

Over 14,000 migrant children detained by Biden administration

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The Biden administration admitted this week to detaining more than 14,000 unaccompanied migrant children in federal custody. More than 9,500 children are held by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), while the remaining 4,500 are in the custody of Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

While some migrants are being allowed to stay in the US while their asylum claims are allowed to play out in immigration court, the vast majority are being turned away. A report by CBS News notes that 3,000 of the children in CBP detention camps, meant for adults, are being kept longer than is legally allowed, with some facilities operating at well over maximum capacity.

Biden administration officials confirmed that they are expanding the number of camps to hold the influx of migrants including a convention center in Dallas that will be used to imprison children. Another camp in Midland, Texas, is also being used.

The White House is desperate to cover up a swell of migrants coming to the US-Mexico border, the overwhelming majority of whom are escaping extreme violence and poverty in Central America. The worsening conditions in the camps have proven to be a political embarrassment for a government that was voted in on a promise to reverse the anti-immigrant policies enforced by Trump.

President Biden has responded to right-wing criticism of his handling of the border crisis by insisting that there exists no “open border” policy and telling immigrants that they should not come to the US.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki went out of her way Thursday to insist that the “vast, vast majority [of families] are being turned away,” adding, “There are limited circumstances, very limited I should say, where families are coming across going through proper protocols at the border, being tested and then having

their cases adjudicated.”

The number of families and unaccompanied minors that will actually have their case brought before an immigration judge and then given asylum, after potentially years of legal appeals and requests, will be extremely few, by design.

In an effort at damage control, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and a group of senators travelled to El Paso, Texas, Friday to inspect CBP operations and receive a briefing on how migrants are being jailed and processed. The DHS did not allow the press to accompany the group citing “privacy and COVID-19 precautions.”

Mayorkas was forced to admit that CBP jails were “no place for a child” but still refused any journalists access to the facilities. The CBP for the first three years of the Trump administration offered ride-alongs to the press but stopped after the start of the pandemic.

President Biden has reportedly been briefed on the conditions on the border and given pictures of the CBP jails but has declined to make those images public.

Press secretary Psaki said this week that the White House would at some indefinite point in the future provide ways for a “pool of media to be able to have your own videos or get your footage of these facilities.” One can be certain that these inspections, if they are indeed allowed to take place, will be of Potemkin villages and not the actual conditions to which thousands of children are currently being subjected.

While the Democratic Party oversees the detention of thousands of immigrant children at the border, the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives cynically approved two token immigration reform bills on Thursday including the so-called “American Dream and Promise Act of 2021.” The bill would ostensibly provide a “pathway for citizenship” for DACA

recipients, or “Dreamers”, as well as for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients and Deferred Enforced Departure beneficiaries.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, the bills, if they are ever signed into law, would only make 4.4 million immigrants eligible for permanent residence out of a total of at least 11 million undocumented immigrants currently residing in the US.

The House also passed the “Farm Workforce Modernization Act” which could allow farmworkers and their families to qualify for legal status as long as they continue to toil in the “agricultural sector”, i.e., the nation’s crop fields and industrial farms where super-exploitation bordering on slavery is rampant.

The chances that either bill will pass with needed Republican support in the Senate are almost nil. However, both pieces of legislation are only meant to provide political cover to an administration which is increasingly being discredited for its anti-immigrant policies.

Senate Judiciary Chairman Dick Durbin admitted as much to CNN when he said that he does not expect Congress to pass a bill that would eventually provide citizenship to all the undocumented immigrants in the US, a key promise of Biden’s 2020 election campaign.

“I don’t see a means for reaching that,” Durbin said, “I want it. I think we are much more likely to deal with discrete elements.”

Once again, the Republican Party, which only a few months ago saw many of its leading members back an effort to overthrow the results of the 2020 election, is allowed to exercise sole veto power over the wishes of the American people, despite the fact that the Democrats control both houses of Congress and the White House.

In another ominous development, CBP officers dressed in riot gear briefly shut down the San Diego, California, border crossing in San Ysidro on Wednesday. The exercise was designed to train border agents to fight back a large crowd, with several traffic lanes shut down.

The drill lasted roughly 30 minutes with loudspeakers asking drivers waiting to enter the US to be patient. CBP called the training an “Operational Readiness Exercise” to “assess the capabilities of our facilities.”

CBP stated the operation had nothing to do with the large encampment of migrants and refugees who have

been living in squalor south of the border for over a month after being turned away from the US.



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