

MEXICO

FLOC (Farm Labor Organizing Committee) union organizer tortured, killed in Monterrey

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On April 8, 2007 union organizer **Santiago Rafael Cruz** was brutally assassinated in the office of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC, based in Toledo, OH) in Monterrey, Nuevo León state. His hands and feet had been tied and he had been severely beaten on his head and face. Nothing had been stolen from the office.

Cruz was a Mexican national who had worked for years in the US.

The FLOC Monterrey office assists Mexicans being recruited into the US government's farm labor "guest worker" program. FLOC helps workers when Mexican recruiters demand exorbitant fees for the work visas.

FLOC and IRTF believe that this murder was a targeted political attack on the union for its work in protecting the human rights of Mexican migrants going to the US as seasonal farm workers. The assassination of Santiago Rafael Cruz came after more than two years of media attacks, deportation threats, robberies, and violent intimidation of the FLOC office and its staff.

On May 24, 2007 AFL-CIO officials announced that prosecutors in Nuevo Leon had told them that three suspects had confessed to the murder. Prosecutors claim that Cruz had been trafficking legal visas to the US and was beaten to death because he had overcharged someone.

The following day, FLOC Secretary General Baldemar Velasquez rejected the Nuevo Leon prosecutors' version of events. "Cruz was killed in retaliation for fighting the corrupt practices of Mexican recruiters," Velasquez said, calling the three suspects scapegoats. "This case is far from being solved."