

Biden administration preparing escalation of anti-migrant attacks, including revival of Trump-era limits on the right to asylum

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On Sunday night, a caravan of up to 1,000 migrants crossed the Rio Grande into El Paso, Texas. The group, consisting mostly of asylum seekers from Nicaragua, accounted for one of the largest single crossings in recent years in Texas, which has seen a surge in migration of late.

According to government statistics, more than 50,000 migrants from Central and South America sought entry into the United States through El Paso in October alone. In response to the humanitarian crisis developing on the southern border, however, the Biden administration is preparing to escalate its persecution of immigrants, the overwhelming majority of whom are working class.

Because many of the immigrants are from countries which do not have repatriation agreements with the United States, such as Nicaragua, they cannot be rapidly expelled under a Trump-era policy known as Title 42, which allows the federal government to expel migrants under the pretense of public health.

The Biden administration has repeatedly defended Title 42, most recently appealing a federal court order to rescind the policy. However, a White House official said the administration still planned to lift the policy while it prepares other measures to restrict immigration at the US-Mexico border.

Multiple sources familiar with the matter informed NBC News that the Biden administration held at least six meetings over the weekend to discuss plans curtailing the number of migrants who would qualify for asylum at the southern border. If adopted, the set of restrictions being suggested bear striking similarity to those put in place by the Trump administration.

Federal officials confirmed the Department of

Homeland Security is preparing new training for asylum officers, including instructions to only grant asylum to migrants that qualify under the UN Convention Against Torture.

Sources added that immigrants unable to prove they are likely to face torture back in their home countries would have to first provide proof they sought and were denied asylum in a country they passed through on the way to the US border, a much higher bar than previously required for asylum.

The policies currently under consideration are commonly referred to as a “transit ban,” a model outlined in 2019 by Trump’s fascistic immigration adviser, Stephen Miller.

The overall effect of the policies under consideration would be a drastic reduction in the number of migrants granted permission to seek asylum in the US, and a sharp increase in the number of immigrants returned to Mexico or deported to their home countries.

The White House has not publicly responded to any questions on Biden’s plan, but it is clear the administration is preparing to escalate its persecution of asylum seekers. Three federal officials told *The New York Times* that the US is in talks with Mexican authorities to determine how many migrants the US will be allowed to send back to Mexico if Title 42 is finally lifted.

Bipartisan efforts against asylum seekers have not been limited to the White House. Earlier this year, Democrats joined Republicans in denouncing Biden’s previous attempt to lift Title 42. Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) called the effort a “frightening decision.” Representative Jared Golden, a Democrat from Maine, introduced a bill to uphold the law because its

end “would be dangerous for both migrants coming to America and Americans themselves.”

In a letter to the White House, Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Manchin along with two Texas representatives demanded the Biden administration extend Trump’s Title 42 policy.

“We have a crisis at our southern border. Never before in our nation’s history have we experienced this scope and scale of illegal border crossings and we remain concerned that your administration has not provided sufficient support or resources to the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) who are tasked with maintaining border security,” they wrote.

In language reminiscent to military doctrine, the bipartisan contingent said both capitalist parties are engaged in negotiations to enact “legislation that will allow DHS to effectively implement policies and programs that have been revealed as critical to *maintaining operational control* over the southern border...” (emphasis added)

In the meantime, the lawmakers called on Biden to “extend the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Title 42 order beyond the looming December 21st deadline until congress can act.”

The reality of the humanitarian crisis developing at the border exposes the American ruling class’ hostility towards migrant workers, as well as the barbarity of its response.

Marcos Chávez Torres, the mayor of Jiménez, a town in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua, told the *Times* many of those that arrived in Sunday’s caravan had been part of a large group that was kidnapped en route and extorted for money before Mexican police were able to free them.

The group contained migrants traveling from several Central and South American countries, as well as Haiti, who had been granted temporary legal status in Mexico that allowed them to travel freely through Mexico for 180 days.

Following the incident, the Chihauhaun government bused the caravan of approximately 1,100 migrants into Ciudad Juárez, across the border from El Paso. Santiago González Reyes, head of the human rights department in Juárez, said the Mexican government paid for the buses and provided a police escort to keep them safe after reasoning the immigrants would risk the

journey north anyway.

El Paso authorities and non-profit organizations have been overwhelmed by the thousands of immigrants fleeing poverty and violence. City officials reported as many as 7,000 migrants released into the city from federal custody last week. The majority of those released in the city are headed to other parts of the US, but must seek food, shelter, and assistance to do so.

Blake Barrow, the director of the Rescue Mission of El Paso, told the *Times* that his shelter was “bursting at the seams.” In August, Barrow said nearly all of the people receiving aid at his shelter were homeless US citizens. The influx of migrants has pushed that number down to about 30 percent, he said.

There are reports of residents opening their homes to those in need, but many have to find shelter where they can, only adding to the city’s homeless population. For example, Kenia Centenos, a woman from Nicaragua, was forced to sleep on a cardboard box outside of a gas station while awaiting money for a bus ticket to Houston.



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