

Immigrants shut down Matamoros-Brownsville border crossing in protest over US-Mexico asylum ban

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11 October 2019

A group of over 300 immigrants—mostly from Honduras—shut down the pedestrian bridge between Matamoros, Tamaulipas and Brownsville, Texas early Thursday morning in a protest against never ending delays to their applications for asylum in the US.

The protest is a powerful indication of growing opposition among the estimated 40,000 immigrants being held in inhumane conditions in Northern Mexico as a result of the agreement between the Trump administration and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) effectively barring their right to asylum.

Immigrant children and nursing mothers were prominent among the demonstrators, facing off against American border guards in riot gear who photographed groups of children in an effort of intimidation. Immediately after the bridge was cleared, US immigration police reportedly held a “training exercise” involving the firing of tear gas. It is not clear if any immigrants were injured in this exercise.

Thousands of immigrants are stranded in Matamoros, living in homeless encampments riddled with disease and beset by crime. The *New York Times* reported, “Not only has the plaza encampment near the bridge in Matamoros grown more crowded by the day, say volunteers who have worked with the group, but in a town that is notorious for drug and gang violence, some migrants have been victims of kidnapping for extortion and sexual assault.”

Yesterday afternoon, Matamoros Mayor Mario López went to the bridge to tell protestors to return to Mexico. López, nicknamed “The Sheep” by workers in Matamoros for his pro-company stand during this year’s wildcat strikes which swept through the city,

was likely acting in collaboration with Trump administration officials, as has the rest of López’s party, Morena, which is headed by AMLO.

According to the *Washington Post*, “Migrants told the mayor they were living in dirty conditions in Matamoros with little shelter or access to toilets, and he promised to send cleaning crews and set up washing facilities.” Such promises, coming from an official with a long anti-working class record, should not be taken at face value. During comments to the press, López also denounced the immigrant protestors for causing problems for local residents.

The demonstration by Honduran immigrants is an expression of growing discontent among the tens of thousands of workers escaping societies which have been devastated by over a century of US imperialist exploitation. In 2009, Honduras was the victim of a right-wing coup, overseen by the Obama administration and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, which resulted in the proliferation of US-backed death squads, leading to widespread corruption, violence and police terror.

In October 2018, thousands of Honduran immigrants marched through Mexico chanting, “Migrants are not criminals, we are international workers.”

Then as now, the working class is proving by its actions that the division of the world into nation-states under capitalism is incompatible with the aspirations and material needs of hundreds of millions of workers worldwide. By marching across borders, the immigrant protestors are proving that the laws making immigration “illegal” are as much a block on the progress of humanity as were the laws legalizing the purchase and sale of human beings as slaves.

In a 1913 essay titled “Capitalism and Workers’ Immigration,” Vladimir Lenin explained:

“There can be no doubt that dire poverty alone compels people to abandon their native land, and that the capitalists exploit the immigrant workers in the most shameless manner. But only reactionaries can shut their eyes to the *progressive* significance of this modern migration of nations... Capitalism is drawing the masses of the working people of the *whole* world [into the class struggle], breaking down the musty, fusty habits of local life, breaking down national barriers and prejudices, uniting workers from all countries in huge factories and mines in America, Germany and so forth...”

Workers in the United States must come to the defense of their brothers and sisters from the south. The Socialist Equality Party demands:

- Safe passage and legal entry for all immigrants into the US
- Abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the dismantling of the militarized border region
- Immediate liberation of all immigrants detained in the United States
- The provision of jobs, homes, health care and educational opportunities to the asylum seekers and all immigrants
- A multi-trillion-dollar program to rebuild Central America, to be paid for by expropriating the wealth of American billionaires
- The right of all workers to safely travel across the world without fear of harassment



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