

Biden administration admitting record low number of refugees into US

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The Biden administration has only allowed 2,050 refugees to resettle in the US at the midpoint through the fiscal year, which began October 1, according to a report by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a non-profit humanitarian aid organization.

The IRC report projects that the Biden administration will admit just 4,510 refugees by the end of the fiscal year, less than half the number that Trump admitted in his final year in office and a record low.

President Joe Biden has made several promises that he would roll back Trump era restrictions on refugee admittance. Upon entering office, Biden signed several executive orders aimed at reversing some Trump policies. In February he announced that he would raise the annual ceiling on refugee admissions to 125,000, up from Trump's historic low of just 15,000, and that he would raise the goal for 2021 to 62,500.

However, this has not yet occurred. In order to raise the cap on refugee admissions the president needs to sign a "presidential determination"—a form of executive decree similar to an executive order—legally establishing the new threshold.

This could be done at any time with the stroke of a pen, yet Biden has so far not done so, keeping the cap on refugees at 15,000 and leaving many of Trump's restrictive policies still in place.

"I don't know the specific reason why [Biden] hasn't signed, and it's really unusual that he hasn't signed," Nazanin Ash, the IRC's vice president for global policy and advocacy said in a statement to the *Washington Post*. "It is typically a standard, automatic last step in the process."

Roberta Jacobson, the White House border coordinator told CNN in March that the administration would dismantle Trump's policies "in a deliberate way" and that "we have to make sure that we're doing

it in a way that is well considered and that responds to where the need is."

Jacobson's excuse did not satisfy the IRC, which referred to the administration's delay on reform as "unexplained" and "unjustified."

In addition to severely limiting refugee resettlement, the Biden administration has also refused to rescind many of Trump's restrictions on majority Muslim countries. While Biden reversed Trump's prohibitions on refugees from many Muslim-majority countries, he has not reversed restrictions that target Muslim refugees, including policies like "extreme vetting." Because of this, only 42 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the United States this fiscal year, while millions remain displaced by a decade of conflict fueled by American imperialism.

These categories are "nothing short of discriminatory" said Ash, who also told the *Post* that there is "no rational relationship between these categories and any security or other concern of the United States. They were simply put in place by the Trump administration to restrict refugee admissions and in particular to restrict the admission of black, brown, Asian and Muslim refugees."

Despite the blatantly discriminatory character of these restrictions, the Biden administration has only bothered to reverse some of them. This has left many refugees caught in limbo. Thirty-three thousand refugees who had been cleared to relocate are being prevented from resettling, and more than 700 flights have been canceled.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of migrants from Central and South America are being detained after crossing the southern border with little hope of admittance into the United States. According to official reports, 20,000 children are currently in US custody

with 19,000 child migrants encountered by border patrols in March alone. The number of children detained could rise to 35,000 by June.

US detention facilities—more accurately described as concentration camps—for migrants along the southern border, are overflowing. Children captured by border patrol agents are supposed to be held in border jails for no more than three days before relocation to larger facilities. These facilities, however, are so crowded that children are remaining in border jails for days and weeks on end.

Despite this humanitarian crisis, the IRC has noted that just 139 people from the Northern Triangle region of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, where many of these migrants are fleeing from, have been admitted as refugees during this fiscal year.

The refusal of the Biden administration to fully end Trump's racist refugee policies exposes the Democratic Party for the reactionary party of capitalism that it is. Tens of thousands of people whose lives have been ruined by US imperialism for decades are fleeing their homes in a desperate effort to seek a better life for themselves and their children. Central American families have even resorted to sending their children unaccompanied in the hope that they may have a better chance of being admitted to the US.

Using the COVID-19 pandemic as a thin cover for this horrendous disregard for human life, the Democratic Party is carrying out the same policies of not just the Trump administration, but the Obama administration as well.

Obama, with Biden as his vice president, deported nearly 3 million immigrants, more than all previous presidents combined. While Trump was certainly more vicious in his policies and rhetoric, the Obama administration was by far the more aggressive in terms of deportations. Obama averaged close to 400,000 deportations annually in his first four years, while Trump was closer to 250,000.

While the IRC is correct that Biden's policies are unjustified, it is not quite correct that they are unexplained. The attack on the rights of migrants and refugees is the product of the rapid decline of American capitalism and the turn of the ruling class toward increasingly authoritarian and oppressive policies. Biden is continuing the legacy of the administrations before him, assaulting the rights of the most vulnerable

with the ultimate aim of turning this attack on the working class as a whole.

Over the past 20 years the Democrats have falsely portrayed themselves as the defenders of migrants, while at the same time employing the same reactionary and oppressive policies as the Republicans. Only the most wretched of political charlatans could defend the Biden administration's decision to retain Trump's anti-refugee policies.



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