

“A badge and a gun do not give these agents a license to kill”: Anger boils over in Biddeford, Maine after ICE killing of Joan Sebastian Guerrero

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There is enormous anger in Biddeford, Maine, a working class city of about 22,000, over the murder of Joan Sebastian Guerrero, a 26-year-old worker from Colombia gunned down by federal immigration agents Monday morning as he drove to work. Guerrero, a husband and the father of a 3-year-old daughter, held a valid work permit, had been issued a Social Security number and had an active asylum claim. He was not the person Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was looking for.

Neighbors heard as many as seven gunshots ring out at about 7:15 a.m. at the corner of Pool and Hill streets. Eyewitness video shows agents dragging Guerrero from his bullet-riddled car and handcuffing him as he bled from his head. His last words, according to a witness, were, “I tried to stop.” His wife and daughter, still in her Bluey pajamas, watched from the sidewalk as he died. His body remained handcuffed on the pavement for five hours. None of the agents wore body cameras. Federal officials refuse to release the name of the shooter, who has been placed on administrative leave.

Guerrero, originally from Bucaramanga, Colombia, worked as a cleaner and DoorDash delivery driver.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has responded to the killing with contempt for its victim and for the public. After first claiming Guerrero had “weaponized his vehicle”—the same lie told about Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, murdered by ICE in Houston six days earlier—the agency retreated to the assertion that he had “attempted to flee” and that the officer fired “fearing for public safety.” On Wednesday a DHS spokesperson doubled down, accusing the dead man of entering the country illegally in 2023 and declaring, “To be clear, work authorization does NOT confer legal status in the United States.”

The killing spree continues. On Tuesday a 28-year-old man was struck and killed by a tractor-trailer in St.

Augustine, Florida while fleeing ICE and Homeland Security Investigations agents—the third death in an ICE operation in little over a week.

WSWS reporters visited Mechanics Park in Biddeford Tuesday, where flowers, candles, handwritten notes and a Bluey blanket and stuffed toy line the fence near the site of the killing. Hundreds of residents have rallied there since Monday, at one point flooding into the Main Street office of Republican Senator Susan Collins chanting “Vote her out!”

Kelsey lives and works a block from where Guerrero was killed. “I’m angry,” she said. “We’ve been screaming about this for a long time. We always do what we’re told. I attend meetings. I call. I email. I show up when I can, and they [the politicians] don’t listen.”

“We should be out in the streets,” she continued. “They make it really hard for us not to, because here in Biddeford, the rent is high, the tax is high, the construction has been crazy. Locally, we’ve lost like 30 local businesses in like five years, just downtown... Every time we show up, it feels like it’s just going into cyberspace or something. It’s infuriating.”

Kelsey’s remarks point to the social reality underlying the events in Biddeford: the ICE rampage is unfolding in working class communities already being hit by soaring rents, taxes and the destruction of jobs and local businesses.

Asked about the difference between the official narrative and what actually happened Monday, Kelsey replied, “They’re already trying to cover things up ... But it doesn’t matter. Someone was murdered on my street, a block away from where I live, a block away from where I work. I’m gonna show up; I’m gonna show up for my community. It doesn’t matter who you are. We don’t kill people on the street. If someone’s guilty of something, we bring them in and we hold them accountable. You don’t just murder people. And it’s happened too many times.”

She described the response of the city's residents: "We all showed up. I mean, within an hour, everyone was down here... Our community is strong. This is a working class city. We all know each other. That's why it feels so personal too. We're all community members here. We go to trivia night. We go to the library. We get coffee. So it's like, when this happens to one of our community members, it happens to all of us."

Katie connected Guerrero's killing to the murder of Salgado in Houston. "I'm here because it matters," she said. "Because Joan's life mattered, and Lorenzo's life mattered, and every silly argument that the other side can come up with, we can refute. You know, he wasn't undocumented. Joan was going to work. His daughter was in the car wearing Bluey pajamas. For God's sake!

"There was no reason for him to be executed in the streets. A badge and a gun do not give these agents a license to kill, regardless of whether they have found the person that they were looking for or not, and ICE needs to be stopped. They and everyone who supports them is on the wrong side of history, and I will stand up and fight and scream and shout for the people who are being killed for no reason."

"The reason why I am out here is because there was a senseless murder in our streets," Emily told the WWSWS. "It has been justified by our administration and plenty of locals, and I feel as though every single person and human that comes out here matters, so that we can stand with the family and stand with our community."

"We're not done talking about this," she added, "and this is only the beginning. Because how many more murders do we need by ICE to make it make sense to people that this is becoming normalized, and it's not okay. We're not going to stand with it. It's not even human."

Hailey, who brought her children to the park, said, "What's happening right now is not okay. It's fascism; it's dictatorship. It's a Gestapo in the streets right now, just terrorizing our communities. And so I'm out here to support our community, and I'm also here to teach my kids, so they're aware of what's going on ... I want them to see these things with their own eyes, so they can't be told different in the future."

Hailey raised the necessity of a general strike: "I've encouraged others that I know to be a part of the general strike, so we can get to that percentage of people that we need in the United States. So, then we can make a difference."

The demand for a general strike arose in Minneapolis this winter, after ICE agent Jonathan Ross shot and killed Renée Good and Customs and Border Protection agents gunned down Alex Pretti. As the WWSWS explained this week in "The ICE murders in Maine and Texas and the lessons of

Minneapolis," the Democratic Party and the trade union apparatus worked systematically to shut that movement down, converting the call for a general strike into a harmless "day of action" while the agents withdrawn from Minneapolis were redeployed nationwide.

The same script is being followed in Maine. Democratic Governor Janet Mills has appealed to Congress to "rein in" ICE, while the state's congressional delegation appealed meekly to DHS's own inspector general, demanding neither the arrest of the killer nor a halt to ICE operations, nor even condemning the killing. Democratic Attorney General Aaron Frey knows the name of Guerrero's killer but is withholding it from the public.

As for the administration's much-publicized "pause" on vehicle stops—dismissed Tuesday by border czar Tom Homan as "not a policy change" but "a temporary pause"—it lasted less than 24 hours. On Wednesday morning Trump overturned the directive, declaring on social media that the government could not give up "one of I.C.E.'s most important and effective Crime Fighting tools, THE TRAFFIC STOP!" The murder of Guerrero, in other words, changes nothing. The license to kill has been publicly reaffirmed by the president himself.

The anger and determination to fight expressed by workers in Biddeford must be armed with a political program. The Socialist Equality Party and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees call for building independent workplace and neighborhood committees, uniting workers across industries, nationalities and immigration status, to prepare mass action, up to and including a general strike, against ICE terror and the drive to dictatorship.



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