US government continues to torture gunshot victim Wilber Garces Perez

Jacob Crosse
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More than four days after an unidentified Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) thug shot him in the back, Wilber Garces Perez remains in severe pain, with a bullet lodged near his spine. He is imprisoned at the South Texas ICE Processing Center in Pearsall, Texas, a concentration camp roughly 130 miles from his home in Austin.

In a statement Wednesday, Representative Greg Casar said he and staff from Representative Joaquin Castro's office visited Garces Perez at the ICE facility. Casar said Garces Perez received an injection of stronger pain medication approximately an hour before the visit.

Garces Perez told Casar that he was discharged from the hospital within hours of arriving on Sunday, without speaking to his physician. Speaking to reporters by phone on Monday, Garces Perez said a doctor told him ICE was in a hurry to remove him from the hospital.

He told Casar that he did not learn the bullet was still in his body until more than a day after the shooting. He spent his first night in ICE custody without a bed, still wearing his hospital gown and in "intense pain."

According to Casar, Garces Perez saw a specialist for the first time on Wednesday. The specialist recommended surgery to remove the bullet.

In a post Wednesday, Garces Perez's attorney, Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch, said another detainee had spoken with his wife and reported that Garces Perez "appeared discolored, extremely swollen, and in significant pain." Casar said Garces Perez was in a wheelchair when they met, with his left arm in a sling. Garces Perez has reported numbness and loss of movement on his left side.

Since Garces Perez spoke to reporters on Monday, ICE guards have confiscated his tablet and cut off his communication privileges, according to Lincoln-Goldfinch. She has demanded that those privileges be restored and that he be returned to a hospital for treatment. She also said she was waiting for a confidential call with her client.

It is no hyperbole to describe the treatment ICE and the US government are meting out to Garces Perez as torture. Since being shot, he has been moved between hospitals and the ICE facility, denied adequate medical care and cut off from confidential communication with his attorney. According to Lincoln-Goldfinch, guards at the GEO Group-run facility handcuffed him, shackled his ankles, placed a chain around his waist and handled him roughly during a transfer to the hospital.

The horrid conditions inside Pearsall were described in a recent WSWS interview with a former detainee. He reported overcrowded dormitories, inedible food and days spent in solitary confinement without water. When he sought treatment for severe eye pain, he said he waited four days to see someone: "All they did was give me some ibuprofen." Pearsall is owned and operated by the GEO Group. A previous government inspection found that ICE paid the company approximately $18 million for guaranteed beds that went unused over one year, even as detainees were crowded together.

Such conditions can have predictable and deadly consequences. Carlos Josue Marchena Marchena, a 36-year-old Costa Rican father of four with Type 1 diabetes, was found unresponsive at Louisiana's Winn Correctional Center on September 18 and later pronounced dead at a hospital.

Marchena is at least the third person held at Winn Correctional Center to die since April. Speaking to the Associated Press from Costa Rica, his sister, Franciny

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Marchena, said her brother told her staff were not checking his blood sugar levels.

"A person who is healthy and taking their diabetes medication has no reason to collapse the way my brother did," she told AP.

Marchena spent more than six months in ICE custody and was moved between facilities before arriving at Winn. There, he told his sister he was not getting enough food or water and that the food was sometimes spoiled. He raised similar concerns with Luis Herrera Andy, a detainee in a neighboring cell, who said Marchena received insulin injections irregularly.

Driven by the capitalist profit motive, ICE's private prison contractors have a financial incentive to reduce the cost of care while collecting government payments for confinement. The Trump administration's mass deportation operation has expanded the number of people exposed to these conditions. Deaths have risen faster than the detained population: Human Rights Watch found that the annual mortality rate increased by approximately 140 percent from the year before Trump returned to office to his first year back. Marchena was at least the 58th person to die in ICE custody since January 2025, according to AP's count. The impunity that produces deaths inside ICE prisons extends to the agents operating on the streets.

Casar and Castro have called for an "independent investigation" into the shooting of Garces Perez. But any investigation by the capitalist state will seek to protect the police. They are instruments of class rule that exist to uphold private property and the dictatorship of the financial oligarchy. Austin police, whom city officials want involved in the investigation, fired tear gas and pepper spray at people protesting the shooting on Sunday. Texas state troopers also fired pepper balls at protesters. More than four days after the shooting, the ICE thug who shot Garces Perez remains unidentified and uncharged.

More than eight months after ICE murdered Renée Good, and nearly 80 days after an agent killed Lorenzo Salgado Araujo as he drove his work crew through Houston, no agent has been charged in either killing. The agents who killed Alex Pretti and Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero likewise face no criminal charges. At a congressional forum this week, relatives and witnesses described the government's obstruction and its efforts to defame the dead. Salgado Araujo's family has demanded the return of his belongings, including the phone and wallet taken after his killing.

The same police state apparatus that shields its agents is prosecuting opposition to their wanton violence. Under National Security Presidential Memorandum 7, Homeland Security investigators infiltrated anti-ICE meetings and obtained union financial records during the investigation behind the Minnesota 15 frame-up. Yet union officials have refused to organize strikes against the deportation Gestapo, which serves as a beachhead for dictatorship. Before the January 23 mass protest, AFSCME Council 5 warned members that staying off work without authorization could expose them to discipline under their contract.

Workers cannot entrust the defense of immigrants or democratic rights to the agencies carrying out the repression, or to Democratic Party politicians and their union adjuncts who appeal to the police for an "independent" inquiry. That defense, and the abolition of the entire state apparatus of repression, requires that workers organize independently of both capitalist parties and the union bureaucracies.

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