

Biden meets with Central American leaders on refugee crackdown

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Vice President Joe Biden met with leaders of the “Northern Triangle” nations—Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala—at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington yesterday to discuss ways of “strengthening border security” in light of the reemergence of record numbers of immigrants fleeing these countries.

The measures discussed at this meeting were undoubtedly aimed at carrying out the objectives of Washington: to implement policies that will forcibly contain the influx of migrants fleeing to the US, and to further strengthen the borders of fortress America.

The meeting, while ostensibly being held between four representatives of sovereign nations, would in fact more accurately be described as a meeting between a leading member of the Mafia and his local underbosses. As was demonstrated to the Honduran ruling class by the US-backed 2009 coup, Washington will not stand for any hindrance to the dictates of finance capital in the region.

The hypocrisy of US policy is shown by the widely publicized United Nations General Assembly session just days ago, where President Obama attempted to posture as a champion for refugees and immigrants. The summit has been praised as a success for the pledge by 12 countries to resettle some 360,000 refugees. This dismal figure amounts to less than a drop in the ocean when compared to the millions of refugees requiring resettlement.

In spite of Obama’s humanitarian rhetoric, Washington’s real attitude towards refugees and immigrants is on display daily at its own borders, and also of course, in its historical record worldwide, with Latin America being perhaps the most tragic example.

The truth is that the Obama administration can offer nothing more than a dressed-up version of the same

failed tactics implemented in the aftermath of the 2014 border crisis, which was largely a result of a mass influx of refugees, particularly unaccompanied children, fleeing the Northern Triangle countries.

New data collected by the Pew Research Center show that these policies have ultimately failed to achieve their supposed goal of “detering” migrants from escaping their home countries. A report issued this week finds that while the number of unauthorized immigrants coming from Mexico has declined since 2014, this figure has been offset by an increase of immigrants coming from Asia, Central America, and sub-Saharan Africa, keeping the overall number of undocumented immigrants steady since 2009.

Based on the “logic” of deterring refugees from fleeing their home countries, a strategy adopted in the 2014 border crisis, the Obama administration took a series of actions including mass deportations, increased spending on border surveillance, and expanding methods of capture and detention.

The consequences of these criminal policies have been devastating. The Obama administration has overseen the apprehension of more than 68,080 family members this fiscal year alone. With no month this year seeing fewer than 3,000 family members detained, it is expected that the annual total will be a national record. Of those deported last year, 32 percent were to the Northern Triangle region; 33,000 people were deported to Guatemala, 21,000 to El Salvador and 20,000 to Honduras.

While Obama stood in front of the world’s leaders saying, “The real measure of the summit will only be what countries do and who they help,” his administration was carrying out its version of “helping”: forcing refugees to return to some of the most impoverished and dangerous countries in the

world.

According to the World Bank, at least 60 percent of Hondurans, 54 percent of Guatemalans and 35 percent of El Salvadorans live below the official poverty line. San Pedro Sula, Honduras, considered the “murder capital of the world,” has the second-highest homicide rate after Caracas, Venezuela. San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, was the third most violent city in the world in 2015, with a homicide rate of 109 per every 100,000 people.

And those refugees who are “lucky” enough to be considered for temporary relief may find themselves in one of the three for-profit detention centers in Pennsylvania and Texas, which have counted at least 31 deaths this year and currently hold dozens of women who have begun a hunger strike to protest for their release.

Other programs, such as the two-year-old child refugee program, have had similarly dreadful results. Of the roughly 9,500 child applications received, only a fraction, about 267 children, have actually been admitted into the United States. Far from fixing the problem, detentions of unaccompanied children have actually shown a dramatic increase over last year’s totals, with the number of children traveling without parents increasing 52 percent.

U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes responded this week to the growing number of critics of US refugee policy, saying, “We do have an allocation for refugees from that region, but we’ve been more focused on trying to get at those root causes in Central America and try to prevent dangerous migration patterns, particularly for unaccompanied children up to the U.S. border.”

Any serious examination of the “root cause” of this global crisis would lead immediately to the disastrous effects of US imperialism throughout the world. The three countries that make up the Northern Triangle region are prime examples.

The roots of US imperialism in Guatemala go as far back as a CIA-orchestrated coup that successfully overthrew a democratically elected government in 1954. This intervention, prompted by the economic interests of the United Fruit Company, led directly to the country’s nearly four-decade-long dirty war, causing well over 200,000 deaths. The effects of this intervention are still being felt today.

The history of El Salvador and Honduras is also riddled with similar events. The US armed and financed the ultra-right government in El Salvador throughout the civil war of the 1980s, while using Honduras as a military base for the illegal Contra guerrilla war against neighboring Nicaragua, after the 1979 revolution that overthrew the Somoza dictatorship and brought the Sandinistas to power.

Washington was responsible for providing nearly \$6 billion to support and arm military juntas in El Salvador while the CIA has continued its legacy of toppling democratically elected leaders as late as 2009 in Honduras.



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