

# Six immigrants die in Texas police chase crash

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Six people were killed and 10 injured September 24 after the driver of an overloaded sports utility vehicle carrying undocumented immigrants fled police after a traffic stop, resulting in the fatal crash along Highway 59, about 90 miles southwest of Houston, near Edna, Texas.

The 16 people, 15 men and one woman, were crammed into a Ford Explorer, a vehicle that is meant to carry a maximum of seven. Reports note that the oldest was aged 43 and the youngest was 18. The driver lost control in the chase, resulting in the vehicle flipping over several times and ejecting many of the occupants.

Twelve of the 16 passengers were immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras who were likely on one of the last legs of arduous journeys. The driver, a 26-year-old US citizen, was ejected from the vehicle and was among the four pronounced dead at the scene. Two others died while receiving treatment at a Houston hospital, where one passenger is still in critical condition.

In response to this incident, politicians and the media have predictably demanded the questioning and detention of those who survived the crash and investigations into criminal trafficking rings, as if the problem lay with the individual traffickers and not the conditions which precipitate the movement of desperate people en masse. Meanwhile, there is a deafening silence when it comes to the conditions that have created war, poverty, and violence in the immigrants' home countries of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Families and unaccompanied minors attempt the long journey to escape grave danger in the form of gang violence, murder, and extortion. A 2011 report by the Global Commission on Drug Policies concluded that the failed US-led "War on Drugs" and the militarized repression of drugs has increased the number of

homicides and other violent crimes, having "devastating consequences for individuals and societies around the world."

The tragic accident does not exist in isolation, and can be added to the ever-increasing list of immigrant and refugee atrocities for which the global capitalist powers play no small part.

The accident occurs a month after the discovery of 71 refugees were found dead along an Austrian highway after having been trapped in a refrigerated truck. It also occurs little over a year after the gruesome discovery of dozens of bodies of immigrants found dumped in mass graves in Texas along the US-Mexico border.

Enrique Morones is the founder of Border Angels, a San Diego-based group seeking to prevent immigrant deaths along the US-Mexico border. He told *USA Today*, "I have seen that little boy," linking the body of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi, the Syrian boy washed up dead on a beach in Greece, to the tiny bodies his organization finds regularly in the deserts of the southwestern US.

Conditions for immigrants can only be expected to worsen as the US and the European Union heighten border patrol and militarization efforts. Since 2011 almost 1 million people have been apprehended at the US-Mexico border.

The US has invested in a \$1.2 million dollar international media scare-tactic campaign to deter people from attempting the journey. The government has also ramped up funding to Mexico so that immigrants are detained and deported before they reach the US. The results of such efforts can already be seen in figures showing that for the first time in history, Mexico is deporting more immigrants than the US.

The Migration Policy Institute reported that since October 2014, Mexico has detained an unprecedented 173,000 people for illegal border-crossing, compared with more than 130,000 apprehended in the US. A

report released in June by the non-profit Washington Office on Latin America, found that between October 2014 and April 2015, Mexico detained 92,889 Central American immigrants, while the US Customs and Border Protection detained 70,448 “non-Mexican,” mostly Central Americans, during this period.

The decades-long interventions by the United States throughout Latin America, are also complicit in creating the conditions of poverty and desperation that have fueled the influx of children and families to the US from Central America in the last few years. The US has supported right-wing dictators with funding and paramilitary training through the Pentagon-sponsored School of the Americas.

Just in the last few years, the US backed the 2012 election of Guatemalan president Otto Pérez Molina, a former general implicated in bloody civil wars that lasted over 30 years. The US also supported the 2009 military coup that ousted former democratically elected Honduran president Manuel Zelaya in retaliation for his ties to Hugo Chavez and the Venezuelan government.



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