

ICE murder in Houston: Trump's war against the working class

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The killing of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, shot down by an agent of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Monday morning on Houston's east side, was a state-sanctioned murder.

Salgado was 52 years old. Born in Mexico, he moved to Houston at 17 and spent his entire adult life building hundreds of houses, according to his family, including the one they live in. There are thousands of people in Houston who have a roof over their heads because of Salgado and his co-workers.

Salgado and his wife have three sons, all of whom graduated from college. One is now a schoolteacher in Houston, another an engineer in Washington DC. Ronaldo Salgado, the teacher and oldest son, has given a series of moving statements honoring his father's memory as a hard worker, provider and a caring parent, while spelling out the family's demands for an investigation into his killing and the punishment of those responsible.

At least two witnesses reported hearing moaning or gurgling from the fatally wounded man, and one heard him call out in Spanish, "They're killing me." Ronaldo Salgado said he learned of his father's death, not from the authorities, who did not contact the family, but from a social media video an hour after the shooting. He told the press, "I recognized him immediately, not from his appearance, but from his voice, crying for help as he lay on the street, bleeding out."

Salgado's second son, Lorenzo, also saw the video. "Hearing him cry out in agony, and you know, seeing that he'd been shot, and they're not providing any first aid care, they're just on him, they're holding him down, letting him bleed like a dog," he told the *Texas Tribune*.

The Trump administration is responding to the killing with a cover-up. The acting ICE director claimed that there was no bodycam or dashcam video of the events leading up to Salgado's death, and the agency has announced it will not make public the name of the agent who fired the fatal shots.

Nor has any forensic evidence been released, indicating how Salgado could have been shot in the right side of his abdomen if the shots were fired while he was driving the van. The FBI has launched an investigation, not into the killing of Salgado, but into his alleged assault on a federal agent by "weaponizing" his vehicle. This is a transparent effort to smear the defenseless

victim and ensure the ICE agent goes scot free.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have also moved to preempt any local investigation. Their first action was to suppress the most important witnesses to the killing: the three construction workers riding in the van with Salgado—Victor Hugo Salgado Araujo (Salgado's younger brother), Jose Trinidad Rojas Pliego and Daniel Tirado Pantoja. All three were taken into custody and pressured to "self-deport." Tirado Pantoja remains confined in an ICE detention facility in Conroe, Texas.

After Trump's return to the White House, Salgado and his family had discussed what he should do if stopped by immigration patrols. They concluded he should remain calm and present papers showing he had applied for legal residence, with his son Ronaldo, an American citizen, as his sponsor. Yet according to ICE, Salgado suddenly decided to use his van as a battering ram to kill an ICE agent.

This account is just as preposterous as the claim made by ICE in Minneapolis that Renée Nicole Good had "weaponized" her car against an agent who then executed her with three shots at close range. After that murder, Vice President JD Vance declared that the shooter was "protected by absolute immunity ... he was doing his job."

The murder of Salgado is part of an escalating conspiracy against the democratic rights of the American people, aimed at establishing a presidential dictatorship. In ICE and CBP, the Trump administration is assembling the shock troops of this conspiracy, exempted in practice from every law and guaranteed immunity for murder by the gangster in the White House.

Acting at the direction of Trump's fascist deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller, ICE and CBP agents have stepped up the number of arrests and detentions to more than 10,000 in the first week of July. According to figures published by Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights last month, 52 immigrants died in ICE custody in the first 500 days of the second Trump administration.

At least 20 incidents have been reported of ICE agents firing into moving vehicles. Four people have now been killed in such attacks: Ruben Ray Martinez, in South Padre Island, Texas, on March 15, 2025; Silverio Villegas González, in Franklin Park,

Illinois, on September 12, 2025; Renée Nicole Good, in Minneapolis, on January 7, 2026; and now Lorenzo Salgado Araujo. Others, like Keith Porter Jr. in Los Angeles and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis, were shot to death by immigration agents while on foot.

