

Judge authorizes surgical force feeding of Cuban immigrant at Montgomery, Texas ICE detention center

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In mid-August, ICE quietly obtained permission from a federal judge to force-feed a Cuban immigrant hunger striker at the Montgomery ICE Processing Center, a privately run facility near Houston, Texas operated by the GEO Group. According to the *Guardian*, the court order authorizes force-feeding through a rare, nonconsensual surgical procedure: the insertion of a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) tube, in which an incision is made in the abdomen and a tube is left in place indefinitely to pump liquid nutrition directly into the stomach. On September 1, ICE requested that the order be extended.

The Cuban striker, who remains unnamed because efforts to contact him have been unsuccessful, entered the United States in 1980, was ordered deported in 2004, and was seized by ICE on July 22, 2026. As in all previous force-feeding cases in ICE custody, the majority of his court records are sealed from public view, and he has no legal representation. He is the 19th confirmed hunger striker in ICE custody against whom the agency has obtained court approval for an “involuntary medical procedure” since January 2025.

The order was granted by federal Judge Andrew Hanen on August 19 and extended on September 3; it is set to expire in mid-September. The striker was recorded as a hunger striker just three days after being seized—an extraordinarily rapid escalation from arrest to forced medical intervention.

The authorization of a PEG tube goes beyond the “standard” nasal-tube force-feeding documented extensively in the *Guardian*’s reporting on Kurdish filmmaker Gabar Choli and others. In the “standard” procedure, guards wrestle the striker to the floor, shackle his wrists and ankles, pin him to a bed, and

medical staff force a tube through the nose and down the throat, pumping liquid into the stomach. This process is repeated, sometimes twice daily, for months. In the Montgomery case, the court additionally authorized surgical insertion of a gastric tube directly through the detainee’s abdominal wall, without consent. Moving from nasal-tube force-feeding to the surgical implantation of a permanent gastric tube marks a new threshold of brutality: the state is installing a control apparatus inside the body itself.

This is a systematic and escalating practice under the second Trump administration. The 19 cases approved since January 2025 amount to a policy of covert torture. The *Guardian*’s investigation—based on dozens of pages of court records and interviews with medical and legal experts—documents that force-feeding has been carried out quietly and intermittently for months at a time, often without the striker ever appearing before a judge or having a lawyer. Nearly all court records remain sealed, and the striker cannot be contacted. Sealed records, unnamed victims, no legal representation, no court appearance—the entire process is designed to operate outside public view and outside any meaningful legal challenge. As ACLU attorney Savannah Kumar states, these procedures underscore “the horrors happening outside our view in ICE detention centers.”

The GEO Group profits from this. Force-feeding is a business practice, sustained by a publicly traded corporation whose revenue model depends on bodies in beds. The same GEO Group operates the North Lake Processing Center in Michigan, where hundreds of detainees launched a hunger strike in April, citing “dangerous conditions, a lack of adequate food and

medical care, and cruel legal obstacles that have kept many in captivity with no end in sight.” GEO’s spokesperson offered only a bland recitation of the corporate line about “dietician-approved meals” and “accredited” facilities—the standard lies of a company that profits from human misery.

The hunger strike is the last resort of the dispossessed, and the state is determined to disarm it. As the WSWS reported on the North Lake strike, hunger strikers are not terrorists or manipulators; they are people protesting inadequate food, medical neglect, arbitrary rules, sleep deprivation and indefinite detention without resolution. The Gabar Choli case makes the same point with brutal clarity: “I am not suicidal. I am using hunger strike as the only available option to protest the abuse and mistreatment.” When the state’s answer to this protest is to hold a man down and force a tube through his nose—or cut into his abdomen—it reveals what the state considers the legitimate scope of resistance: none.

The force-feeding of hunger strikers is, at its core, a political act of repression. The hunger strike is the classic weapon of the powerless, the one form of protest available to a person stripped of every other democratic right. The state’s response is to physically overpower the striker and forcibly sustain his body so that he may continue to be held, processed, exploited and deported. It declares: your body belongs to the state, to be kept alive for the state’s purposes. This is the logic of the slave plantation, the concentration camp, the prison. The PEG tube—a surgical intervention that remains in the body indefinitely—is the ultimate expression of this logic.

The immigrant detention system is a laboratory for the methods the ruling class intends to use against the working class as a whole. What is being tested and normalized in the ICE detention centers—mass seizure, indefinite detention without trial, denial of legal representation, sealing of records, medical torture, forced feeding—is the repertoire of repression that capital is preparing for the broader social struggles it knows are coming.

The Montgomery case exposes the fraudulence of the bourgeois legal system’s claim to neutrality. Judge Hanen has a long reactionary record on immigration. He approved the surgical invasion of a man’s body without the man ever appearing in court, without legal

representation, on the basis of sealed records. The judge in the Choli case, Rolando Olvera, went further: he denied Choli’s request for a court-appointed attorney and wrote that even with counsel the outcome would be unchanged, since he would continue to approve force-feeding regardless.

The WSWS reported in April on the essential historical connection: force-feeding through nasal tubes is “a form of torture used at Guantanamo Bay and other CIA-run black sites.” The methods now applied to immigrant hunger strikers in Texas and Michigan are the same methods developed by the US imperialist state for its “war on terror”—developed against prisoners in offshore black sites, refined through decades of counterinsurgency, and now repatriated to the domestic population. The same state that force-fed hunger strikers at Guantanamo now force-feeds hunger strikers in Montgomery.

The hunger striker, by refusing food, exposes the lie that the state is merely “processing” or “administering” him. Every hunger striker is a living indictment of the system that holds him, and force-feeding is the state’s attempt to silence that indictment by proving that even the body itself can be subdued.

These atrocities are the product of the capitalist state’s drive to crush resistance, and a private prison industry that converts human beings into a revenue stream. The defense of the hunger strikers cannot be left to the ACLU’s courtroom appeals, to the Democratic Party, or to any wing of the political establishment that funds and staffs this apparatus, but requires the independent mobilization of the working class, armed with a socialist program that fights for the abolition of the immigrant detention system and of the capitalist order that has produced it.



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