

Trump orders ICE traffic stops resumed as a fourth immigrant dies in 8 days

Tom Hall
16 July 2026

President Donald Trump on Wednesday overturned a temporary suspension of Immigration and Customs Enforcement traffic stops, less than 24 hours after it was announced. Trump intervened to prevent even a token restraint on ICE after its agents killed Lorenzo Salgado Araujo in Houston and Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero in Biddeford, Maine, and ordered the agency to continue the vehicle-stop operations through which it killed both men.

In an especially provocative social media post, Trump called traffic stops “one of I.C.E.’s most important and effective Crime Fighting tools,” praised the agency for doing a “GREAT job” and ordered agents to continue them. After denouncing the “Radical Left ‘Dumocrats,’” he assured ICE agents, “you are loved and respected in America.” This amounts to a statement of support for the murders of Salgado and Guerrero.

The temporary suspension itself constituted a transparent fig leaf. It restricted only ICE-initiated vehicle stops, which account for a small minority of the agency’s arrests, and exempted stops involving criminal warrants and joint operations. ICE could continue workplace raids, arrests at homes and courthouses, detention operations and the rest of its nationwide rampage.

But Trump’s refusal to tolerate even this token restriction makes clear that the ICE killings have the backing of the federal government, who are using the immigration Gestapo to terrorize immigrant workers as part of a broader attack on the democratic rights of the whole working class. The administration is doubtlessly also seeking to provoke a confrontation, as it did when an ICE surge in Minneapolis led to mass protests following the murders of Alex Pretti and Renee Nicole Good, that it can exploit to expand police-state measures.

Meanwhile, revelations of another death in ICE custody has brought the total to four dead in eight days. On Wednesday, ICE announced Jesús Manuel Arenas-Silva, a 45-year-old Venezuelan immigrant, allegedly died of cardiac arrest Monday while agents were transferring him between detention centers in Georgia. ICE arrested him July 9, only four days before he died. His family and immigrant advocates say ICE denied him necessary medication, while the agency claims he suffered cardiac arrest. He was the 22nd person to die in ICE custody this year.

On Tuesday, a 28-year-old Mexican immigrant was chased into traffic by ICE and fatally struck by a tractor-trailer near St. Augustine, Florida.

The FBI is adding on to Salgado’s murder with smears after the fact. Houston Public Media reported an FBI search-warrant

affidavit for Salgado’s impounded vehicle Wednesday for “what appeared to be a white crystal-like substance packaged in small bags,” which they claim was “consistent with methamphetamine.”

The bureau is using the insinuation of drugs, a week after the fact, to criminalize Salgado after his death and divert attention from the agents who killed him. In reality, Salgado and the other three occupants of his van were not even the targets of the operation. The pretext of this is completely flimsy. The affidavit reports no chemical testing and their description of the “small bags of white crystal-like substances” could easily fit packets of table salt.

Meanwhile, popular opposition continues to spread. Hundreds packed Houston City Hall on Tuesday to demand accountability for Salgado’s murderers, including more than 100 people registered to speak at a City Council meeting. Crowds filled the council chamber and an overflow room to capacity, while additional demonstrators gathered on the steps outside. Demonstrations also took place in Biddeford and Portland, Maine, and protesters gathered outside an ICE facility in Scarborough. Further protests are being planned nationwide over the weekend.

The Democratic Party is desperately trying to head off this growing movement. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries have called for investigations and “accountability,” while nearly 200 House Democrats sent a letter requesting ICE vehicle-stop guidelines and “training materials”—an absurdity that relegates the premeditated policy of murder by Trump to inadequate “training” for ICE thugs. Senator and supposed “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders waited most of a week to say anything before making a short social media post Monday.

The Democrats have no fundamental disagreement in principle with the mass-deportation program. The Obama and Biden administrations deported millions of people, expanded the detention and border-police apparatus and militarized police departments across the country. Trump is expanding upon the machinery they built and maintained.

In Houston, local Democrats are now posturing as opponents of ICE. Harris County District Attorney Sean Teare has announced an investigation into the killing. Mayor John Whitmire issued a statement calling for a 90-day national “moratorium” on ICE operations and has called on the Texas Rangers, the state police force controlled by the ultra-right Republican governor Greg Abbott, to investigate Salgado’s murder. Abbott has said that the

Rangers will conduct an investigation.

