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## Police: Man held at least 8 hostage in human trafficking scheme

By: YNN Staff

A man accused of holding at least 8 hostages in a human trafficking scheme has been charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Police arrested 33-year-old Fernando Salazar Sunday at a home on Johnny Morris Road in East Travis County

Police say they have made contact with at least eight of what's believed to be 15 hostages who were held at the home, including a 15-year-old child. The victims, who were from all around Central America, said they were threatened with weapons and forced to cook and clean. The house was believed to be a stash house for smugglers.

One of the hostages was able to reach his wife in New York, who then contacted the New York Police Department. NYPD transferred the call to Austin Police, and local officers were able to find the house from the man's directions.

The man who called for help tells police he paid \$800 for his illegal transport into Austin but says Salazar threatened him with a gun demanding more money.

Police said they found a 9-millimeter handgun and an air pistol inside the home. They also found a 15-year-old boy who was asked to get more money from his family in Mexico.

"They weren't able to produce the money so he was having to work for them, to cook and clean. He had been there for over a week before we had been there on Sunday," Donald Baker with the Austin Police Department said.

According to Baker, APD receives about one call per week related to human trafficking.

"This is happening in Austin. We're having innocent victims and families that are being extorted, threatened with violence, transported and held against their will for weeks on end," he said. "And it's continuing around in our neighborhoods."

Salazar's bond has been set at \$100,000.

An APD official tells YNN they expect more charges will be filed against Salazar down the line. [Click here](#) to read his arrest affidavit.

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