no one available to transport him to court from the Northwest State Correctional Facility, about 45 minutes north.

At the hearing the next day, Sessions said the situation was too confusing to order Jerez's immediate release. This baseless decision came after the government's attorney, Kaitlin Hazard, said during the hearing that she believed there may be warrants for Jerez's arrest based on records she reviewed. Hazard had not verified whether those warrants were active, she told the judge. Jerez, who took the stand Tuesday, denied knowing of any active warrants for his arrest.

On Monday, March 16, a federal judge freed one of three people swept up in the fascistic assault in South Burlington last week. Jisella Johana Patin Patin, who goes by Johana, a 31-year-old asylum seeker from Ecuador, left the US District Court in Burlington on Monday, welcomed by her husband and a crowd of hundreds of supporters who had gathered outside the courthouse. Organizers said Johana was going directly to see her two daughters, ages 4 and 8, who attend school in South Burlington. A hearing for Daysi Camila Patin Patin, Johana's 20-year-old sister, is scheduled for March 20.

Ruling from the bench, District Judge Geoffrey Crawford ordered Johana's release, calling her petition essentially uncontested. Johana's attorney, Kristen Connors, said she plans to discuss with her client whether to pursue further legal action over what she called a clear constitutional violation. The door of Johana's home was broken down in the South Burlington raid, and she was detained using a warrant that did not carry her name.

The arrests of the three individuals came after an ICE enforcement operation in South Burlington on March 11, which resulted in a chaotic nine-hour standoff and the discharge of a

federal agent's weapon.

ICE Deportation Officer Colton Riley conducted surveillance at 337 Dorset Street and observed two men entering a Toyota Camry, erroneously believing the driver was Deyvi Daniel Corona-Sanchez. This identification was based on registration data for a vehicle Corona-Sanchez had previously owned but no longer possessed. The driver, in fact, was a teenage boy who is an American citizen. This faulty surveillance led to a high-risk vehicle pursuit through a busy morning corridor near South Burlington High School and Tuttle Middle School, resulting in several collisions before the occupants fled into 337 Dorset Street.

ICE agents had targeted Corona-Sanchez, claiming the 24-year-old Mexican national had been previously deported in 2022 and was facing a pending DUI charge in Middlebury, Vermont. Federal agents possessed only an administrative warrant issued by an immigration official, which was not signed by a judge. Internal agency memos, like the one signed by ICE Director Todd Lyons in May 2025, claim these documents are sufficient for home entry. However, US District Judge Jeffrey M. Bryan of Minnesota ruled against this in January 2026 and ordered the release of a detainee after ICE forced entry with only an administrative warrant, finding it a violation of the Fourth Amendment.

Migrant Justice, a 2,000-member grassroots organization, activated its Rapid Response Network at 8:30 a.m. and mobilized over 200 protesters who surrounded the home at 337 Dorset Street. The protesters formed a physical blockade, linking arms to prevent ICE from reaching the door. Under conditions in which events were livestreamed across social media, and with the community and local media watching, ICE agents were forced to wait nearly nine hours for a criminal warrant signed by a federal judge.

By 5 p.m., a judicial warrant signed by Magistrate Judge Kevin Doyle was used as the justification for breaching the home at 5:30 p.m., when Vermont State Police troopers used a battering ram to smash down the door, enabling ICE agents to rush the interior.

A witness inside, José Jerez, reported that during entry to the house an officer tripped while chasing residents and accidentally discharged their service weapon. While no one was

struck, this was acknowledged as a significant operational safety failure that could have been disastrous.

To clear a path for federal agents, flash-bangs, pepper balls and pepper spray were deployed against protesters. Vermont State Police claimed that while they were present to “protect members of the public and ... law enforcement who were carrying out a lawful court order,” all chemical agents and less-lethal munitions were deployed exclusively by federal agents. South Burlington Police similarly stated that officers did not deploy chemical agents or less-lethal munitions.

