

ICE escalates violent enforcement operations across Detroit metro area

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Within a span of less than three weeks, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have conducted two violent vehicular pursuits in residential Detroit neighborhoods, leaving two asylum seekers severely injured and triggering a growing outcry from immigrant communities and civil rights organizations.

The incidents expose the lawless character of the Trump administration's immigration crackdown and its deliberate targeting of vulnerable workers who entered the United States legally seeking protection. Both victims—a Venezuelan woman and a Mauritanian man—had applied for asylum through official channels. Both were subjected to high-speed chases through city streets by federal agents operating in plainclothes and unmarked vehicles. Both were denied access to their families while hospitalized.

May 19: Yerlys Moreno López tackled and injured by ICE agents

On the morning of May 19, Yerlys Moreno López, a Venezuelan asylum seeker who had entered the United States through legal channels in 2024, had just left her home on Detroit's east side when ICE agents attempted to pull her over. After a chase that ended when her car struck a parked vehicle, Moreno López exited her car and was immediately tackled to the ground by agents.

In a sworn statement, Moreno López described what followed: "I exited my car. Two ICE agents tackled me to the ground. One, with orange hair and a beard, grabbed my hair and pulled my shirt." The assault fractured her kneecap, lacerated her other knee requiring eight stitches, abraded her right forearm, and left her with a blow to the head and additional bruising—injuries that required emergency surgery.

ICE's account flatly contradicts hers: the agency claims she sustained all injuries in the crash. But medical records

submitted by her attorneys undercut this claim. Hospital staff documented that Moreno López told them repeatedly, within hours of the incident, that her injuries occurred after she had already gotten out of the vehicle.

The Detroit Medical Center's Detroit Receiving Hospital, where she underwent surgery, refused to provide any updates to her husband or allow visitors—apparently under pressure from the ICE agent stationed at the hospital. Moreno López was subsequently transferred to the North Lake detention center, a facility operated by the GEO Group, one of the country's largest private prison corporations. Attorneys filed a petition for habeas corpus in federal court seeking her release, citing both the unlawfulness of her detention and the inadequacy of medical care available at the detention facility.

Lopez's husband, who refused to identify himself because of fear of retribution, visited her in the hospital but was told she was in surgery. When he returned later, he found out that the hospital had bowed to pressure from ICE and refused to provide any information on her or confirm she was receiving treatment.

Christine Sauvé, spokesperson for the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, described the pattern as a public health crisis. "These incidents are not just a matter of immigration policy, but also civil rights and healthcare for vulnerable individuals," she said. "Patients like Yerlys may suffer harm when returned to immigration detention where specialty medical care is routinely unavailable or inadequate, despite the laws and policies requiring it."

June 4: Mohammad (Mohamd) Salim Abdessamed impaled in ICE pursuit

Less than three weeks later, on the morning of June 4, ICE agents conducted what the agency described as a "targeted enforcement" traffic stop near Whitlock and Warwick on

Detroit's west side. The target was Mohammad (Mohamd) Salim Abdessamed, a 23-year-old Mauritanian asylum seeker who had been in the United States for approximately two years.

According to family members, Abdessamed fled because he did not recognize his pursuers: they were traveling in unmarked civilian vehicles and wearing plainclothes. He had no way of knowing they were federal agents. ICE, for its part, claims he struck three government vehicles and pinned an agent's leg in a car door before fleeing—but provides no independent corroboration of this account.

The pursuit ended catastrophically. Abdessamed lost control of his Chevrolet Malibu, which crashed through a fenced yard, landed on top of two parked vehicles, and was brought to a halt by a metal pole from the fence—which impaled him in the chest and upper body. Detroit Fire Department personnel found him conscious but critically injured. He was transported to Corewell Health in Dearborn in critical condition.

His family faced an information blackout. Hospital staff at Corewell Health told relatives they had “instructions not to give any information” because Abdessamed was in ICE custody. An ICE agent was stationed at the facility. In the immediate aftermath, his family publicly stated they did not even know whether he was alive.

Several days after the crash, ICE confirmed to reporters that Abdessamed had survived his injuries and surgery and was in stable condition. The agency provided no further details about his medical situation, his location, or the immigration actions he faces. Community organizations and his family continue to report that they are being shut out from direct contact with him.

A pattern of lawless state violence

These two cases are not aberrations. They are the visible bloody surface of a deportation machine operating with deliberate brutality and near-total impunity. The Trump administration has granted ICE an expansive mandate to conduct enforcement with no meaningful constraint—no requirement to identify themselves in plainclothes operations, no obligation to notify families, no accountability for injuries caused during pursuits or arrests.

The conduct of hospitals in both cases reveals the extent to which ICE intimidation has penetrated civilian institutions. Both the Detroit Medical Center and Corewell Health Dearborn refused to provide medical updates to family members of ICE detainees—abandoning elementary

obligations of care and transparency in deference to federal agents. The GEO Group's North Lake detention center, where Moreno López was transferred, refused to comment to reporters, deferring entirely to ICE. These are private corporations and nominally independent medical institutions that act as extensions of a police-state apparatus.

It is also significant that both victims entered the country through legal channels to seek asylum—a right enshrined in U.S. and international law. The Trump administration's enforcement regime makes no distinction between those with pending asylum claims and those who entered unlawfully. The target is not illegality; it is the immigrant working class as a whole.

The Democratic Party's role in this situation warrants direct scrutiny. Michigan has two Democratic U.S. senators and a Democratic governor. Detroit is governed by Democrats at every level. One of the two House members from Detroit, Rashida Talib, is a member of the Democratic Socialist of America (DSA). Yet there has been no serious political challenge to ICE operations in the city—no move to withhold state resources, no legislative action to constrain the agency, no demand that hospitals be legally protected from ICE pressure on patient confidentiality. The Democratic Party has not opposed the deportation machine; it has accommodated it.

Meanwhile, Detroit police are prohibited by department policy from engaging in high-speed vehicular pursuits for low-level, non-violent offenses—a restriction enacted after years of community pressure following crashes that killed bystanders. ICE operates under no such constraint. Federal agents can chase an asylum seeker through residential streets at any speed, without identification, and when that pursuit ends in near-fatal injury, they face no investigation, no discipline and no legal accountability.

The working class—immigrant and native-born alike—must conduct its own response to this escalation. The targeting of asylum seekers is an attack on the entire class. State repression directed at the most vulnerable workers today lays the political and institutional groundwork for repression of all workers tomorrow. The defense of immigrant workers is inseparable from the defense of democratic rights and the independent political organization of the working class against both parties of American capitalism.



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