The Democrats' posturing is the height of cynicism. In April, the City Council passed an extremely limited ordinance restricting cooperation between the Houston Police Department and federal immigration agents. But after Governor Abbott threatened to withhold more than \$110 million in grants, Whitmire and the city council gutted the ordinance, deleting, among other provisions, language stating that an administrative ICE warrant that no judge had signed could not justify arrest or detention.

Whitmire also has extensive ties to the Texas Republican Party, even attending a private fundraiser for fascistic Congressman Dan Crenshaw last year. Formerly the longest-serving member of the state senate until stepping down after 40 years in 2023 to run for Houston mayor, Whitmire expresses in a more open form the essential unity of the basic class interests underlying both capitalist parties.

As mayor, he has carried out massive austerity, pushing more than 1,000 municipal employees into retirement through buyouts, and imposed \$122 million in spending cuts. The city froze hiring while exempting the police and fire departments. Whitmire simultaneously approved a police contract that raised salaries by 36.5 percent over five years.

In the City Council meeting, Houston Councilwoman Carolyn Evans-Shabazz berated the packed audience, essentially blaming them for not voting for Democrats. "There's not much we can do if we don't have you doing more than coming and talking and protesting. We need you at the polls," she declared, to the jeers and heckles of the audience.

WSWS reporters spoke with workers and young people at Tuesday's demonstration outside Houston City Hall. Their comments expressed the outrage and fear spreading through immigrant communities, deep distrust of both capitalist parties and a growing conviction that only independent action by the working class can halt the ICE terror.

One young woman said she "couldn't understand how someone who was unarmed, not trying to cause any harm, was murdered in cold blood."

"If ICE is able to shoot a man with a work permit who's in this country legally, then immigrants don't have rights," she continued. "Even if I'm born and raised in the US—maybe I don't have my documentation on me. They wouldn't know that. I was born here. I have nowhere else to go."

She rejected the racist conception of the United States promoted by Trump and his fascist thugs. "America is not only white. America is built on immigrants. America is an immigrant. We are not from here. None of us are from here. They're targeting people for simply their color."

An immigrant from Mexico, who asked not to be filmed and whose name is being withheld, said, "I couldn't believe it" when Salgado was killed. "It just hit me, because it could have happened to any one of us or anyone in my family."

The worker described how the killing and the expanding ICE dragnet had transformed daily life. Their children learn in school that the United States is "the land of freedom" where everyone has rights, but "after what they see, they're kind of confused because they don't know what to believe."

People in the community are "packing their stuff and leaving for Mexico because they don't want to end up like Lorenzo—killed." The worker's husband, who is seeking legal status, no longer takes their youngest son with him to construction sites. "He keeps telling me, 'I'm not going to take him anymore because I'm afraid that they may pull me over and something may happen to him.'"

The worker rejected any claim that the Democratic Party offered an alternative, saying that if either party had wanted to make a difference, "they would have made the difference a long time ago."

A young woman at the demonstration drew the same conclusion. "The Republican Party can do whatever they want, and it just happened. But the Democrat Party is always like, 'We have to be kind about this.' And it's never enough. It's always never enough."

She also denounced Mayor Whitmire and the City Council. Referring to Governor Abbott's threat to withhold \$110 million in state grants unless the city abandoned even its limited restrictions on police collaboration with ICE, she said, "All the money is going to war, to the police, to Wall Street ... and the people are still not safe."

She contrasted the council members' indifference to Salgado's killing with their attention to routine business: "The people we've put in power—when we were talking about Lorenzo, they were quiet. But when they were talking about some noise complaint, they were more than happy to comply."

A young person named Colton said what affected him most was "watching people getting killed in the streets." ICE agents "use deadly force like it's nothing," he said. "It's wrong. It shouldn't be done."

Colton said his generation was becoming increasingly politically active because young people were working but saw no improvement in their lives. "That's why I'm out here," he said. "I want to do my part. I want to be part of it."

He defended socialism against the anticommunist lies promoted by the political establishment. "It's the fullest democracy, because it is trying to bring power to the people, trying to bring the working class out of poverty."

When a WSWS reporter raised the need for workers to organize a general strike against ICE terror, the immigrant worker responded, "They have to feel ... how it's going to affect the country. So I believe that would be a good thing."

Colton expressed the same essential point in the clearest terms: "The working class are the gears that keep the machine moving. We are the gears. We are what makes the machine move. Without the working class there is none of this. We could go on a worldwide strike and shut down every government overnight."



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact