

More migrant deaths as Trump unveils class-based immigration quota

Eric London
17 May 2019

Near midnight on Tuesday, officials carried the tiny body of a two-year-old Guatemalan boy out of a hospital in Horizon City, Texas, and drove his body to the morgue in nearby El Paso. He was the fourth immigrant child to die in US detention since December.

The boy and his mother were arrested on April 3 near the Paso Del Norte Bridge, where hundreds of immigrants were detained in the frigid cold underneath an overpass. The boy was admitted to a hospital under guard only on April 7. There, he spent the last month of his life battling pneumonia, a disease he evidently contracted in detention.

Several hundred miles south in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, a 10-year-old Guatemalan girl died en route to the United States, according to the Mexican National Institute of Migration (INM). After traveling over a thousand miles from her home, the girl began experiencing severe throat pain and died shortly thereafter.

The path from the Central American countries ravaged by American imperialism and corporate exploitation is a trail of tears. And those immigrants who successfully make the journey to the US now face an increased likelihood of incarceration in makeshift concentration camps.

The US military announced late Wednesday that it has agreed to build six massive tent internment camps to hold 7,500 immigrants near the US-Mexico border. The agreement between the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is not only an escalation of the attack on immigrants, it also is a dangerous warning that the US military is constructing detention centers on US soil.

While the government may first fill these jails with immigrant workers fleeing war and violence, the existence of mass detention plans like Readiness

Exercise 1984 (Rex 84) shows that the American ruling class is also preparing to round-up dissidents, opponents of war and other “national security threats.”

As the Trump administration prepares further repressive measures, it is unveiling a new immigration plan aimed at establishing a class-based system for visa processing.

On Thursday, Trump addressed reporters from the White House Rose Garden and announced a “merit-based” immigration plan that will drastically reduce family-based visa applications and replace them with requirements based on education and skill. The plan will also cut the visa lottery system, which grants 50,000 people the ability to migrate to the US each year.

Trump introduced his plan with a demagogic speech aimed at presenting the measure as “pro-American worker.”

“Democrats are proposing open borders, lower wages and, frankly, lawless chaos,” he said. “We are proposing an immigration plan that puts the jobs, wages and safety of American workers first.”

He attacked asylum seekers, claiming working class migrants escaping death, persecution and torture are “abusing” the system: “Asylum abuse also strains our public school system, our hospitals and our shelters, using funds that should go to elderly veterans, at-risk youths, Americans in poverty, and those in genuine need of attention. We’re using the funds that should be going to them. And that shouldn’t happen.”

Trump makes these statements as he eviscerates social spending, cutting funding for housing subsidies for the elderly and disabled, slashing programs that feed the poor and provide food subsidies to the working class, cutting spending for tuition aid, and eliminating workplace safety regulations, thereby placing millions

of workers in greater danger at work. This billionaire real estate speculator is lying to American workers in the hope he can divert their anger from those really responsible for the decline in living standards: the financial aristocracy that Trump represents.

The content of Trump's new immigration plan is a direct attack on the working class. By requiring that immigrants prove educational merit, English language skills and the ability to pass a US civics test as a condition for applying for a visa from outside the US, Trump is effectively barring the vast majority of workers and peasants, who have had little or no education and for whom the life-and-death struggle for existence means it is not possible to practice English or study for a civics exam.

The plan will throw upwards of 4 million people off of immigration waiting lists, according to *Forbes* magazine. *Forbes* cites one legal analysis finding that under the plan, "immigrants in the green card backlog would lose their place in line and would need to apply under the new point-based system."

Trump said his immigration plan would include massive increases in funding to further militarize the border, calling it the "most complete and secure border package ever secured by our country, or any other country for that matter."

The far-right is split over Trump's plan. The *New York Times* reported that Trump's fascist advisor Stephen Miller was a co-author of the plan (alongside Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner) and *Breitbart News* applauded the proposal as an "America First" immigration plan, which will entail "big chain migration cuts." However, Mark Krikorian, the executive director of the extreme-right Center for Immigration Studies, criticized the plan for not calling for a sufficient "reduction in total immigration."

The proposal is unlikely to pass Congress and as a result Trump will likely cite the plan as justification for even more extreme measures. Earlier this week, the *Washington Post* reported that the administration is considering a nationally coordinated military operation to arrest 10,000 immigrants in one fell swoop across 10 major US cities.

The attack on immigrants is the tip of the spear of the attack on the democratic rights of the entire working class and must be opposed.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact