

South Texas horror: 7 immigrants, including 14-year-old boy, die after being trapped in rail container

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In a horrific scene Sunday afternoon, a Union Pacific worker in Laredo, Texas, found six people dead inside a railcar. A seventh person, believed to be part of the same group, was found dead Monday roughly 150 miles away, next to a rail line outside San Antonio, Texas.

These deaths are the direct result of the fascistic and anti-human immigration policies championed by Trump and embraced by both political parties. Immigrants, fleeing desperate economic conditions and US-backed dictatorships, are being forced to make dangerous and deadly choices in order to survive.

The deaths are believed to be linked to a human smuggling operation involving people from Mexico and Honduras attempting to enter the United States. It remains unclear whether only seven people were attempting to cross or if they were part of a larger group.

As of this writing, the names of all the deceased have not been publicly released. Authorities have identified five of the six people found in Laredo: a 14-year-old boy from Honduras, a 24-year-old man from Honduras, a 29-year-old woman from Mexico, and two Mexican men, ages 45 and 56, according to the Webb County Medical Examiner's Office. The sixth person has not yet been identified.

An autopsy performed by Dr. Corinne Stern, the Webb County medical examiner, determined that the woman died from hyperthermia, or heat stroke. While autopsies have not yet been completed for the others, the medical examiner said it was "highly probable" that the rest of the group also died from hyperthermia.

Dr. Stern estimated that the group suffered for hours in the oppressive heat before succumbing. "Based on my examination on the scene and what I know of from the investigation, I really believe they were dead in less than eight hours," Stern said.

In her 10 years as a medical examiner along the border, Stern noted that it was not unusual for immigrants to die trying to cross the border, but that this spring "has been

busier than it was this time last year."

The deaths are part of a decades-long policy of state murder at the border. Since 1994, when the Clinton administration launched "prevention through deterrence" through Operation Gatekeeper and related measures, the US government has deliberately sealed off safer urban crossing routes and forced migrants to cross deserts, rivers, mountains, and into railcars and tractor-trailers. Human Rights Watch notes that US Border Patrol has reported about 10,000 deaths since 1994, while local rights groups believe the real toll is far higher, with many thousands more disappeared.

The International Organization for Migration's Missing Migrants Project has recorded more than 5,200 deaths and disappearances at the US-Mexico border from 2014 to 2023 alone, including 686 in 2022, when it became the deadliest land migration route in the world. The expansion of the border wall, surveillance towers, roads and military infrastructure has compounded the death toll while devastating fragile border ecosystems, cutting through wildlife corridors, floodplains and indigenous lands.

In a press conference Monday, Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar said a seventh body had been found near train tracks outside San Antonio and is believed to be connected to the same group. Salazar said sensors on the containers alerted Union Pacific that they had been opened near the area and earlier in Del Rio, Texas, where the train originated.

Salazar said the deceased was a male with a voter registration card from Mexico and that he was found in a "state of decomposition." Salazar estimated that temperatures in the sealed containers rose to between 120 and 150 degrees Fahrenheit, or roughly 49 to 66 degrees Celsius. South Texas in May is already sweltering, with temperatures this past weekend exceeding 90 degrees, or 32 degrees Celsius.

Salazar confirmed that the containers "cannot be opened

from the inside” and that they are “air-tight, water-tight.” He hypothesized that someone opened the container from the outside on Saturday and that the male either fell out or was thrown out.

Salazar revealed that on Saturday a person in distress trapped in one of the boxcars contacted a relative. That relative then called the San Antonio Police Department and reported that the person was trapped in a boxcar, that it “was getting very, very hot” and that they were in “physical trouble.” Salazar said San Antonio police were dispatched to investigate Saturday but did not locate the container.

In addition to local police, Homeland Security Investigations and Customs and Border Protection agents have been dispatched to ascertain the victims’ identities, investigate the deaths and locate the alleged smugglers.

The blood of these immigrants is only the latest social crime committed by the Trump administration. At least 50 immigrants have died in ICE or immigration detention since Trump returned to office, including 32 in 2025 and 18 so far in 2026.

On the orders of fascist White House adviser Stephen Miller, ICE has been deployed to cities and airports to disappear people. ICE is currently holding about 60,000 immigrants in detention. Since nearly 90 percent of ICE detainees are held in privately operated or for-profit facilities, roughly 54,000 people are imprisoned in the private detention system.

While the Trump administration has intensified attacks on immigrants, which serve as a spearhead of dictatorship, the campaign to divide workers based on nationality and expand the border police has been bipartisan.

During the Biden administration, 53 immigrants died after they were locked in the back of a sweltering tractor-trailer in San Antonio in June 2022. Among the dead were 47 adults and six children. Ignoring the deaths, the Biden administration continued to use the CDC’s Title 42 expulsion policy as a mass asylum-blocking measure until May 2023, forcing immigrants to remain in Mexico or try their luck with smugglers.

While two adults were sentenced to life in prison for their role in the June 2022 mass casualty event, no one from the Biden administration has been charged in relation to the deaths, even though the policies of the US government are to blame.

These anti-immigrant and anti-human policies are not confined to the United States. They are the policy of every major capitalist government. In Europe, the Mediterranean has been transformed into a vast graveyard by the anti-immigrant policies of the European Union, Britain and their allied regimes in North Africa and the Middle East. Police and coast guard agencies carry out illegal “pushback”

operations, deny rescue to sinking vessels and force desperate men, women and children into longer and more dangerous crossings. Thousands have drowned at sea as a direct consequence.

The same dynamic has produced mass casualty events across Europe. In October 2019, the bodies of 39 migrants were found in the back of a freight lorry in Grays, Essex, in the United Kingdom. As the WSWS wrote at the time, the deaths were the outcome of Britain’s brutal “deterrence” regime and the broader European policy of “Fortress Europe,” which had forced refugees into sealed containers, refrigerated trucks and other deadly routes.

Everywhere, the ruling class responds to the crisis created by capitalism with repression. The major powers are spending feverishly on war, rearmament, border walls, detention camps, police and military technology, while insisting there is no money for schools, healthcare, housing, social programs, or relief from poverty. The same governments that claim society cannot afford the basic necessities of life find unlimited resources for imperialist war abroad and the persecution of immigrants at home.

These deaths expose the reactionary character of the capitalist nation-state system itself. Under conditions of war and reaction, the ruling classes have turned the planet into what Leon Trotsky described in 1940 as “a foul prison,” divided by passports, visas, border guards and police checkpoints.

Immigrants are not the problem. They are victims of the same capitalist system that exploits workers in every country, destroys whole societies through war and poverty, and then criminalizes those who try to escape the wreckage. The answer is the international unity of the working class against capitalism and the nation-state system on which it rests.



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