A state police Critical Action Team in riot gear helped clear a path through protesters to the door, and ICE agents brought out three adults—none of whom was an initial target or named on the warrant.

Social media was flooded with scenes of police violently clearing the way for ICE; at least one officer was seriously injured. Gwendolyn Heaghney, a Winooski resident, told *Seven Days* that a Burlington officer threw her to the ground when she was trying to help a fellow protester who was being detained and struggling to breathe. Heaghney said she sought treatment at the University of Vermont Medical Center’s emergency department on Thursday and that she had suffered a concussion. She said she planned to seek legal remedy for what she called an assault, *Seven Days* reports.

By Thursday afternoon, March 12, three different federal judges in Vermont had issued emergency restraining orders blocking any planned transfers of the three detainees out of state. This was a critical intervention, as federal authorities have previously relocated detainees to distant jurisdictions as a tactic to disrupt legal defense, placing them beyond the reach of local attorneys.

Chief Judge Christina Reiss noted in her order regarding Daysi Patin that the young woman had been arrested in her own home without a warrant, and that the basis for her detention was not clear. Attorney Connors, representing Daysi’s elder sister Johana, emphasized in court filings that Johana’s name appeared nowhere on the judicial document used to force open the front door—a point Judge Crawford found essentially undeniable when ordering her release Monday.

ICE charged all three with illegally entering the country. The sisters entered through the southern border in 2023 and have pending asylum claims. Jerez, who has lived in the US since 2015, is facing separate removal proceedings in a Boston immigration court. He has a child who is a US citizen.

ICE did not explain why it detained the three people who were not the targets of its warrant. The government’s position at the release hearings was that anyone who crossed the border without authorization is subject to detention, a stance judges have repeatedly rejected.

The Dorset Street raid is only the latest and perhaps most visible ICE operation in Vermont. Major events of the past year include:

April 14, 2025: The Mohsen Mahdawi citizenship

trap. Mohsen Mahdawi, a Palestinian Columbia University student and legal permanent US resident, was detained at the US Citizenship and Immigration Services office in Colchester, Vermont, where USCIS had scheduled a citizenship interview, the final step in his naturalization process. After the interview concluded and he signed a pledge of allegiance, he was handcuffed by hooded, masked agents in unmarked vehicles and taken into custody.

April 21, 2025: The Pleasant Valley Farm raid. US Customs and Border Protection agents arrested eight migrant workers at Pleasant Valley Farms, a dairy in Berkshire, in the largest immigration enforcement action against migrant workers in Vermont in recent memory.

November 5, 2025: The Jeffersonville gas station roundup. Border Patrol agents detained several people at a Maplefields gas station on VT-15 in Jeffersonville during the early morning hours. An employee described people “running around and yelling” as immigration officers rounded up more than 10 people.

A bipartisan effort is underway across the state, with Vermont Republican and Democratic politicians criticizing the federal operation while covering up the role of local and state police. Republican Governor Phil Scott called the operation “totally unnecessary.” He has since directed the Vermont State Police to plan uniform changes so that troopers are more visibly distinguishable from federal immigration agents.

The state’s federal congressional delegation is made up of Democrats and nominal independents such as Bernie Sanders. In a joint statement along with Senator Peter Welch and Representative Becca Balint, Sanders called the ICE action “irresponsible, reckless and unprofessional.” Sanders said only that ICE created a crisis and had failed to arrest the person they were pursuing, and instead arrested three people not named on the warrant.

Attempts to present local and state police as an opposition to ICE are as transparent in the Dorset Street raid as in ICE operations across the country. While the overwhelming majority of the population is hostile to Trump’s fascist anti-immigration assault, these raids are not opposed by the Democrats. As Bernie Sanders said on *The Tim Dillon Show* podcast in October 2025, “Trump did a better job. I don’t like Trump, you know, but we should have a secure border. ... Biden didn’t do it.” He added, “If you don’t have any borders, you don’t have a nation.”



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