

Biden launches barbaric attack on immigrants

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The scenes playing out across the US-Mexico border disqualify the US government from ever lecturing the world on “human rights,” its favorite pretext for invading countries and laying waste to entire societies.

The number of immigrant children detained by the US government has risen from 3,200 to 4,200 this week. Children report to attorneys that they are not allowed to shower and that they have not seen the sky in days. Yesterday, the Biden administration announced that instead of releasing children to family members, the government will transport 3,000 teenage boys to a Dallas convention hall, which they have chillingly dubbed an “immigrant decompression center.”

The events make clear that far from representing a break with Donald Trump, the Democratic Party is continuing and deepening his anti-immigrant policies. Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the situation at the border a “humanitarian crisis,” as though the Biden administration and her own party were not primarily responsible for it.

The scant media attention to the attacks on immigrants has focused on the mass detention of unaccompanied children, presenting the matter as a “crisis.” Republican members of Congress traveled to the border on Monday, masquerading as the Child Protection League, declaring that the “barbaric” conditions of migrant children traveling to the US border “broke their hearts.” In other words, they want them kept out.

Perhaps even worse than the conditions imposed by the Biden administration on the children and youth that it has allowed to enter the country is its decision to summarily expel all arriving adult immigrants and those children crossing with relatives on the grounds that they pose a health risk due to the coronavirus.

In a late January letter to the Biden administration,

dozens of medical experts explained that such “Title 42” expulsions serve no medical purpose: “Imposing restrictions on asylum seekers and other migrants based on immigration status is discriminatory and has no scientific basis as a public health measure.” Title 42 abolishes due process, ends the right to apply for asylum or other relief, and denies immigrants the right to appear for a hearing before expulsion. Seventy percent of the over 100,000 people who attempted to cross the border in February, including thousands of children, were expelled in this manner.

Those immigrants deported under Title 42 are sent back across the border after US authorities strip them of their possessions, including their shoelaces, leaving them to shuffle across bridges into Mexico. Many are flown hundreds of miles away from where they crossed, to be expelled at a different point along the border. Thousands presently find themselves homeless or detained along the US-Mexico border where the pandemic is spreading unabated.

In Mexico, immigrants are held in government facilities that a Doctors Without Borders official described as “worse than a makeshift camp, you don’t even have access to proper water.” The government of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced yesterday it has detained 1,000 children in such facilities, complying with demands by the Biden administration for a harsher crackdown. Mexican officials have also conducted a series of high-profile mass raids in recent weeks on behalf of the US.

The crackdown has resulted in death on a mass scale. On Saturday, the Guatemalan town of Comitancillo held a funeral for 11 town residents, who were murdered by gang members and their bodies burned in a car fire while trying to enter the US in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas in January—a crime which Mexican

authorities covered up. Earlier this month, a car packed with immigrants crashed while attempting to enter the US, killing 13 immigrants from Mexico and Central America.

Adult immigrants and accompanied children who are “fortunate” enough to make it into the United States without summary expulsion are held in crowded detention centers where COVID-19 is also spreading like wildfire. There are presently 420 active cases in detention centers, up from 370 at the end of last week. A total of 10,000 detainees have been infected with the virus since the start of the pandemic.

As for those who are able to win release from detention centers, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have been dropping off sick COVID-positive immigrants in towns on the Texas side of the border to fend for themselves without medical attention and without informing medical officials or local non-profits.

This reality exposes the lie that the Democratic Party represents a “lesser evil” compared to the Trump administration’s fascistic attack on immigrants. Even under Trump’s “Remain in Mexico” policy, immigrants were ostensibly allowed to apply for asylum, unlike today.

The Biden administration will soon introduce its main immigration bill, the US Citizenship Act. In announcing the bill, Biden and Democrats will spew meaningless platitudes about how America is “a nation of immigrants” (one might add, despite their best efforts). But the bill does nothing to undo the criminalization of immigrants and will pave the way for millions of deportations, especially of those who are now trying to enter the United States, as well as those with criminal records.

Under the bill, immigrants will still have no right to an attorney, the network of immigration jails will remain open, the immigration court system will remain under the control of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), child detention will remain “legal,” the border will be further militarized, hundreds of millions of dollars will go to arming Central American police and death squads and a “public information campaign” will be conducted to scare Central Americans away from trying to reach the US border.

Workers in the United States and Europe must come

to the defense of their class allies in Mexico, Central and South America, rejecting the xenophobic propaganda coming from the capitalist parties and the corporate media.

Those risking their lives to enter the US and EU are workers, small farmers and ruined small shopkeepers from countries whose natural resources have been plundered and whose population has been exploited and suppressed by powerful corporations and imperialist-backed dictators for over a century.

The coronavirus pandemic has killed nearly 800,000 across Latin America. The World Economic Forum estimated that 500 million people will fall into poverty, while the International Labor Organization predicted that 1.6 *billion* informal jobs worldwide—including a large section of the working class in Latin America—will be lost or see huge wage cuts. The total amount of income loss suffered by the international working class in 2020 was \$3.4 trillion, roughly equal to the amount gained by the world’s richest people. The World Bank reported that 800 million immigrant family members have lost \$110 billion in remittance transfers from the US and Europe for food and other necessities.

Workers in the advanced and underdeveloped countries alike confront hardship as a direct result of the policies of the ruling classes. The global working class must mobilize its tremendous social power in the struggle against these conditions by uniting across national boundaries. For this reason, defending the democratic rights of immigrant workers is a strategic imperative in the fight for socialist revolution.



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