

Mexican government employing torture in US-backed anti-immigrant drive

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With the support of the Obama administration, the Mexican government is operating a systematic operation to torture, beat, extort, kidnap, and kill migrants traveling through Mexico en route to find work in northern Mexico and the United States.

An April 4 report in the *Guardian* tells of several indigenous youngsters who were captured by officials with Mexico's National Immigration Institute (INM), held in captivity, beaten, and deported to Guatemala. The young people, aged 15 to 24, had never been to Guatemala. They were residents of the southern Mexican state of Chiapas and speakers of the Mayan language Tzeltal.

One 18-year-old was beaten by four Mexican agents who told him that he must sign documents admitting he was Guatemalan or be killed. "One pushed me, another was kicking my leg, and a third who was very fat gave me an electric shock here, on the back of my right hand," the boy said. "I really thought I was going to die, so I signed lots of sheets of paper—but I can't read or write so I didn't know what I was signing."

Mexican human rights groups accuse the Mexican government of rounding up Mexicans for deportation in order to fulfill quotas aimed at securing further weapons funding from the US government.

The Mexican government's crackdown against migrants in Mexico is part of the "Southern Border Program" of President Enrique Peña Nieto. The program was announced in July 2014 and was praised by US President Barack Obama, who said in a January 2015 meeting with Peña Nieto: "I very much appreciate Mexico's efforts in addressing the unaccompanied children who we saw spiking during the summer. In part because of strong efforts by Mexico, including at its southern border, we've seen those numbers reduced back to much more manageable levels."

Washington is directly implicated in the crimes carried out against migrants before they reach the United States. Between 2009 and 2013, the Obama administration provided \$112 million in weapons and equipment through the Merida Initiative, a plan based on militarizing Mexican police and the INM. A February 2016 Congressional Research Service report showed that the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement also pledged over \$86 million to Mexico for "mobile non-intrusive inspection equipment and related equipment and training for Mexico's southern border strategy."

Under the Obama administration, the US has given the Mexican government \$3 billion to arm and militarize its security forces. In return, the Mexican police, military, and INM have assumed the role of US imperialism's advance shock troops, terrorizing and deporting migrants in an effort to prevent their ultimate arrival in the US.

Children in particular have borne the brunt of the US-Mexican collusion against immigrants. As a result, a Georgetown Law report on Mexico's migrant policy notes that "the United States has invested significant political and fiscal resources in the fortification of Mexico's southern border" and that "the immigration system currently in place in Mexico operates more like a child-deportation machine."

Since 2010 alone, the United States and Mexico have deported over 40,000 children back to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. With its Southern Border Program in full effect, Mexico, for the first time in 2015, has overtaken the United States in terms of the number of Central American child deportations. On top of those deported from the "Northern Triangle" countries listed above, the Obama administration has also deported tens of thousands of Mexican children

and well over 2 million migrants in total.

Those that arrive in the United States are forced to live a life of fear and poverty. In January, the Obama administration launched a new round of raids aimed specifically at rounding up immigrant parents and their children. Department of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson said that renewed family deportation raids “should come as no surprise. I have said publicly for months that individuals who constitute enforcement priorities, including families and unaccompanied children, will be removed.”

In 2014, the Obama administration announced that it would reinstate mass detention of migrant families and began housing tens of thousands of migrants, including tens of thousands of orphan children, in cells for fast-tracked deportation. In August 2015, the Obama administration once again defended its family detention program in US District Court for the Central District of California.

The widespread government persecution migrant workers face once they arrive in the US has not deterred tens of thousands from seeking to escape the poverty and violence of Central America: from 2008 to 2014, the number of asylum applicants in the US has increased by 1,185 percent.

The poverty and violence that have devastated Central American society are not caused by unexplainable historical accidents. Rather, they are the product of the explicit policies of US imperialism, working in collusion with the corrupt national bourgeoisies to rob the working class and peasantry. The US has imposed the will of American banks and corporations on the masses of Latin America through dictatorship, death squads, and invasion.

Today, US imperialism can also count the bourgeois nationalist and Stalinist-inspired ex-guerrilla movements as its staunch supporters. These groups, once held-up as representatives of “socialism,” have fully integrated themselves into the bourgeois political establishment and are now primary conspirators in the ongoing attacks against the living standards of Latin American workers and peasants.



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