

The ICE murders in Maine and Texas and the lessons of Minneapolis

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On Monday morning, at the corner of Pool and Hill streets in the small city of Biddeford, Maine, Joan Sebastian Guerrero, a 26-year-old worker from Colombia with a valid work permit, Social Security number and active asylum claim, was murdered by federal immigration agents. Neighbors heard as many as seven gunshots ring out around 7:15 a.m. Eyewitness video shows agents pulling Guerrero out of his bullet-riddled vehicle, dropping him on the concrete and handcuffing him as he bled from his head.

His last words, according to witness Daniel Boucher, were, “I tried to stop.” Guerrero’s partner and his 3-year-old daughter, “wearing Bluey pajamas,” with a “pink rolling backpack,” according to the *Portland Press Herald’s* account, watched from the sidewalk as he bled out and died. His body remained handcuffed on the pavement for five hours.

The lie that has now become standard issue for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), that the victim had “weaponized his vehicle,” fell apart within hours. That was the story the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) first gave Senator Angus King, the same story told about Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, murdered in Houston six days earlier as he drove his co-workers to a construction site. When witnesses and video demolished that pretext, ICE retreated to the claim that Guerrero had “attempted to flee the scene” and that the officer fired “fearing for public safety.”

This second lie is, if anything, more sinister than the first. It abandons even the pretense of a threat. It is a public declaration that federal agents may gun down anyone, anywhere, for supposedly trying to drive away—an assertion of the right to murder.

The killings have provoked mass outrage. In Biddeford, hundreds of protesters flooded the streets within hours, rallying downtown and storming the local office of Senator Susan Collins. In Houston, demonstrations over Salgado’s murder have continued for a week, with demonstrations across the country planned for this weekend.

Reflecting concerns that the situation is extremely explosive, the Trump administration announced, through the office of Senator King, that ICE would “pause” non-urgent vehicle stops. However, border czar Tom Homan immediately issued a clarification: “It’s not a policy change; it’s a temporary

pause.” Homan told Fox News, “I wouldn’t even call this a bump in the road. This will be a short term review, so ICE feels comfortable.”

The reign of terror continues, with new assurances for the “comfort” of the ICE agents. Just yesterday another immigrant was killed, struck by a tractor-trailer in St. Augustine, Florida while fleeing ICE and Homeland Security Investigations agents, who have not explained why they approached him. The authorities have not even released the name of the victim, describing him only as a Mexican.

These murders raise critical political issues. It is now over six months since ICE agent Jonathan Ross shot and killed Renée Good in her car in south Minneapolis and just under six months since Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents gunned down Alex Pretti as he sought to protect a woman being assaulted by the agents. These murders came amidst a violent federal occupation of the Twin Cities that provoked weeks of protests, culminating in demonstrations in January involving tens of thousands in downtown Minneapolis. The call for a general strike against ICE became the central demand.

Confronted with a movement of the working class demanding the expulsion of ICE and the prosecution of the killers, the Democratic Party and the trade union apparatus worked systematically to shut it down. Governor Tim Walz mobilized the National Guard and state police against protesters. The trade union bureaucrats ordered workers to obey no-strike clauses in their contracts, converting the demand for a general strike into a “day of action.”

When the visible federal presence in Minneapolis was reduced through a deal between Walz and the Trump administration, the Democrats and their pseudo-left apologists proclaimed victory. The *World Socialist Web Site* warned against these complacent pronouncements. The paramilitary forces were being redeployed and the drive to dictatorship was being stepped up. That warning has been completely vindicated.

The agents withdrawn from Minneapolis street corners were dispersed as part of a nationwide occupation. ICE has been deployed to the nation’s airports and more than 40 states, reaching towns that previously had not suffered a federal enforcement presence. Meanwhile, a \$45 billion detention

buildout proceeds. The military occupation of American cities continues, with more than 2,600 National Guard troops in Washington D.C., 1,500 in Memphis—where a Guard soldier shot and killed 20-year-old Tyrin Johnson this month—and more in New Orleans.

