

Mexico deploys National Guard, detains immigrants at record levels

Alex González
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Three weeks after reaching a deal with the US to halt the imposition of tariffs, Mexico has sharply escalated its persecution of Central American immigrants. Recent reports indicate that immigrant women and children are being held in overflowing concentration camps that are just as horrific as their US counterparts. At the same time, the Mexican financial oligarchy has doubled down on the militarization of the country to meet the apprehension quotas set by Trump's fascistic advisors.

In just one month, Mexican police and military have set into motion a high-gear system of roundups and raids that have increased deportations by one third. Some 22,000 people were deported in June, the highest monthly figure since early 2006. In the six months that Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (popularly known as "AMLO") has been in office, deportations have increased by 245 percent. In total, 82,132 people have been deported since the "leftist" administration was inaugurated.

The number of immigrant detentions has also reached new highs. Some 29,000 immigrants were detained in June, up 23 percent from May. This means that Mexican authorities captured about 1,000 immigrants *per day*. The Mexican capitalists are eager to show a reduction in migrant numbers by a July 22 deadline established during the previous negotiations.

The tragedies unfolding for immigrant families were on sharp display last week when the bodies of a father and his young daughter washed up in the border town of Matamoros, across the river from Brownsville, Texas. The same day, the bodies of a young woman, a child and two babies were found dead on the broiling Texas desert.

For immigrants detained during their journey north, conditions are just as dangerous and horrific. Given that formal facilities to hold immigrants have rapidly run

out of space, Mexican authorities are using open-air fields, sports stadiums, and other makeshift encampments to hold thousands of people. The head of the Mexican National Commission for Human Rights has (CNDH) reported that immigration centers are up to five times at capacity.

In the city of Comitán, Guatemala's consul in the southern state of Chiapas described the detention facilities as "an absolute indignity" and "the worst I've ever seen." He reported seeing 360 migrants in a building with a capacity of 90. "The citizens of my country are not receiving medical attention," he said. "There are sick children."

In Tapachula, also in Chiapas, a desperate Haitian mother begged a camera crew to give assistance to her son. "Help me. Help me with my son," she cried through the fence. "Please, some food. My son is dying. Every day we do not have drinking water. Help me!" Her heart-wrenching cry for help has been viewed by millions of people on social media.

But even as Mexico's detention facilities have overflowed with desperate women and children, Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador laced the boots of 70,000 additional National Guard troops to greet impoverished workers and peasants with military-style violence.

Mexico's National Guard officially launched on Sunday with the swearing in of 10,000 troops in Mexico City's *Campo Marte*. At the ceremony attended by top military brass and cabinet members. General Luis Rodríguez, who heads the National Guard, called the body "the largest ever created in Mexican territory." In his remarks to the troops, AMLO stated his "faith that you will not let down the people of Mexico."

The creation of the National Guard marks a

significant step in the militarization of Mexico. It comes 13 years after the launching of the disastrous “war on drugs” that has claimed the lives of 250,000 people and the disappearance of 40,000 more. It is that much more significant that the National Guard was proposed and approved by AMLO and his party, Morena, which has majorities in both chambers of Congress and voted virtually unanimously for the new military body.

The swearing-in ceremony for the National Guard was a stark expression of the betrayal, almost exactly one year after his election, of the millions who voted for AMLO under the promise that he would withdraw the military from the streets. Instead, the “leftist” AMLO has released a force that will undoubtedly carry out even more abuses, extrajudicial murders, and human rights abuses.

The images of 21,000 war-ready soldiers already patrolling the southern and northern borders are just the beginning. For the remainder of 2019, some 82,000 National Guard troops will be deployed. By 2020, this figure will be about 97,000 and will reach 111,500 by 2021.

Under these conditions, a treacherous role is played by individuals and organizations—including the pseudo-left publication *Jacobin Magazine* —that seek to downplay the danger of militarization or to obscure the class nature of the military. The National Guard are not “the people in uniform,” as claimed by AMLO, but rather direct instruments of the ruling class that are mobilized to serve the interests of the rich. As stated by the great revolutionary Leon Trotsky, “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state is a bourgeois cop, not a worker.”

The mass deployment of troops is not a temporary anomaly. The ruling class, historically outdated and clinging to its privileges, will use the military to repress not only immigrants, but native-born workers and youth who are rapidly radicalizing due to decades of declining wages, job insecurity, and exploitative working conditions. The deployment of the National Guard, along with the attacks on the democratic rights of immigrants, is aimed at preparing for inevitable social explosions.

Layers of desperate immigrants have already been pushed to a breaking point. For the third time in one month, at least 100 immigrants attempted to escape

their detention facility in Tapachula, but were stopped by the National Guard. On Saturday, a group of 127 Haitian migrants rioted on-board a plane in an attempt to stop their deportation. On Monday, US authorities closed an international border crossing in El Paso, Texas, in response to group of Central American and Cuban immigrants that chanted, “We will cross!”

To this must be added the resurgence of the class struggle that has powerfully erupted in 2019, but is still in its early stages. The same border town of Matamoros that saw the tragic drowning of a young father and daughter also witnessed a wildcat strike wave by at least 70,000 workers that pointed the way forward in the struggle against authoritarianism and reaction.

The mass deployment of troops is not a sign of the strength of the ruling class, but rather of weakness. As creators of all the wealth in society, it is the international working class that has the power to bring about a revolutionary change to free humanity from poverty, oppression and war.



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