

Thousands of Migrant Workers Still Being Held in Detention on the Southern Border

Mounting political problems of migration for the Biden administration threaten to consume his presidency

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Media accounts in the United States have shown that thousands of migrant workers and their families are being held in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) detention facilities in the state of Texas.

Since the advent of the new administration which took office on January 20, the numbers of people seeking admission to the U.S. has continued to increase exponentially.

Although President Joe Biden has appointed his Vice President Kamala Harris to address and contain the burgeoning crisis, it is quite obvious that the federal government does not have the organizational capacity or the political will to effectively resolve the issue. The question of immigration into the U.S. is closely linked to the imperialist foreign policy of Washington and Wall Street which has systematically exploited and oppressed the masses of people within the Central America region and Mexico.

For several weeks, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its affiliates within the immigration and border services concealed the actual conditions prevailing inside the detention facilities. However, Texas Congressman Henry Cuellar (Democrat) traveled to one of the CBP centers and released photographs and videos of the overcrowded and unsanitary situation facing children and adults.



Migrants held in CBP detention with guards overlooking (Abayomi Azikiwe)

On March 30, several members of the corporate press were allowed to enter the CBP detention facility in Donna, Texas where the images were taken and published during the previous week. The release of the initial photographs earlier in March, sparked sharp criticisms of the Biden administration from Democrats, Republicans and independent political forces. Immediately, Biden deployed a delegation to Texas while announcing that two military bases would be opened to house unaccompanied children seeking to enter the U.S. Nonetheless, the president has refused to declare the situation on the southern border and within the migrant detention facilities as a national crisis requiring immediate executive and legislative measures.

Many thousands are continuing to move throughout the Central America and Mexico region with the aim of entering the U.S. often in efforts to reconnect with family members. A recent [British Broadcasting Corporation \(BBC\) report](#) filmed in Mexico, illustrates the human trafficking operations taking place from Central America. Couriers are paid large sums of money to smuggle people across dangerous waterways and rural areas until they reach the border between Mexico and Guatemala. People are fleeing from poverty, the tyranny of drug lords and the impact of drought largely stemming from climate change.

An [article published by the Associated Press](#) on the media delegation which visited the Texas facility says that:

“The Biden administration for the first time Tuesday (March 30) allowed journalists inside its main border detention facility for migrant children, revealing a severely overcrowded tent structure where more than 4,000

people, including children and families, were crammed into a space intended for 250 and the youngest were kept in a large play pen with mats on the floor for sleeping. With thousands of children and families arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border in recent weeks and packing facilities, President Joe Biden has been under pressure to bring more transparency to the process. U.S. Customs and Border Protection allowed two journalists from The Associated Press and a crew from CBS to tour the facility in Donna, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, the nation's busiest corridor for illegal crossings."

Concurrently, the Biden administration is continuing the same immigration policy of expelling entire families with children along with adults traveling on their own under the Trump-era public health regulations enacted during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Contrastingly, the Biden White House says that it will not expel unaccompanied minors and children while seeking to house these juveniles in better facilities. (See [this](#))

Criminalization of the Plight of Migrant Workers and Their Families

When the migrants are detained and moved into the CBP detention facilities they are given medical examinations and psychological evaluations, according to the officials. The children are checked for lice and if they show symptoms of coronavirus they are supposed to be placed in some form of isolation.

Nevertheless, in viewing the photographs released by both Congressman Cuellar and the media delegation from March 30, it becomes quite obvious that these facilities where migrant workers and children are being detained are incubators for infectious diseases. After the detainees are processed through examinations, photographs and psychological evaluations, they are given notices of when to appear before an immigration court.

U.S. immigration officials claim that if the children have contact information for relatives living in the country, they are allowed to inform them of their status. However, many of these relatives themselves maybe living as undocumented persons and are reluctant to come forward. The detainees are fingerprinted as well placing them within the federal law-enforcement system for future monitoring.

In the same report quoted earlier in this article, it says of the flow of migrants into the U.S.:

"The Border Patrol is apprehending far more children daily than Health and Human Services is placing with U.S. sponsors, leading to a severe backlog in the system. The Border Patrol generally is not supposed to detain children for more than three days, but Health and Human Services lacks space. More than 2,000 kids have been at the Donna facility for more than 72 hours, including 39 for more than 15 days. HHS is housing children at convention centers in Dallas and San Diego and is opening large-scale sites in San Antonio, El Paso and elsewhere."

Consequently, these families will remain separated for the unforeseeable future. The living circumstances in the CBP and HHS facilities will make the migrant workers and children susceptible to contracting coronavirus and other illnesses at a time when the number of COVID-19 cases are surging in more than half of the states threatening the advent of a fourth wave in the U.S., the country with the most infections internationally. The trauma of residing in these detention centers could scar the psychological make-up of both the adults and children held in custody along with their families living both outside and inside the U.S.

Federal Government Must Take Immediate Action on Immigration Reform

The Biden administration can no longer ignore the escalating numbers of migrants attempting to enter the U.S. Policy initiatives to provide vaccinations and economic relief to millions of people, cannot be utilized as an excuse for inaction on the border crisis.

New legislation and executive orders are required to address the needs of the migrants seeking asylum. The aggressive military and economic policies of the government and corporations should be curtailed in order to provide relief to people living in Mexico and Central America.

This crisis has its origins within domestic and foreign policy imperatives of the U.S. which are designed to maintain white supremacy, enhance capitalist exploitation and the imperialist plunder of Latin America and the Caribbean. The influx of migrants into the U.S. is a manifestation of the more than three decades of wars waged against the peoples of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

Tens of millions of people living in these geo-political regions targeted by Washington, the European Union, NATO and their allies are being forced from their homes. The economies under which they live have been destroyed through wars of occupation and the enactment of globalization which stifles the capacity of people to build an independent existence.

Imperialist war and the unquenchable demand by the capitalist states for the land, resources, waterways and labor of the majority of the world's population has prompted the large-scale displacement of an estimated 75 million people worldwide. The problems of migration from the oppressed nations can only be resolved by a radical transformation of the industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America.

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