

NASW Texas Human Rights Committee Condemns ICE Shooting of Wilber Rafael Garcés Pérez

The Human Rights Committee of the National Association of Social Workers, Texas Chapter, is deeply troubled by the shooting of Mr. Wilber Rafael Garcés Pérez by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer in Austin on Sunday, September 20, 2026.

Mr. Garcés Pérez, a 28-year-old asylum-seeker from Venezuela, was working as a food delivery driver when he was shot. According to his attorney, he came to the United States through a parole program and has been working to support his family. Within hours of being shot, he was transferred to an immigration detention facility in Pearsall, more than 100 miles from his family, with a bullet still lodged near his spine.

Social workers are guided by a Code of Ethics that affirms the inherent dignity and worth of every person and calls us to pursue social justice on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed people. These principles do not depend on a person's immigration status. Whatever the legal questions surrounding Mr. Garcés Pérez's case, no one should be shot while going about their work, denied adequate medical care, or cut off from their family at a moment of crisis.

We are concerned about the broader harm this incident causes. Social workers across Texas serve immigrant families in schools, hospitals, clinics, and community agencies. We see firsthand how fear of ICE keeps people from seeking medical care, children from attending school, and survivors of violence from reaching out for help. Incidents like this deepen that fear and the trauma that comes with it, for the individual, his family, and the entire community.

The NASW Texas Human Rights Committee calls for:

1. **An independent, transparent investigation.** An investigation led by the same agency whose officer fired the shots cannot command public confidence. We urge an independent investigation.
2. **Immediate and adequate medical care.** Mr. Garcés Pérez must receive appropriate treatment for his injuries, including evaluation by qualified specialists, consistent with basic human rights standards for people in custody.
3. **Access to family and counsel.** His family and attorney must be allowed to communicate with and visit him without obstruction.
4. **No removal while the investigation is pending.** We welcome the federal court's emergency order pausing his deportation. As the person shot and a key witness, Mr. Garcés Pérez must remain in the country until the investigation is complete, and we urge authorities to consider humanitarian release.
5. **Accountability and clear use-of-force standards** for federal immigration enforcement operating in Texas communities. This is not an isolated incident: federal immigration agents have been involved in multiple shootings in Texas, including the fatal shooting of Mr. Lorenzo Salgado Araujo in Houston.

We stand with Mr. Garcés Pérez, his family, and the immigrant communities of Austin and across Texas. We encourage social workers to check in with their clients and communities, who

may be experiencing increased fear, and to connect them with trusted legal and mental health resources.