

Mexican truckers call for national strike to free driver jailed after crash with federal agents

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Mexican truck drivers are calling for a national strike to free a fellow driver detained after a September 25 collision with a patrol vehicle of the Federal Attorney General's Office (Fiscalía General de la República, FGR) on Federal Highway 54, near the community of Sierra Vieja in Villa de Cos, Zacatecas. One agent was killed. Authorities announced within hours that they had arrested "the responsible person," before any charge was filed or evidence presented. Workers have overwhelmingly rejected the official account, and many accuse the agents of trying to extort the driver.

The strike call is the latest sign of growing militancy among truck drivers across North America. From September 3 to 6, hundreds of Mexican cross-border drivers blockaded the Mexicali-Calexico and San Luis Río Colorado-Yuma ports of entry to protest the Trump administration's mass revocation of their B-1 visas. In the United States, calls for an October 1 shutdown spread among drivers crushed by diesel prices that reached \$6.44 a gallon at the end of September, driven up by the US-Israeli war on Iran.

On both sides of the border, drivers are organizing through WhatsApp groups and social media, outside the employers' chambers and the official unions, and confronting a state that treats them as suspects.

The fight to free the Zacatecas driver raises basic political questions for workers in Mexico and internationally. The FGR checkpoints that drivers denounce as extortion rackets belong to the security apparatus that the Morena (National Regeneration Movement) government of President Claudia Sheinbaum has expanded in close coordination with Washington, and which it has repeatedly turned against truckers and farmers who protest. The employers' chambers and transport organizations have spent the past year "coordinating" with the same agencies. The defense of this driver, and of drivers generally, rests with the rank and file, organized independently of Morena, the employers and the union bureaucracies, and united with transport and logistics workers in the United States and across the Americas who face the same companies, the same supply chains and the same war-driven crisis.

Contradictory official accounts

On the day of the crash, Zacatecas Public Security Secretary Arturo Medina Mayoral reported that one FGR agent had died and three were injured while carrying out "operational work" on the highway.

Initial reports said the agents were at an inspection point. On September 27, the FGR issued a statement denying this. "Contrary to what some press accounts have indicated, the events did not occur at an inspection

point," the agency said. According to its version, three agents of the Federal Ministerial Police signaled a truck to stop, the driver fled, and during the chase the truck "rammed the police unit that was following it," overturning it, killing one agent and injuring two.

Neither version explains why the agents ordered the truck to stop, what they were doing on that stretch of highway, or whether they identified themselves. No evidence has been made public showing the driver caused the crash. More than 10 days after the arrest, authorities have not disclosed his identity or where he is held, and no charges have been announced.

"They are there to rob us"

The driver has drawn a massive outpouring of support on social media. In a Facebook video with more than 850,000 views, a trucker called on workers to defend the driver and denounced the criminality of the security agencies. "We all know what those agents were doing there," he said. "They are there to rob us." He accused FGR agents of routinely setting up checkpoints in poorly visible locations, masked, behaving aggressively and without identifying themselves or their vehicles.

He argued that authorities are afraid to release the driver's identity because "they know that all of us are with that guy," and urged truckers to "support their comrade" as the authorities bring "the full weight of the law" down on him. He contrasted the speed of the arrest with the impunity surrounding daily attacks on drivers: "How many truckers are attacked on the road every day and haven't gotten justice?"

Across more than 3,700 comments, workers demanded the driver's release, called for a national strike and denounced robbery by FGR agents. The top comment called for "a national stoppage of one or two hours a day," arguing that a nationwide transport shutdown would cause major economic losses and force the government to respond. One driver described the routine: "They're always asking what kind of cargo you're carrying. If they're not interested, they just tell you to go ahead, but if they like what you're carrying, it's another story."

Extortion on the highways

The anger reflects conditions drivers face every day. The National Guard recorded 6,263 robberies of freight vehicles in 2025. Officials boast

that the number fell in the first half of 2026, but industry sources told *El Financiero* that seven of every 10 robberies now involve violence. The National Association of Transporters (Asociación Nacional de Transportistas, ANTAC) estimates that about 200 drivers have disappeared since Sheinbaum took office in October 2024.

The Zacatecas government itself had acknowledged extortion by FGR agents. On June 10, Governor David Monreal of Morena denounced an “extortion checkpoint” run by the FGR’s Coahuila delegation on Highway 54 at the Zacatecas border, where he said agents had extorted migrants and other travelers for nearly two decades. On September 22, three days before the crash, the state legislature unanimously urged the FGR to investigate its checkpoint on Highway 49 at Rancho Grande, in Fresnillo, after testimony that drivers had been forced to pay 50,000 to 60,000 pesos under threat of being handed over to federal authorities.

The same practices have been denounced in Michoacán. On August 24, a caravan of drivers from the port of Lázaro Cárdenas drove to the FGR’s offices in Morelia to protest extortion at highway checkpoints and to demand the release of a colleague arrested by FGR agents at a checkpoint near Taretan. The National Confederation of Mexican Transporters (Confederación Nacional de Transportistas Mexicanos, Conatram) made public a complaint that an FGR regional official had demanded monthly payments to remove the checkpoints, and quoted him:

It is his right to set up whatever checkpoints he wants, and if we want him to remove them, we have to pay the monthly fees. His actions are backed by Ernestina Godoy, the FGR prosecutor, and nobody is going to do anything to him because he is the law in Michoacán.