In another notorious case, Marimar Martinez was shot five times in October 2025, allegedly for “ramming” immigration officers with her car. She survived, and charges against her were dropped when video evidence emerged showing that the federal agents initiated the collision. In virtually every encounter that has been recorded on video, the federal agents have been proven to be violent thugs and liars, but they have been protected by their bosses in ICE, DHS and the White House.

The war on immigrants is an attack on the most vulnerable section of the working class, aimed at splitting workers along national lines while the oligarchy plunders society. But the machinery being assembled is directed against the working class as a whole. A force that can murder an immigrant construction worker on his way to work and face no consequences can and will be turned against strikers, demonstrators and every form of popular opposition.

Already, billions have been appropriated for a network of concentration camps, databases of protesters and legal observers are being compiled, and in Texas itself federal courts have sentenced 15 anti-ICE protesters in the Prairieland case to a combined 556 years in prison on “terrorism” charges—while every ICE killer walks free.

In this campaign of state terror, the Democratic Party functions not as an opposition but as an accomplice. Houston’s Democratic congressional delegation has responded to the murder with a letter to the head of DHS and the acting ICE director, the very officials directing the cover-up, politely requesting an “independent” investigation. Such toothless appeals, to be filed away and ignored, are the sum total of the Democratic “opposition.”

When the murders of Good and Pretti brought 100,000 people into the streets of Minneapolis and raised the demand for a general strike, Democratic Governor Tim Walz deployed state troopers and the National Guard—not to protect immigrants, but to protect ICE. Walz hailed a partnership with Trump’s “border czar,” presenting the removal of most ICE agents as a “retreat” by Trump. In fact, it was a redeployment, to Houston and other cities.

After performative “no” votes arranged in advance with the Republican leadership, congressional Democrats dropped every demand for restrictions on the immigration police and cleared the way for the nearly \$70 billion Secure America Act, which funds ICE and CBP through the end of Trump’s term—on top of the \$170 billion already allocated, including \$45 billion for concentration camps.

The Democrats, a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, fear a movement of the working class

from below far more than they fear dictatorship. The fight for justice for Lorenzo Salgado Araujo therefore falls to the working class itself.

There is enormous and growing outrage over Salgado’s murder. On Wednesday, 1,500 people assembled on the spot where Salgado was killed, demanding justice and calling for ICE to leave Houston. The League of United Latin American Citizens launched a GoFundMe appeal for the family with a \$5,000 donation to support Salgado’s widow. By Thursday nearly \$300,000 had been contributed.

This outrage is part of the movement that brought 100,000 people into the streets of Minneapolis in January after the murders of Good and Alex Pretti. This movement must be armed with a program and perspective.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the formation of rank-and-file committees in every workplace, school and neighborhood as centers of resistance to the Trump dictatorship. The sentiment for a general strike that emerged in Minneapolis must be revived and organized in Houston and throughout the country.

Workers must demand the naming of the killer and his arrest and prosecution; the release of all video and forensic evidence; the immediate freeing of the three witnesses, beginning with Daniel Tirado Pantoja, and an end to all deportation proceedings against them; the dropping of the FBI’s frame-up investigation; and the withdrawal of ICE from Houston and every city. These demands must be connected to the fight to abolish ICE and CBP, close the detention camps and free all those imprisoned within them.

No appeal to the courts, the Democratic Party or the November elections will accomplish this.

The defense of the most vulnerable immigrant worker is the defense of the democratic rights of all working people, and the demand of the workers’ movement must be the right of workers to live and work in whatever country they choose.

Above all, the working class must be united—native-born and immigrant, across every industry and every border—in a common political movement against the Trump dictatorship, the oligarchy it serves and the capitalist system from which fascism arises. Dictatorship is the response of the ruling class to the deepening crisis of its own system. It can be answered only by the independent mobilization of the working class in the fight for socialism.



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