

PRESS RELEASE

Mexican National Involved in Smuggling and Labor Trafficking Scheme Sentenced to 3 Years in Federal Prison

Friday, March 7, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Connecticut

Marc H. Silverman, Acting United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that PORFIRIA MARIBEL RAMOS SANCHEZ, 47, a citizen of Mexico last residing in Vernon, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Kari A. Dooley in Bridgeport to 36 months of imprisonment for her involvement in a scheme to smuggle aliens into the U.S., harbor them at Hartford area residences, force them to work, and threaten to harm them in various ways if they failed to pay exorbitant fees, interest, and other living expenses.

According to court documents and statements made in court, beginning in September 2022, the FBI and Hartford Police interviewed several Mexican nationals who disclosed that they were smuggled from Mexico into the U.S. and transported to Hartford. The investigation revealed that victims typically arranged with Ramos's mother, Maria Del Carmen Sanchez Potrero, and others in Connecticut and Mexico, to cross the border into the U.S. in exchange for a fee of between \$15,000 and \$20,000 that each would need to pay once they were in the U.S. In most cases, the victims were required to turn over a property deed as collateral before leaving Mexico. They were then smuggled across the border and transported to Hartford area residences, often at a substantial risk of bodily injury or death.

After the victims arrived in Connecticut, they were told that they would have to pay approximately \$30,000, with interest, and that they would have to pay Sanchez, Ramos, and their co-conspirators for rent, food, gas, and utilities. The co-conspirators created false documents for the victims, including Permanent Residence cards and Social Security cards, and helped the victims find employment in the Hartford area. In addition to their own jobs, some victims were required to perform housework and yardwork without compensation and without having their debt reduced.

Victims were rarely provided with an accounting of their debt. If victims failed to make regular payments, or in amounts that the co-conspirators expected, they were sometimes threatened, including with threats to harm family members in Mexico, to take property in Mexico that had been secured as collateral, to reveal victims' immigration status to U.S. authorities, and to raise their interest payments.

To date, investigators have identified 19 victims of this scheme. Multiple victims were minors, and at least two were smuggled into the U.S. unaccompanied by a relative or legal guardian.

Ramos has been detained since her arrest on October 5, 2023. On October 4, 2024, she pleaded guilty to conspiracy to encourage and induce, bring in, transport, and harbor aliens.

Judge Dooley ordered Ramos to pay restitution of \$574,608. As a condition of her plea agreement, in partial satisfaction of her restitution obligation, Ramos and her husband agreed to sell a house they owned at 74 Burnside Avenue in East Hartford, which was used to facilitate this criminal offense. However, in violation of her plea agreement, Ramos did not inform the government of the pending sale and sold the house in November 2024 to a relative of her husband for \$75,000 less than its appraised value.

Ramos faces immigration proceedings when she completes her prison term.

Sanchez [pleaded guilty](#) and awaits sentencing.

This investigation has been conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hartford Police Department, U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Angel Krull and Shan Patel.

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