

Democrats maintain silence over persecution of Central American immigrants at US-Mexico border

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In the face of the Trump administration's sadistic and illegal treatment of Central American immigrants seeking to apply for asylum at the border crossing between Tijuana-San Ysidro and San Diego, the Democratic Party has said virtually nothing, exposing as a cynical fraud its pretensions of sympathy for the plight of immigrant workers.

For the third day, United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials at the border checkpoint are holding in limbo a large majority of the 170 migrants who participated in a caravan from Guatemala to seek refuge in the US from murderous political and gang violence in their home countries. In line with President Donald Trump's racist attacks on the caravan as an assault by criminal elements against US national security, the CBP has allowed only 14 of the refugees to cross into the US and begin the onerous process of applying for asylum.

The rest, consisting largely of women and children, are being left to camp out on the Mexican side of the border. This is being done to people who have endured a months-long trek in an attempt to escape horrific conditions caused by US imperialist intervention, exploitation and support for CIA-backed death squad regimes. The deliberate delay in processing the immigrants is a flagrant violation of international laws and conventions guaranteeing the right to asylum.

The 14 immigrants who have been allowed to apply for asylum are being held in a detention center known as the "hielera," or "cooler," where they could remain for days, or even a week, as border agents question them to determine whether they have "credible fear" of returning to their home countries.

Under orders from Attorney General Jeff Sessions,

the Justice Department has filed criminal charges against 11 immigrants, allegedly part of the caravan, who are said to have entered the US illegally. "The United States will not stand by as our immigration laws are ignored and our nation's safety is jeopardized," Sessions said in a statement.

The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the CBP and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE), has announced a policy of separating children from their parents where families are caught crossing the border without documents.

Trump has repeatedly railed against what he calls the "catch and release" policy, a pejorative term for allowing undocumented immigrants to remain free pending the outcome of their administrative hearings and determination of their status, instead of locking them up for weeks, months or even years. Earlier this year, the US Supreme Court ruled that immigrants held in detention facilities have no right to a bail.

On Sunday, Vice President Mike Pence made a provocative visit to El Centro, California, just 100 miles east of the scene unfolding in Tijuana, where he toured a construction site for Trump's border wall. After lauding the CBP and Homeland Security, Pence accused the caravan's organizers of persuading people to leave their homes to advance an "open borders" agenda.

The silence of the Democratic Party will not shock anyone who has paid attention to immigration policy over the last decade. The slim chance these migrants have of being granted asylum is not a new feature of the Trump administration, but rather a longstanding bipartisan policy. More than 75 percent of applicants from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador between

2011 and 2016, under the Obama administration, were rejected. Obama deported more immigrants than any previous president. The policies of the Trump administration are a continuation and intensification of those of the Obama administration.

In order to reduce the number of immigrants reaching the US, and circumvent international law regarding asylum seekers, the Obama administration oversaw a program called “Frontera Sur,” which required the Mexican government to crack down on Central American migrants before they could make it to the US border.

Under the program, Mexico relocated hundreds of immigration agents to its southern border with Guatemala to carry out the dictates of Washington. Mexican immigration officials set up mobile checkpoints and conducted regular raids on trains and immigrant safe houses to prevent Central Americans from reaching the United States.

The Obama administration supported this campaign with training, technology, intelligence and funding. The US has provided the Mexican police and military with roughly \$100 million to detain and deport Central Americans.

A year after the program’s initiation in July 2014, apprehensions by the Mexican government increased by 71 percent over the previous year. The crackdown has led to the deportation of about 950,000 Central Americans as well as the detention of many indigenous Mexican citizens living in southern states like Chiapas. According to a 2015 United Nations report, the large-scale detention and deportation scheme has also produced widespread torture.

After the caravan initially left Chiapas over a month ago, Trump pressured the Mexican government to “break up” the migrants, using the tools in place from Obama’s “Frontera Sur” program.

The Mexican government obeyed Trump’s order and worked to intimidate the group. Trump boasted of its actions in a tweet in early April, saying, “The Caravan is largely broken up thanks to the strong immigration laws of Mexico and their willingness to use them so as not to cause a giant scene at our Border.” Shortly afterwards, armed Mexican immigration agents entered a train carrying over 500 of the original 1,500 in the original caravan, forcibly removed them from the train and left them to travel on foot miles from any major

city or town.

The Democrats are complicit in the conditions in Central America that are driving desperate people to become refugees. Over 80 percent of the migrants traveling in this year’s caravan are from Honduras. In 2009, the Obama administration, with direct oversight by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, backed a military coup in Honduras that ousted the elected president Manuel Zelaya and inaugurated a period of repressive violence against the working class.

The repression includes arbitrary detentions, beatings, torture and the murder of members of opposition media. Since the overthrow, the US has turned a blind eye to fraudulent elections held under state-of-siege rule so long as they produced victories for US-friendly candidates. The US government entered into bilateral agreement with the Honduran government in 2010 to resume the direct flow of US military aid to the Honduran armed forces and police. Organized gangs in the country are well known for extorting Hondurans to pay an arbitrary “war tax,” and some who can’t pay are killed.



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