

Migrant woman drowns in Pacific Ocean off the coast of San Diego

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Last Friday, October 29, an unidentified woman drowned while trying to cross the US-Mexico border between the city of Tijuana, Baja California, and San Diego, California. The woman is presumed to have been part of a large group of migrants trying to cross the ocean border.

The group of about 70 migrants was swimming around an extension of the US-Mexico border fence that juts some 300 feet into the Pacific Ocean where waters can be treacherous. Part of the barrier which stretches into ocean includes barbed wires, sensors, and surveillance cameras. The border fence is a combination of walls and fences which extend for thousands of miles across California and the other southwestern US states.

In all, 36 Mexican migrants, 25 men and 11 women, were captured Friday in the waters near Border Field State Park, commonly known as Friendship Park. They are all being processed for deportation.

Friendship Park and the adjoining areas are among the most heavily surveilled by the US Customs and Border Patrol, Air and Marine Operations, the US Coast Guard, the San Diego Fire Department and California State Parks. This year Border Patrol increased its patrol of the beach area to deter efforts to cross the maritime route.

The group of undocumented immigrants was swimming around the border fence intending to reach Friendship Park. The park was inaugurated by First Lady Pat Nixon 50 years ago as a place for families on both sides of the border to meet, speak with and touch each other separated by a chain link fence. At the time Mrs. Nixon declared “I hope there won’t be a fence too long.” Instead, the fence has been strengthened over the years, and topped with rolls of concertina wire, intensifying the separation at the border. Only 10

people are allowed at the fence at a time with 30 minutes maximum, and photos and videos are not permitted on the US side.

Numerous immigrants have died trying to cross the treacherous waters between Tijuana and San Diego.

Yuri Rios, a Honduran immigrant, attempting to reunite with her husband in California, drowned on March 16 of this year, leaving two orphan children in Tijuana. Two days later a boat carrying 32 migrants fell apart in these same waters and two people drowned. On March 27, Jose Ramon, a Cuban immigrant, died of hypothermia in these same waters. In May, another boat carrying migrants crashed and sank in the adjacent waters, drowning four. Other drownings frequently take place in the Rio Grande on the Mexican border with Texas.

This latest fatality occurred as thousands of migrants are forced to brave extreme heat and drought to cross into the US in the brutal conditions in the Sonoran desert. Between January and July 2021, 146 bodies have been found in the Arizona Desert, according to *Humane Borders*, an Arizona-based immigrant rescue organization. Brad Jones, with *Humane Borders*, reported that “on average, about every two days migrants’ remains are found.”

Since last fall, some 1.7 million undocumented immigrants have been blocked from entering the US, the highest number since the government began keeping statistics in 1960. This mass migration takes place even though Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala, have increased the number of troops mobilized to block migrants from going north. According to White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, in April 2021, Mexico assigned 10,000 armed troops at the border.

The right to asylum, to seek refuge and exit from one nation to another, pushed by hunger, poverty and

persecution, has been under increasing attack that was exacerbated during the Trump administration and has continued under Biden.

While Trump was in office, Stephen Miller, the fascist architect of child separation, saw in the devastating global pandemic an opportunity to further crack down on migrants and asylum seekers. The Trump administration began employing section 265 of Title 42 of the 1944 US Public Health Services Law. The law prevents immigrants from entering the United States, using the pretext of stopping the introduction of communicable diseases.

The special protections offered to minors have long been viewed as a major hurdle to carrying out rapid mass deportations. Title 42 is being used to overcome these restrictions. Hundreds of thousands of adults and children have been singled out for expulsion, arguing that their presence would increase the spread of COVID-19. Since the use of Title 42 began, over 380,000 immigrants have been expelled, sometimes within hours of their detention, with no due process. Among these are over 1,500 children.

The use of Title 42 has continued uninterrupted under Biden, who has expelled immigrants at the same rate as Trump. Apprehensions skyrocketed in the past year from 400,000 in the fiscal year ending September 2020 to nearly 1.7 million the fiscal year ending in September 2021. Mexico itself is the leading country of origin with over 600,000 migrants, a fact which raised the absurdity of the “Remain in Mexico” policy of the United States, which designated Mexico as a “safe third country” within asylum law.

The latest victim of the barriers to crossing the border joins a long list of dead and disappeared migrants, pushed to cross the border by the poverty and violence in Mexico, Central America and Haiti, aggravated more recently by the coronavirus pandemic and the consequences of global warming.

US Customs and Border Patrol agency attempted to place the blame on smugglers with San Diego Chief Patrol Agent Aaron Heitke absurdly stating, “This is yet another example of the ruthless tactics smuggling organizations use to bolster their power and profits.”

The unidentified woman joins the tragic figures of at least 10,000 dead trying to cross the US Mexico border since 1997. These deaths make a mockery of Emma Lazarus’ words inscribed on New York’s Statue of

Liberty, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...”

Ultimately, it is US imperialism that is responsible for the conditions in Central America, Mexico and Haiti that force people to seek asylum. Dictatorial and criminal regimes, imposed by the United States in Haiti and across Central America, deny people basic democratic and human rights leave tens of thousands no option but to undertake dangerous routes, seeking safety for themselves and their families.

The attacks on asylum pursued by the Biden administration, which rubber-stamps child detention centers along the border and continues the brutal policies of the Trump and Obama administrations, makes it and both parties of the ruling class criminally responsible for this latest drowning and for every single death and abuse that takes place at the border.



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