

Migrant woman dies suspended from US border wall, a death on Washington's doorstep

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A 32-year-old migrant woman died tragically last week after attempting to cross the United States-Mexico border near Douglas, Arizona, on Monday, April 11. According to the Cochise County Sheriff's Office, the cause of death was due to the fact that she "was trapped upside down for a significant amount of time."

The woman was from Hermosillo, the capital of the state of Sonora, which is about 250 miles south of Tucson, Arizona. She scaled the 30-foot-tall steel structure with a ladder on the Mexican side, but while attempting to lower herself her climbing harness became entangled, which caused her to become stuck while hanging upside down.

Authorities were informed of the woman and her situation by emergency dispatchers from Mexico around 10 p.m. After recovering her body from the harness, responders attempted resuscitation, but she was pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital.

Her tragic death is neither accidental nor isolated but the deliberate and predictable result of the militarization of the US-Mexico border and the enforcement of anti-migrant polices by the Democratic Party and the Biden administration.

On top of the unforgiving and scorching heat of the Sonoran or Chihuahuan desert, migrants seeking to cross the border outside official ports of entry face multiple walls, fences, barbed wire, attack dogs, drones. Former President Donald Trump waged war on immigrants as one of the key planks of his fascistic administration placing innumerable new blocks in the way of migrants, including his infamous wall.

Such border fortifications, however, had been ramped up well before Trump came to office and have been

implemented the world over by capitalist governments, regardless of the party in power, intent on keeping out migrants fleeing war, poverty and extortion by criminal gangs.

Previously, migrants would cross borders near urban areas, but they have been forced into more remote areas, exponentially increasing the danger. This has meant ever more numbers attempting to cross into the US through treacherous terrain and reliant on abusive human smugglers.

"It's a humanitarian crisis, and it's been a humanitarian crisis since 1994," Enrique Morones, founder and former executive director of the immigrant advocacy group Border Angels, told Truthout. That year, during President Bill Clinton's first term, the first sections of border wall began to be erected. "Before that wall was being built, one or two people would die every month. After the wall was built, you started having one or two per day."

According to the Missing Migrant Project, an international organization that records migration incidents, 48,037 migrants have gone missing worldwide since 2014, with 6,141 dying or going missing in the Americas. Last year, there were 1,248 migrants who died or went missing in the Americas.

The most dangerous place for migrants in the world is the Mediterranean Sea, which year after year sees the highest numbers of missing or dead migrants. Already this year there have been 526 dead or missing from the sea crossing, with 23,860 missing or dead since 2014.

Against the backdrop of a world pandemic, the years 2020 and 2021 set successive records for the number of dead or missing migrants along the US-Mexico border, while so far this year the grim toll has already climbed

to 204. These numbers are undoubtedly gross undercounts: The group Border Angels estimates that since 1994, about 10,000 people have died in their attempts to cross the border, and for every body found five more are unaccounted for.

According to the report, “Left To Die: Border Patrol, Search and Rescue, & the Crisis of Disappearance,” 63 percent of all reported cases of missing migrants are not even investigated, and 27 percent remain unsolved. It also tragically noted that in at least 40 percent of the cases in which a “Crisis Line worker contacted the Border Patrol with substantive information on the location of a distressed person to request an emergency response, Border Patrol did not mobilize any search or rescue whatsoever.”

The gruesome brutality at the border is also illustrated by reports of Border Patrol agents destroying life-saving water stations, and instances of border agents standing idly by as migrants become delirious and pass out from exhaustion.

The explosion in the number of deaths at the border is a direct and conscious result of the policies carried out by successive US administrations, both Republican and Democratic. A decisive turning point was the approval of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 under the Clinton administration, whose framework was based on a systematic criminalization of the status of “illegal immigrant.”

For the ruling class, the deaths of hundreds or thousands of people each year serve the purpose of deterring migrants from attempting the journey, while those who are in the country without official documentation live in fear of deportation and being split from their families. The vast majority of migrants seeking asylum at the US-Mexico border are fleeing the consequences of US-backed coups and dictatorships or military interventions which have the region in a continuous state of poverty and political instability.

Meanwhile the right of asylum has become a dead letter under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Trump and his fascistic immigration architect Stephen Miller exploited the pandemic to implement Title 42, using the spread of COVID-19 as a justification to halt all immigration to the US, including that of children.

The Biden administration, which defended the

continuation of Title 42, only recently announced it plans to end the policy in May in order to allow Ukrainian refugees entry into the United State primarily through the US/Mexico border, to support Washington’s war aims against Russia.

Had the young woman been granted her rights, she should have been able to present herself at a US port of entry to apply for asylum. Instead her body hangs on Washington’s doorstep.

There is only one force that can put an end to these horrific deaths at the borders, and that is the working class. The Socialist Equality Party not only calls for the demilitarization of all borders, but also of opening and elimination all borders. Workers should have the right to travel and move without restrictions and to live and work where they choose. This program can only be won through an international struggle against the capitalist class in the fight for socialism.



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