

# US and Mexican officials stoke up nationalist backlash against immigrants

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On Sunday, right-wing anti-immigrant protesters marched through Tijuana's high-end Rio area, along the US-Mexico border, shouting "No illegals," "No to the invasion" and "Mexico First!" Their target was the caravan of over 1,000 migrants which reached Tijuana over the weekend, in what is the final stop on their 2,700-mile-long journey from Honduras to San Diego.

Tijuana's mayor, Juan Manuel Gastélum, a member of the right wing Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) has continually referred to the migrants as an "invasion" and "horde," echoing the xenophobia and nationalism of the Trump administration. "No city in the world is prepared to receive this—if I'm allowed—this avalanche," said Gastelum during a news conference. "It is a tsunami. There is concern among all citizens of Tijuana."

Sunday's demonstration, along with provocations late last week by Tijuana residents are the product of the anti-immigrant chauvinism being whipped up on both sides of the border.

"We want the caravan to go; they are invading us," Patricia Reyes, a 62-year-old protester, told reporters. "They should have come into Mexico correctly, legally, but they came in like animals." Her sentiments, however, were not shared by all. "This is not what Tijuana is like! All migrants are welcome here!", an elderly woman shouted at the protesters.

Tijuana is the northernmost town in Baja California, which borders the US city of San Diego. The San Ysidro port of entry is the busiest border crossing on the entire planet. Every day, 365 days a year, 70,000 passenger vehicles, 20,000 pedestrians, and 4,000 commercial trucks cross back and forth, connecting a massive workforce to California, the world's fifth largest economy. The San Diego-Tijuana border region trade represents a \$250 billion economy with over 6.6

million residents and nearly 3.2 million workers, and is known as the Cali-Baja mega region.

The claims that the US and Mexico are too financially strained to assist the migrants turns reality on its head. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) found that the top 10 percent of Mexico's highest earning families capture two-thirds of the nation's income.

At the same time, half of Mexico's 127 million residents do not earn enough to meet basic needs, and one in five suffers from hunger. Over half of Mexico's children live in poverty and a United Nations study found that 14 percent of children suffer from stunted growth as a result of malnutrition.

The vast degree of social inequality in Mexico, which mirrors that of the United States, cuts through the lie that the immigrants pose some kind of threat to what are in reality nonexistent resources for the working class. A report published earlier this year by researchers Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman found that the bottom half of the world's population—3.5 billion people—owns less than 2 percent of the total wealth in the world.

While there were only about 200 anti-caravan protesters in a city of 1.6 million, officials on both sides are working in tandem to build anti-immigrant sentiment and use the caravan as a scapegoat for existing societal problems, and create divisions amongst the working class.

Authorities closed all northbound pedestrian and vehicle traffic at the San Ysidro crossing during Monday morning's peak commute hours, 3:30 a.m. to 6:30 a.m., citing baseless rumors about the caravan intending to "rush" the border.

No indication of such an act was ever proven. However, CBP officials were ready to install new

movable wire-topped barriers during the three-hour “surprise.” The border is in the process of a \$741 million renovation project scheduled for completion in 2019.

Monday morning’s closure affected the majority of the over 100,000 who cross daily, leaving tens of thousands in panic, unsure when the border would re-open and if they would make it to work and school.

The long delays also affected the businesses that rely on border trade. “It delays everything. The manufacturing industry relies on on-time deliveries so their customers have products they need to sell and produce is the same thing. It means your produce is sitting in a truck for a longer period of time and that could affect its shelf life,” said a port authority official.

The closure is part of a concerted effort to pit tens of thousands of workers who cross the border regularly—themselves immigrants—and the powerful bi-national industry sectors against the Central American asylum seekers.

US and Mexican officials are creating an impossible and deadly situation for migrants at the border. The full weight of the US military is being prepared for a bloody assault on a few thousand migrants, men, women and children—who have little more than the clothes on their backs and are fleeing brutal violence in their home countries, which is in no small measure a product of Washington’s involvement in Central American affairs.

Meanwhile, attempts by the Trump administration to prohibit asylum applications persist, despite the fact that on Tuesday a federal judge blocked the administration’s attempt to ban asylum.

While the Trump administration is stoking up right-wing chauvinism on both sides of the border, there has been nothing but deafening silence from the Democrats. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has not once referenced the migrant caravan, but did issue a roundabout statement prior to the elections that Trump’s campaign against immigrants was a diversion from the “real” issue of health care.

The newly elected congresswoman and member of the Democratic Socialists of America, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, only once tweeted about the caravan, on October 26, and has since remained silent on the issue, even as the deployment of troops and attack on asylum rights continue unabated.

The pseudo-left organizations do not pose any political opposition to the chauvinism being whipped up on both sides of the border, giving the ultra-right a free hand.

Only a movement organizing the strength of the international working class can put an end to the deportations, the immigration detention centers, the attacks on asylum, and the massive prison camps currently being built.

The Socialist Equality Party is the only political organization that represents the true interests of the working class, and fights for genuine socialist internationalism, an end to the nation state system, and a world without borders. Workers have the right to live and work wherever they choose with full citizenship rights, something they are denied under the capitalist system. We urge workers on both sides of the US-Mexico border to take up the fight for socialism by joining the SEP.



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