

Amidst complete silence from Democrats

Migrants seeking asylum are turned away for the second day at US-Mexico border

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In a blatant violation of international law, the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at the Tijuana-San Ysidro border checkpoint in southern San Diego County refused to process asylum requests for nearly 200 Central American migrants for the second day in a row. The move comes under a direct order from President Donald Trump, who tweeted last week: “I have instructed the Secretary of Homeland Security not to let these large Caravans of people into our country.”

Late last night, the Department of Justice announced it was criminally prosecuting 11 members of the caravan for “illegal entry,” which carries a possible 2-year prison sentence for first offenders and a 20-year sentence for immigrants with certain pre-existing criminal convictions. Attorney General Jefferson Sessions said in a statement: “The United States will not stand by as our immigration laws are ignored and our nation’s safety is jeopardized.”

The standoff at the border marks another milestone in the assault on democratic rights in America. The right to asylum is an internationally protected human right, established by Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. The declaration was signed in the aftermath of World War Two in response to the decision by many governments—including the United States—to deny entrance to Jewish refugees and other targets of Nazi persecution.

The Trump administration’s decision to violate international law has been met without opposition from the Democratic Party, which has maintained almost total silence over the matter. Moreover, Trump’s action to block the asylum seekers was made possible by

California’s Democratic Governor Jerry Brown, who recently agreed to Trump’s request that governors send National Guard troops to their borders with Mexico to block the supposed “threat” posed by the migrant caravan.

The group currently seeking asylum at the US-Mexico border is part of a yearly “caravan” of Central Americans who make the grueling 2,500-mile trek by foot, train and bus from the Guatemala-Mexico border. The caravan is organized by Pueblo Sin Fronteras—People Without Borders—anonprofitbased in San Diego, California. The migrants are predominantly from the “northern triangle” countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, and are fleeing three of the most violent and poverty-stricken countries in the world, all of which have been ravaged by US imperialism for decades.

The organization arranges groups to travel in large numbers annually for the safety of the migrants. The trek is one of the most dangerous and deadly migration routes in the world. Thousands of men, women and children fall victim to the violent drug cartels along the path each year, enduring the most grotesque crimes, including kidnapping, extortion, robbery and rape. An estimated 80 percent of women are sexually assaulted or raped on the journey—a fact that has gone unreported by the self-absorbed millionaires in the #MeToo campaign.

The 180 migrants who reached the border on this year’s trip were first refused entry on Sunday after their arrival in the Mexican border city of Tijuana on Friday. The CBP commissioner absurdly claimed that the agency was “at capacity” and could not process any requests despite months of advance notice and high-

profile media coverage of the trip.

Despite the frigid temperatures, the asylum seekers were forced to camp outside overnight Sunday in front of the US border in a plaza at the Mexican entrance to wait for CBP agents to hear their asylum requests. About 50 migrants reportedly have been trapped inside the port of entry between the two countries after officials allowed this group of the “most vulnerable” to enter the pedestrian walkway, ostensibly to start the process. Officials then provocatively barred them from stepping foot on US soil. Reports are unclear as to what has happened to the group.

Human rights experts have publicly denounced CBP’s cynical claim to be “at capacity.” An attorney for the caravan told reporters, “They have been well aware that a caravan is going to arrive at the border... We can build a base in Iraq in under a week. We can’t process 200 refugees? I don’t believe it.”

The refusal to process the asylum request has nothing to do with an absence of resources. Republican and Democratic administrations have repeatedly increased funding for CBP over the last decade and hundreds of national guard troops were deployed to the border earlier this month. However, these resources were never meant to help immigrants seeking asylum, but were instead meant for just the opposite: to keep them out.

The Trump administration made a calculated decision to draw attention to this year’s caravan, viciously targeting it to further escalate his right-wing, anti-immigrant agenda. Trump has spent the month denouncing the migrants traveling in the caravan in a series of tweets suggesting they are criminals and rapists. Referring to a possible government shutdown this fall, Trump said at a rally in Michigan over the weekend: “If we don’t get border security, we’ll close down the country.”

The callous attitude of the administration was underscored on Monday when Vice President Mike Pence took a tour of the construction site for a border wall in El Centro California, just 100 miles east of the scene unfolding in Tijuana.

Pence lauded CBP and the Department of Homeland Security as “great and brave American heroes.” He brought special greetings from “the great champion of law enforcement in the United States”—President Trump. Upon conclusion of his remarks, CBP

employees presented him with a piece of the original Border Patrol fence as a gift.

The actions taken by the Trump administration to deliberately and publicly block asylum seekers from exercising their rights is a watershed moment in the ongoing war on immigrants. The moves by the Trump administration are a direct continuation of the policy of his predecessor, Barack Obama, who was nicknamed the “deporter-in-chief” after deporting more immigrants than any other president in history during his time in office.



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