

# Biden administration prepares to escalate deportations of families detained at the border

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Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data leaked to *Axios* indicates the Biden administration utilized “Title 42” to deport approximately 13 percent of the more than 13,000 migrants attempting to cross the US–Mexico border as a family between March 14 and March 21. According to the data, 42 percent of families were expelled to Mexico last month, down from 64 percent in January and 91 percent in October.

The fall in the share of families being deported comes as the number of migrants, including unaccompanied children, crossing and being detained at the US–Mexico border has risen sharply. In addition to US immigration detention centers being overcrowded, Mexico has been unable to take in more families expelled from the US.

However, the *Axios* report made clear that the Biden administration is working to ramp up deportations. A DHS spokesman told the website that the US is “working with our partners in Mexico to increase their capacity.”

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said at her regular press briefing Monday that there had been a delay in deportations in recent weeks since it “takes a minute to ensure there is proper transportation and steps in place to do that.” Psaki insisted that there are only “narrow, narrow circumstances in which families can’t be expelled.”

Title 42 is a provision of federal law allowing the US government to deny migrants’ right to apply for asylum on American soil. Citing health concerns over COVID-19, the Biden administration deported more than 70,000 migrants under the law in February. At the time, this accounted for 70 percent of migrants detained that month.

Families that have not been immediately kicked back to Mexico face an uncertain future. They will be allowed to remain in the US as they go through

immigration proceedings. However, there is no guarantee the migrants will be granted asylum. Because immigration proceedings can take years, families could make a new home in America, only to be forcibly removed some time later.

Despite the increase in migrants being allowed into the US, the Biden administration has declared that migrants who are caught crossing the border outside official ports of entry will eventually be sent back to Mexico.

“Our policy remains that families are expelled, and in situations where expulsion is not possible due to Mexico’s inability to receive the families, they are placed into removal proceedings,” a DHS spokesperson told *Axios*.

US immigration agencies are ramping up bed space in detention centers, and in some cases releasing detainees, to deal with the influx of migrants. Camps throughout the region are overwhelmed and unable to accommodate more immigrants. Although officials in the region were supposed to limit the number of migrants in custody to 700, more than 5,000 were in detention as of Sunday. The Biden administration recently rented hotels near the border to house migrants with a \$86 million contract.

*Axios* reported a source familiar with the border patrol indicated officers have been told they can release migrants at their own discretion. Border patrol agents told *Fox News* officers in the Texas Rio Grande Valley released 150 migrants without giving them a court date. Often, families are dropped off at bus stops or local nongovernmental organizations.

Local officials in San Diego have opened the city’s convention center to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to temporarily house unaccompanied migrant children. The HHS announced

the facility will be used for about three months, with each child staying for an average of 30 to 35 days.

The Biden administration has been pressuring the Mexican government to slow the number of migrants reaching the border. Although both governments deny it was quid pro quo, the US has recently agreed to give 2.5 million COVID-19 vaccines to Mexico. Biden dispatched senior White House officials over the weekend to visit Mexico and Guatemala in a bid to get the two countries to take more aggressive immigration measures.

Roberta Jacobson, former ambassador to Mexico in the Obama administration who now serves on Biden's National Security Council, and Juan Gonzalez, the National Security Council's senior director for the region, have traveled to Mexico. Jacobson and Gonzalez will meet with Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard and other officials from Mexico's Foreign Ministry. Officials from Mexico's National Institute of Migration will join the discussions as well.

White House officials announced the delegation will discuss "a joint development strategy along southern Mexico and in the Northern Triangle" to "explore areas where the United States and Mexico can work together to address the root causes of migration."

Gonzalez will then travel to Guatemala, accompanied by State Department official Ricardo Zuniga, to meet with President Alejandro Eduardo Giammattei and Foreign Minister Pedro Brolo. There they will discuss promoting job creation in Guatemala with representatives of the private sector and other economic and security officials. Biden announced a \$4 billion, four-year program to back efforts in the region.

"What is happening at the southern border is shameful," Luz Lopez, a lawyer with the Southern Poverty Law Center, told *Democracy Now!* Tuesday. "We as a country should remain vigilant and hold any administration accountable, regardless of political party, with respect to our treatment of children seeking refuge, who are fleeing countries that are in turmoil, largely because of our geopolitical policies over the past several decades."

The vast majority of migrants from Central America come from the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. The largest number come from Honduras, where President Juan Orlando Hernandez is being investigated by US federal

police as a drug kingpin. El Salvador's president, Nayib Bukele, is similarly involved with drug gangs and regularly utilizes authoritarian measures against social opposition.

The social breakdown and gang violence driving millions to flee the region is the direct result of US imperialist intervention. The corrupt governments in the Northern Triangle countries all have origins in dictatorships sponsored by the US to crush local opposition to corporate pillaging.



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