The Posse Comitatus Act, which for nearly 150 years barred the military from domestic law enforcement, is a dead letter. On Tuesday, House Speaker Mike Johnson defended the Pentagon's request for an additional \$350 billion, on top of a record \$1.1 trillion budget, by declaring: "We're fighting communism on our very own shores."

Meanwhile, the killers remain under Department of Justice protection. Good's killer and Pretti's killers are free and uncharged. Only this week did Minnesota prosecutors finally obtain evidence federal authorities had withheld for half a year, prompting Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty, a Democrat, to thank her "federal partners" for helping "promote public trust."

The Democrats' toothless "reforms" of immigration enforcement were advanced to contain the popular movement and rehabilitate the deportation apparatus, not dismantle it. Before the killings, the Democrats had funded Trump's mass deportation operation without meaningful conditions. Once the protests receded, they dropped even their token reform proposals.

What terrifies the Democrats is not the buildup of a police state but the emerging mass movement from below that threatens the capitalist status quo.

Now, confronted with two more corpses, the Democrats are playing off of the identical script. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer declared Tuesday that "the killings won't stop until we stop the impunity that Trump and Republicans want to preserve." He knows that impunity is bipartisan. It was Schumer and the Democratic leadership who engineered the cynical maneuver that cleared the way for nearly \$70 billion in additional money for ICE and the Border Patrol through 2029. This is the money that hired, armed and dispatched Guerrero's killers.

Maine's congressional delegation issued a joint letter appealing to the Department of Homeland Security's own inspector general for a "comprehensive, transparent, and expedited investigation." The letter does not demand the identification or arrest of the killer, does not call for a halt to ICE operations, does not even condemn the killing, which it describes euphemistically as a "fatal shooting involving" ICE personnel. Its stated concern is that "timely and factual answers" provide "closure" and ensure that future operations are conducted "safely" and "lawfully."

Maine's Democratic Attorney General Aaron Frey knows the name of Guerrero's killer but is withholding it from the public, announcing only that the officer has been placed on leave.

A particularly foul role is played by Bernie Sanders, who has said nothing about either murder. His silence follows from his

embrace of Trump's anti-immigrant framework. Sanders has repeated the nationalist claim that without borders "you don't have a nation" and praised Trump for having "done a better job" than Biden in securing the border. His role, like that of the Democratic Party's entire nominal left, is to legitimize the deportation apparatus and block an independent movement of the working class against it.

The determination to fight exists in Biddeford, in Houston, in Minneapolis and throughout the country. What is required is an independent organization and program. Every official channel is a mechanism for strangling the movement while the machinery of terror is expanded and perfected for use against the entire working class.

The erection of a police state goes hand in hand with the waging of wars of conquest, as in Iran, to steal oil and other resources, including new sources of cheap labor. The cost is imposed on the working class, in the form of skyrocketing prices and the destruction of healthcare, education and jobs. State repression is the inevitable response to the mounting resistance of workers.

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) call for the building of independent workplace and neighborhood committees to prepare mass action, up to and including a general strike, against ICE terror and dictatorship. These committees must unite workers across industries, nationalities and immigration status, and establish direct links between the struggles in Houston, Biddeford, Minneapolis, Memphis and throughout the country.

The fight against ICE violence cannot be separated from the fight against dictatorship, and the fight against dictatorship cannot be separated from the fight against the financial oligarchy that supports it. The death squads in the streets, the drive to criminalize opposition and the White House conspiracy against the midterm elections all arise from the same source: a society in which staggering levels of inequality and wealth concentration can no longer be reconciled with democratic forms of rule.

The defense of democratic rights falls to the working class. It requires the fight for socialism and the reorganization of economic life to serve social needs, not the wealth of the oligarchs and their wars.



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