

Thousands cleared from Texas border camp as detentions and deportations of Haitian refugees continue

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24 September 2021

The encampment along the Texas border town of Del Rio was reportedly cleared Friday of the last of more than 15,000 migrants, most of them of Haitian descent. The closure of the makeshift camp under a bridge connecting the US and Mexico came just a week after President Joe Biden and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the summary expulsion of the desperate refugees.

DHS officials told reporters Friday that Haitians had been rapidly expelled on 17 flights since Sunday, with potentially thousands more expected to be deported in the coming days.

An unnamed US official revealed to CTV News that seven flights were being scheduled to Haiti on Friday, six on Saturday and seven on Sunday. Thus far, nearly 2,000 refugees have been sent to the Caribbean nation while 4,000 remain trapped within the prison-like conditions of immigrant facilities. Thousands of others have either been forced to return to Mexico or released into the US with notices to appear in court or to report to immigration authorities at a later date. Many of those released will eventually be hunted down by immigration officials and can expect to have their asylum claims denied in court.

DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said about 8,000 of the migrants “have decided to return to Mexico voluntarily,” and 5,000 are currently in DHS custody and having their status processed to determine whether they will be expelled outright or allowed to press their claims for legal residency.

In justifying the deportations, Biden has invoked the Title 42 pandemic restrictions instituted by former President Donald Trump, who utilized the pandemic as a pretext for denying immigrants the right to asylum.

Although a federal judge ruled last week that Trump’s Title 42 order was improper and gave the federal government two weeks to end the procedure, the Biden administration has appealed the decision, revealing that the Democrats will not adopt an approach towards migrants and asylum seekers significantly different from the xenophobic policies of Trump. The Biden administration has also stated it has no plans to stop expelling migrants on public health grounds.

The rapid deportations have triggered a wave of

condemnation of both the violent brutality the migrants have faced at the hands of fascistic border patrol agents along with the inhumane treatment meted out by the Biden administration.

In a demonstration of the callous disregard for the rights of the refugees across the political establishment, Del Río Mayor Bruno Lozano, a Democrat, called the removal of the migrants “phenomenal news.” This comes after searing images circulated online of Border Patrol agents on horseback whipping and herding migrants as they sought to cross the Rio Grande River along the Mexico-US border, scenes which recalled some of the most racist periods of American history.

President Joe Biden reacted to the widespread outcry produced by the brutal repression of the migrants with feigned anger towards the border agents, calling their behavior “horrible” and issuing a number of platitudes aimed at hiding his administration’s rubber stamping of the illegal and ferocious crackdown at the border. Despite Biden’s warnings of “consequences” and that “people will pay,” the agents responsible for the attack have so far not been fired or faced any repercussions, with all of them being assigned to administrative duties.

The effort of the Biden White House to deport thousands to a country engulfed in extreme poverty and widespread gang violence, along with political and social institutions that are in shambles following a presidential assassination and a catastrophic earthquake, is a massive crime.

It also shatters the illusions promoted by the pseudo-left and promoters of identity politics that electing Biden would result in a “progressive” shift from the fascistic and xenophobic attacks that were launched by Trump against immigrants throughout the latter’s presidency.

The Haitian migrants had crossed through the Rio Grande River from Mexico, arriving from several other countries in Latin America where many had sought refuge following Haiti’s devastating 2010 earthquake, which laid waste to most of the country’s infrastructure and profoundly exacerbated conditions of mass poverty, hunger and political repression.

Most of them were forced to flee their residences in South America for the United States this year after unemployment

soared due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with many hoping that the Biden White House would provide safe passage for their entry into the US as asylum seekers.

Numerous testimonials from migrants in recent days testify to the harrowing circumstances they faced along their trips through South and Central America. In an interview with BBC News, Fiterson Janvier described how he left Haiti in 2014 and spent several years in Brazil, where he and his family endured conditions of poverty and social desperation before they decided to travel to the US. Janvier recounted an immensely difficult journey, ultimately passing through 11 different countries while moving on both foot and by bus. He spent seven days traversing through the dense jungles of Colombia and Panama, where he saw dead bodies of other Haitian and Cuban migrants who fell victim to the dangerous trek.

Many migrants like Janvier have been robbed of the scant amount of cash they had on hand by violent drug organizations and people-smuggling gangs. He said migrant women also constantly faced the threat of rape, with his wife and three-year-old son narrowly managing to hide from the gangs. Migrant rights groups estimate that in Mexico alone as many as 80 percent of migrants have been either victimized, extorted or abused on their journey through the Americas.

Janvier said his mother was among the 2,200 people who died in the second earthquake that hit the country earlier this summer. The earthquake followed the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July, who has been replaced with an even more corrupt regime barely holding onto power and containing leading officials that are implicated in the president's murder. This is combined with armed gangs that control much of the country's territory, mass starvation, little to no basic resources, and a COVID-19 pandemic for which the country's dilapidated hospitals and shantytowns are totally unprepared for.

For many migrants their main fear has not been dying at the hands of gangs or under the sweltering heat of the US-Mexico border region but being placed right back into Haiti's impoverished and menacing slums. "Haiti is like hell for me now," Janvier noted. "There is nothing for me there. If they're going to send me back, they may as well just kill me."

Kelly Overton, executive director of charity organization Border Kindness, pointed to the deportations as being almost like a death sentence. "There seems to be a level of desperation" from Haitian families Overton told the BBC. "They say there's no option to go back, no safe place to go back to, no possibility of a life that's worth living."

The past few days has in fact seen massive opposition and resistance from Haitians in Haiti and others inside the US against the deportations, sparked by awareness of the conditions which await them and outrage over the anti-democratic nature of the expulsions.

Migrants who arrived at the airport of Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince erupted in anger once they discovered they were back

in the same poverty-stricken country they had fled. Returnees reacted furiously as they stepped off their flight, with some rushing back toward the plane and attempting to get back on board. Videos on social media showed deportees at the airport rummaging on the ground searching for their unlabeled belongings that had been scattered by ICE agents.

Civil rights groups have also highlighted the callous mistreatment of child deportees. Dozens of children with non-Haitian passports have been sent to Haiti as part of the deportation operation, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Although their parents may be Haitian nationals, at least 30 children have Chilean passports, nine have Brazilian passports and two have Venezuelan passports, according to Giuseppe Loprete, the IOM's chief of mission in Haiti.

On Tuesday, around 200 Haitian Americans shut down a major thoroughfare in Miami as they demonstrated in front of a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services field office. Demonstrators held signs that read "End Racism at the Border" and "Treat All the People the Same," while chanting "Let them breathe," connecting the horrific conditions migrants are facing to George Floyd's infamous final words before he was killed by a Minneapolis police officer last year.

Marleine Bastien, an executive director of the Miami-based, immigrant rights Family Action Network Movement, told the *Washington Post*, "This is cruel. I am getting so many calls from people asking why? What have Haitians ever done to America? All we have done is try to help America, and we are treated like this?"

The fight to defend the democratic rights of Haitian migrants and all immigrants victimized by imperialism cannot be entrusted in any section of the political establishment, which defends the profit interests of the capitalist system above all else. This applies in particular to the Democratic Party, whose endless promotion of racial politics serves to divide the working class amongst each other while violence and brutality against immigrants goes uninterrupted.

The fight against xenophobia and repression must be taken up by the working class on a global scale, committed to an international struggle against capitalism and its replacement with a socialist society which will tear down national boundaries and uphold the right of workers to live and work where they please with full citizenship rights.



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