

At least 46 undocumented immigrants found dead in truck trailer in sweltering Texas heat

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Hardly a day goes by in contemporary America without a mass casualty event produced by capitalist reaction. On Monday evening, a semi-truck trailer filled with bodies—some dead, some still clinging to life—was discovered a stone's throw from a busy interstate highway in San Antonio, Texas.

The truck was carrying undocumented immigrants fleeing desperate economic conditions in Central America and the legacy of over a century of US imperialist exploitation. The immigrants were forced to enter surreptitiously due to the anti-immigrant restrictions imposed by the Democratic administration of President Joe Biden.

So far, the official death toll is 46, but this is expected to rise, as local officials say 16 others were hospitalized at varying stages of illness. This is the deadliest such event in US history. It doubles the death toll of the second highest mass immigrant asphyxiation, when 19 people suffocated in a truck trailer in Victoria, Texas, in 2003.

Earlier Monday, temperatures in San Antonio hit 103 degrees Fahrenheit (40 Celsius). It is difficult to imagine how those who perished in the trailer spent their last moments struggling to escape. One individual who lives near the spot where the trailer was found told the *New York Times*, “Now I’m hearing there are kids.” Families often make the journey together.

After discovering the trailer, police and Border Patrol reportedly deployed military-grade heat-seeking equipment to search for and detain any immigrants who managed to escape.

This social crime is the responsibility of the Biden administration, which was elected on the basis of mass opposition to the fascist Donald Trump, but whose administration has carried out a ruthless attack on immigrants, arresting more in 2021 than Trump

detained in any one year in office. Biden is on pace to arrest some 2 million immigrants this year, a new record. Two days ago, Biden ended all previous restrictions on ICE arrests, ordering agents to arrest immigrants regardless of arrest record or how many years they have been in the United States.

The trailer was discovered in Texas hardly 24 hours after Spanish and Moroccan border police carried out a brutal melee attack on a crowd of African immigrants attempting to cross into the Spanish outpost of Melilla on Africa's northern coast. At least 36 immigrants died, some after being beaten by police, some hanging from the barbed wire border fence, some in the stampede that followed the police assault.

Both crimes expose the lie that the US and its NATO allies are waging war against Russia in Ukraine for humanitarian reasons. If these crimes had taken place in Russia, the imperialist governments would have used them as pretenses to justify further escalation of a war which threatens the world with nuclear catastrophe.

It is already clear that the political establishment in the US will respond to the mass death in San Antonio by using the event to justify a further crackdown on immigration. An hour before the bodies were discovered in his district, Texas Republican Congressman Tony Gonzales tweeted that immigration is “incentivizing lawlessness and creating absolute chaos at our southern border.”

After the event, Gonzales blamed Democrats for being insufficiently iron fisted. Texas Governor Greg Abbott, a fascist supporter of Trump, blamed Biden for the deaths, tweeting: “They are a result of his deadly open border policies. They show the deadly consequences of his refusal to enforce the law.”

The corporate media will alternate between demands for a military-style crackdown on the border and

denunciations of whichever criminal was driving and abandoned the trailer in the heat.

But the existence of smugglers is a criminal byproduct of the bipartisan border policies of the US government which are fundamentally to blame.

Deaths like these did not occur prior to the militarization of the US-Mexico border initiated by Democratic President Bill Clinton. In the 1990s, Clinton, with the support of Democrats and Republicans, enacted programs like “Operation Gatekeeper” and “Operation Hold-the-Line,” the aim of which was to militarize urban crossing zones and force migrants to cross in the uninhabitable deserts.

In 2006, under the George W. Bush administration, Congress passed the Secure Fences Act, which facilitated the construction of hundreds of miles of border barriers and further militarized the border. Those voting “yes” for this law included then-Senators Joseph Biden, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, John McCain and Charles Schumer.

In 2010, Obama signed legislation that deployed a fleet of drones to the border and 1,500 National Guard soldiers to block or arrest immigrants. In 2018, the Democratic Party caved when Trump illegally redirected congressionally-apportioned money to fund his deployment of the National Guard to the border. The Biden administration kept pandemic-related restrictions on all asylum applicants and kept Trump’s Remain In Mexico policy in place, which barred all refugees from entering the US through Mexico.

The trailer was discovered in southwest San Antonio, barely a mile from where nine immigrants were found dead of dehydration and asphyxiation in the back of a semi-truck trailer almost exactly five years ago, on July 17, 2017. At that time, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote:

The world is pulsing with people who are forced to flee their homes under the weight of decades of economic exploitation and war. According to a UN report from 2015, there are 65.3 million refugees in the world, more than the population of the United Kingdom, France or Italy.

The refugee crisis is the product of the capitalist system and requires a socialist

solution. Never in history has the contradiction between the ease with which capital flows across borders and the difficulty with which human beings flee across national boundaries been so acute. As the world economy becomes increasingly interconnected through the advent of the Internet, mobile phones and integrated global supply lines, the ruling classes of the so-called democratic countries are increasingly protecting themselves, as Leon Trotsky put it, “by a customs wall and a hedge of bayonets.”

Socialists reject attempts to reconcile “left-wing” slogans with nationalist poison. Figures like Jeremy Corbyn in the UK and Bernie Sanders in the US expose their pro-capitalist outlook when they talk about “reasonable management of migration” (Corbyn’s Labour Party manifesto) and denounce open borders as a “right-wing proposal” that “would make everybody in America poorer” (Sanders’ interview with *Vox*, July 18, 2015).

Socialists oppose the division of the world into nation-states and call for bringing the geographical organization of the world into harmony with the international character of the global economy.



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