

US and Mexico begin mass deportation of Venezuelan migrants

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Last weekend, the administrations of presidents Joe Biden in the United States and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known as AMLO, in Mexico, set in motion their agreement to summarily deport all Venezuelan migrants seeking to enter the United States.

The agreement was initially announced on Wednesday in response to a surge of Venezuelans escaping the humanitarian crisis created by years of U.S. sanctions aimed at starving the country into submission.

US authorities estimate that the number of Venezuelans seeking to reach the United States has increased 30 times since April, with 3,000 migrants, mostly from Venezuela, crossing into Panama daily on their way to the United States.

Despite enforcing a policy of mass infections responsible so far for 1.1 million COVID-19 deaths and having declared that “the pandemic is over,” Biden continues to base his immigration policy on Title 42, a Trump-era decree that cites COVID-19 as a pretext for violating the right to asylum enshrined in international law.

Describing forced relocations characteristic of the most entrenched dictatorships, a Venezuelan migrant who had crossed into the United States told France 24, “At no point were we told that we were going to be deported. They just took us out and drove us away” into Mexico. Pointing at the Tijuana-San Diego border crossing behind him, another migrant said “We are hungry in Mexico. We are on the border. Look, there is the wall. They kicked us out without even saying ‘Look, you are being deported.’ If I was being deported then send me to Venezuela on a flight.”

The actions of the Biden administration, which claims to be a lighthouse for democracy and human rights, can only be described as tossing human beings across the

border like trash.

As a meaningless cover, Biden’s program will allow 24,000 Venezuelans to apply for legal residence. However, migrants can only apply from their country of origin and must prove that they have a local sponsor and financial means to sustain themselves in the United States before traveling exclusively via air.

Not only are these requirements unaffordable for all but a privileged layer of professionals and businesspeople, but the Biden administration is also banning all those who have already entered Panama, Mexico or the United States irregularly during the past five years from applying.

Biden’s program in fact has the cruel and punitive stench of the far right and only serves to legitimize and strengthen the fascist movement being cultivated by the American ruling elite. Ultimately, these forces will be used as shock troops against the emerging mass movement of the American and international working class against inflation, war, the pandemic and social inequality.

Blas Núñez-Neto, the Chief Operating Officer at the US Customs and Border Protection, declared on Thursday that the program “is only for Venezuelans, but we are going to be closely monitoring how effective it is in reducing the influx of migrants and, if it works, we’ll begin a process of reviewing if it can be expanded.”

So far this year, a record 160,000 migrants, approximately 70 percent of them Venezuelans, have crossed the dangerous Darien jungle into Panama on their way to the United States, according to Panamanian authorities.

While crossing Costa Rica on Monday, the Venezuelan migrant and physician Fidel José Reinoza described powerfully to Crhoy what this means: “The

Darien is a mountain that tries to find the best way to kill you. You might run out of food; it could be the rushing rivers; it could be its immense jungle of 21,000 [square] kilometers... Truly, all of us who have crossed the Darien are warriors. We are heroes.”

For weeks and sometimes months, these migrant workers uprooted from their homes and neighborhoods cross thousands of kilometers, facing immense jungles, brutal armed forces trained and armed by US imperialism to stop them, along with gangs, storms and drought.

Having arrived at the US-Mexico border, the Venezuelan migrants usually turn themselves in. The US Border Patrol then forces them to throw away their wet clothes and backpacks, takes their names, fingerprints and pictures, gives them plastic bags for other belongings and sends them to a camp for a few hours or days before deporting them.

The abuse by government officials is generalized on both sides of the border. A migrant, Paolo Gutiérrez, told *Jornada* that one US official said to another, “Take this shit away” referring to the groups of migrant families. Another told him, “Are you stupid, you son of a bitch?” and several called them “illegals.”

The Mexican authorities then drive them farther south to migrant stations, where they are handed orders for “your definitive exit of the country within 20 calendar days.” On top of it all, a migrant told *Jornada* that Mexican officials steal their clothes and cash. “We were all in shock, crying, given the certainty that we were also being kicked out from here, that we don’t even have enough to eat... We don’t believe this is fair, we are a group of working people,” she said.

A group of Venezuelans that traveled to the Ministry of Inclusion and Social Welfare in Mexico City told *Jornada* that they were refused even shelter.

Following its own agreement with Washington, the Guatemalan government announced Monday that it had detained 350 migrants, mostly Venezuelan, and was immediately deporting them south to Honduras.

About 6 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2015, trying to escape truly abhorrent conditions. A 2021 household census by the Andrés Bello Catholic University and the Central University of Venezuela found that 94.5 percent of the Venezuelan population was living in poverty. Similarly, only 5.8 percent of the population is not suffering any level of food insecurity.

In the historically higher-paid public sector, the average wage is \$12 per month.

Such a humanitarian catastrophe in a country with one fifth of the world’s oil reserves and a once thriving industrial sector is an indictment of the entire capitalist system. The ongoing crisis is above all the product of sanctions imposed during the Obama and Trump administrations and renewed under Biden against corporations doing business in Venezuela. These were aimed at bankrupting the country and facilitating the installation of a US puppet regime.

Venezuelan crude oil production remains between 400,000 and 723,000 barrels per day, compared to 2.5 million-3.5 million barrels before the US sanctions.

On the other hand, it has been the bourgeois nationalist government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela that has been in charge of enforcing this massive drop in living standards while using police-state measures to crush all social opposition from below and defend capitalism at all costs.

As shown by both Maduro’s submissive appeals to Washington for rapprochement and the criminal collaboration of AMLO in the war on immigrants, no Latin American country can free itself from semi-colonial domination by US imperialism and further impoverishment outside of the independent struggle of the working class against these capitalist regimes as part of the global fight for socialism.



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