

PRESS RELEASE

Mexican National Pleads Guilty to Racketeering Conspiracy Involving the Forced Labor of Mexican Workers

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Middle District of Florida

Four Co-Defendants Previously Pleaded Guilty for Their Roles in Compelling the Labor of H-2A Visa Recipients Throughout the Southeastern United States

Tampa, FL — Alexander Villatoro Moreno, age 53, also known as Quichi, pleaded guilty in federal court in Tampa, Florida, to conspiracy under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. A federal grand jury in the Middle District of Florida had previously returned a six-count indictment against multiple defendants for their roles in the conspiracy, which victimized Mexican H-2A workers who, between 2015 and 2017, had worked in the United States harvesting fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products.

“Exploiting our nation’s immigration laws to victimize people seeking legitimate employment is not only illegal but unconscionable,” said U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida Gregory W. Kehoe. “The conspirators in this case deliberately deceived and trafficked individuals into the United States, then subjected them to deplorable conditions for profit. Diligent investigation and cooperation by our law enforcement partners assured that these criminals were brought to justice.”

According to court documents, Villatoro Moreno and his co-defendants operated and managed Los Villatoros Harvesting (LVH), a farm labor contracting company, that functioned as a criminal enterprise compelling victims to work in Florida, Kentucky, Indiana, Georgia and North Carolina. Villatoro Moreno and his co-defendants fraudulently recruited Mexican nationals to come into the United States on short-term, H-2A, agricultural visas and misled the United States to secure visas for the victims. Villatoro Moreno and his co-defendants charged workers exorbitant recruitment fees to work for LVH and lied to the victims about how much they would be paid, the hours they would work, the working conditions and the reimbursement they would receive for paying recruitment fees and other expenses. The workers were then compelled to provide long hours of physically demanding agricultural labor, six to seven days a week, for far less pay than they were entitled to under the law.

In addition to the work conditions, Villatoro Moreno and his co-defendants used various coercive means to compel the victims' labor, including imposing debts on workers; confiscating the workers' passports; subjecting workers to crowded, unsanitary and degrading living conditions; verbally abusing and humiliating the workers; threatening workers with arrest, jailtime and deportation; isolating workers by preventing them from interacting with anyone other than LVH employees; and threatening to physically harm the workers' family members back in Mexico if the workers failed to comply with their demands.

When officials began investigating, Villatoro Moreno obstructed the federal investigation by helping to prepare false payroll information to conceal underpayments to the workers and distributing fake reimbursement receipts to the victims to make it appear that LVH was complying with the law by reimbursing the workers for their travel-related expenses.

Villatoro Moreno's four co-defendants previously pleaded guilty in connection with their roles in the scheme. Bladimir Moreno, Alexander Villatoro Moreno's brother, owned LVH and pleaded guilty in 2022 to conspiracy to violate the RICO Act and conspiracy to commit forced labor. Efrain Cabrera Rodas and Christina Gamez, LVH supervisors, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the RICO Act while Guadalupe Mendes Mendoza, another LVH supervisor, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to obstruct a federal investigation. In 2022, Bladimir Moreno was sentenced to 118 months in prison and ordered to pay over \$175,000 in restitution to the victims while Rodas and Gamez were sentenced to 41 months and 37 months in prison, respectively. Mendoza was also sentenced in 2022 to serve eight months of home detention and a \$5,500 fine to be paid over 24 months of supervised release.

The Palm Beach County Human Trafficking Task Force, which includes the FBI, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations and the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, investigated the case. The Task Force received assistance from the Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General, the Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Colorado Legal Services Migrant Farm Worker Division, Legal Aid Services of Oregon Farmworker Program and Indiana Legal Services Worker Rights and Protection Project.

The Government of Mexico, including the Fiscalía General de la República (FGR), provided significant assistance in the extradition of Villatoro Moreno to the United States. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs worked with law enforcement partners in Mexico to secure the arrest and extradition of Villatoro Moreno.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ilyssa Spergel for the Middle District of Florida and Trial Attorney Matthew Thiman of the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section are prosecuting the case. Former Trial Attorney and current Assistant U.S. Attorney Maryan Zhuravitsky for the District of Maryland also prosecuted the case.

Anyone who has information about human trafficking should report that information to the National Human Trafficking Hotline toll-free at 1-888-373-7888, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For more information about human trafficking, please visit www.humantraffickinghotline.org. Information on the Justice Department's efforts to combat human trafficking can be found at www.justice.gov/humantrafficking.

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