

Migration raid, shooting spark riot

Wire services

El Universal

Martes 18 de abril de 2006

Miami Herald, página 1

TULTITLAN, State of Mexico.- Residents of this town just north of Mexico City overturned and smashed immigration service trucks after a policeman shot and killed a local man - evidently mistaking him for a Central American - during a raid on undocumented migrants.

Townpeople expressed outrage Monday that police would open fire on fleeing migrants and said the victim was a construction worker on a lunch break whose dark skin and work clothes may have made him look like a potential target.

Investigative police commander Jorge Cruz Cid confirmed the killing, and said that several officers from the police force for Mexico State - who were supporting immigration agents in the raid - had been detained for questioning.

Tultitlan is a rail junction town frequented by Central Americans who slip across the Guatemala-Mexico border and ride trains north in a bid to reach the United States. Immigration raids here are frequent - migrants often stop here to buy or beg for food - and residents say police often detain townspeople mistakenly.

"They (police) came and grabbed one of the girls who lives on the next block, but her family came out to defend her," said Tultitlan housewife Virginia Sánchez. "They come and grab people just because they are dark-skinned."

Police investigators tried unsuccessfully for hours to convince townspeople to let them drag away the two smashed trucks, but residents said they first wanted assurances the officer would be prosecuted.

By law, the National Immigration Institute is the only agency designated to handle undocumented migrants, but the institute often depends on different police agencies for support, as in Monday's raid.

The dead man was identified as Roberto Lugo, around 20 years of age. Residents said he was neither running nor trying to confront police when he was shot at point-blank range.

POLICE ABUSES

Townpeople and Central American migrants interviewed at the scene said Mexican police frequently rob and abuse undocumented migrants, many of whom they simply release after robbing them.

While some in Tultitlan earn money by selling food and clothing to migrants, many also give them the same items out of pity.

Waiting in a nearby field for a train to pass, Carlos López, 28, an undocumented migrant from Guatemala City, said Mexican police routinely rob and release migrants.

"If you're carrying any money, they take it from you, federal, local police, all of them," López said. Sitting nearby, José Ramos, 18, of El Salvador, agreed.

"If you're on a bus, they pull you off and search your pockets and if you have any money, they keep it and say 'get out of here,'" Ramos said of police.

In December, the governmental National Human Rights Commission issued a report in which it corroborated many of the abuses committed against migrants in Mexico, and condemned the use of police agencies to detain undocumented migrants.