The drivers reported demands of up to 300,000 pesos per truck.

The Morena government closes ranks

The same state government’s answer to the checkpoints was to ask the FGR to suspend the one at Rancho Grande and to propose, through Government Secretary Rodrigo Reyes Mugüenza, that any that remain operate in coordination with the National Guard and the State Police. Extortion by one police force is to be policed by another: the National Guard, which Morena placed under Army command by constitutional amendment in September 2024.

This is federal policy. On September 5, three weeks before the crash, Sheinbaum convened the National Security Cabinet in Zacatecas with Monreal, the defense and navy secretaries and Security Secretary Omar García Harfuch, and praised the “coordination” between federal and state forces. The FGR is formally autonomous, but it is headed by Ernestina Godoy, Sheinbaum’s former legal counsel, whom the Morena-controlled Senate installed in December 2025 for a nine-year term after the president arranged the exit of her predecessor, Alejandro Gertz Manero.

The government has shown the same hostility toward truckers who act on their own. Before the April 6 national strike by truckers and farmers against insecurity and soaring diesel costs, Sheinbaum declared there was “no reason” to block highways and blamed “three or four leaders.” Interior Secretary Rosa Icela Rodríguez asked, “What is the reason they are protesting?” When the strike went ahead, riot police in Tlaxcala, sent by Morena Governor Lorena Cuéllar, broke up a blockade with tear gas and water cannon and detained protesters. ANTAC suspended the action, declaring:

The same authorities who have been absent so many times when crime robs, attacks, disappears and takes lives showed up this time... but to repress, beat and detain those who only ask to live and work with dignity.

The pattern extends to the border. During the B-1 blockade, officials held a meeting with the Interior Ministry to which the drivers were not invited. Sheinbaum has deployed 10,000 additional National Guard troops to the northern border at Trump’s demand and signed a security pact with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The Morena government’s priority is the uninterrupted flow of goods through North American supply chains that Washington is integrating into its war economy. Its police serve as a mechanism for extracting money from drivers and as a force for clearing their protests from the roads.

The record of the federal prosecutor’s office leaves no room for illusions. In the 2008 Operación Limpieza, investigators found cartel infiltration at the top of its predecessor, the PGR, including senior officials accused of selling classified information to organized crime. The official commission on the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students in 2014 called it a “crime of the state” involving federal police, prosecutors, the military and intelligence services. It was the PGR that led the initial 2014 investigation/cover up.

The employers’ chambers and “coordination” with the FGR

The official transport organizations have responded very differently from the rank and file. Before the April strike, the employers’ National Chamber of Freight Transport (Cámara Nacional del Autotransporte de Carga, CANACAR) joined other organizations in rejecting the mobilization, calling blockades actions “outside institutional channels.” During the B-1 blockade, a CANACAR representative said, “My hope is that it does not extend to Tijuana.” Drivers at the Mexicali crossing understood whose side the chamber was on. When a local CANACAR official explained he had been meeting with ICE and CBP when 17 visas were revoked, a worker shot back: “Exactly, you are with ICE and CBP.”

In Michoacán, the protest was led by Conatram, a local transport association and a union of the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC), a pillar of the corporatist labor apparatus built under the PRI. It ended in a negotiated agreement to withdraw checkpoints in that state, without challenging the apparatus behind them. One representative declared, “We are not opposed to inspections,” asking only that they be carried out legally and “with respect.” A week later, on September 1, Conatram, CANACAR and other industry groups met with Héctor Elizalde, head of the FGR’s Criminal Investigation Agency, the same agency whose agents were involved in the Zacatecas crash, and reaffirmed their “willingness to work in a coordinated manner with authorities.”

As of publication, none of the major transport organizations reviewed for this article has publicly called for the release of the Zacatecas driver. The contrast with the thousands of drivers demanding strike action and organizing themselves through social media could not be sharper.

An international struggle

The struggles of Mexican drivers cannot be won within national borders.

The same war-driven fuel crisis is squeezing drivers and owner-operators on both sides of the US-Mexico border, and cross-border drivers move the freight of the same corporations on both sides of the line. The Trump administration has revoked more than 25,000 B-1 visas from Mexican commercial drivers, according to CANACAR estimates, accusing them of illegal cabotage on the flimsiest grounds. In the United States, it seized on a fatal crash in Florida in August 2025 involving an immigrant driver to launch a sweeping crackdown on immigrant truckers' commercial licenses. In both countries, a crash becomes the pretext for criminalizing drivers.

The call for a national strike shows the right instinct. To succeed, drivers need their own organizations: rank-and-file committees, controlled democratically by drivers themselves, independent of the employers' chambers, the CROC and the other union bureaucracies, and of Morena and every capitalist party. Such committees can demand the driver's release, the public disclosure of what the agents were doing on Highway 54 and the dismantling of the extortion checkpoints. They should reach out to logistics, port, auto and agricultural workers in Mexico and connect with drivers in the United States and Canada through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), uniting workers across the borders against the corporations and the governments that serve them.



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