**[FJLaw] H-2A Workers Rise Up due to Preventable Illness and Death of Co-Worker in Washington State**

Northern Washington Farmworker's Complaints of Headaches Went Ignored  
Before His Death, Colleague Claims  
<http://www.thestranger.com/slog/2017/08/07/25333857/northern-washington-fa>  
rmworkers-hospitalization-sparks-protest-this-weekend-he-died  
  
Honesto Silva Ibarra, 28, was a married father of three from Mexico who  
worked in Washington on a temporary agricultural visa, according to fellow  
worker Barbaro Rosas, 30. Rosas had known Ibarra for a little more than a  
month before his colleague became sick with headaches in the field, he  
says.  
  
The last time Rosas heard from Ibarra, he had gone to a local clinic in  
Bellingham after attempting to tell his supervisor about his headaches and  
trying to buy a plane ticket home. But Rosas said that their supervisor,  
an employee of Sarbanand Farms in Sumas, Washington, ignored Ibarra and  
made him go back to work. Later, he collapsed, according to Community to  
Community Development, an immigrant rights nonprofit.  
  
Today, Haborview Medical Center and the King County Medical Examiner's  
Office confirmed that Ibarra was treated at Harborview, and then passed  
away over the weekend.  
  
Ibarra's illness, Sarbanand Farms' response, and other complaints about  
workers' treatment launched a one-day strike from 70 farmworkers last  
Friday, Rosas told The Stranger through a translator. When The Stranger  
spoke with Rosas on the phone today, he did not yet know his colleague was  
dead. Rosas spoke to us outside the Whatcom County Courthouse, where  
immigrants rights activists held a protest in solidarity with the  
Sarbanand farmworkers.  
  
"We're aware of the situation," Norm Hartman, a public relations  
professional representing the farm, said of the work stoppage. "It's a  
labor issue. We do not comment on such matters. We hope it can be  
resolved." Hartman did not immediately respond for a request for comment  
on Ibarra's death.  
  
According to the Whatcom County Assessor's Office, Sarbanand Farms is  
under a Limited Liability Corporation registered by Baldev Munger, a  
California-based man who oversees a number of blueberry farms with his  
brother, Kable Munger. The farm sits right outside Sumas city limits, near  
the Canadian border.  
  
Here's how Rosas described Ibarra's treatment at Sarbanand, via translator  
and activist Maru Mora Villalpando:  
  
We were working in the fields and it was really hot. He started having  
headaches. He reported back to the supervisor. He was ignored by the  
supervisor. He couldn't take it anymore so he went back to his cabin to  
rest. Then the supervisor went to the cabin and made him go back to work.  
And when the shift ended the next day, he went back to work also still  
with headaches. And the weather was hotter that day. He told again the  
supervisor how he felt. Again the supervisor ignored him in his request.  
He went back to his cabin. He couldn't take it anymore. And he asked the  
manager for a favor: to take him to the airport because he wanted to go  
back to his family. This staff person responded by saying he couldn't take  
him because that would mean abandoning the work.  
Rosas said that Ibarra attempted to go to the airport on his own to get a  
flight, but found that his visa had expired and that he couldn't buy the  
ticket. Then, Rosas said, Ibarra went to a local clinic in Bellingham.  
When Rosas and other workers asked for a report on Ibarra, they were told  
that he had arrived for dehydration, Rosas said. "Then he was taken to  
another place in Seattle," Rosas said. "And then we got some reports back,  
maybe yesterday, that he was still there."  
  
A spokesman for the Whatcom County Sheriff's department said deputies  
responded to a "disturbance" at the farm on Saturday evening, but would  
not elaborate.  
  
The King County Medical Examiner's office confirmed today that Ibarra  
died, stating his death was not under investigation-meaning that it was  
not considered unexpected or suspicious. Harborview Medical Center also  
confirmed that Ibarra had been treated over the weekend, but did not give  
more information on his condition.  
  
After Rosas and other Sarbanand workers stopped work on Friday, they say  
they were fired on Saturday at around 11 in the morning. Rosas said he and  
the other workers who went on strike had showed up to work again on  
Saturday, but were separated from the rest of the workers and told they  
were fired.  
  
Rosas said he and the other workers had been living in farmworker housing,  
but were told they could not stay. Now, Rosas said, the 70 workers are  
living in tents on a sympathetic community member's property, unable to  
work because of their expired visas.  
  
Rosas, who is also married and has a baby in Mexico, said he has been  
coming to work in Washington state for six years, but has never  
experienced conditions like those at Sarbanand farms. He said the food  
lacked nutrition and was very oily, and that he was charged $12 per day  
for meals. Since starting work on July 2, Rosas said he has made $1,600,  
or $320 a week.  
  
A spokesperson for Washington State Labor and Industries, which  
investigates worker rights complaints, did not immediately respond to The  
Stranger's request for comment.