

Migrants dumped in front of VP Kamala Harris's home in sub-freezing conditions: Gratuitous cruelty and political reaction

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In an act of officially sanctioned barbarism, as many as 140 migrants were dropped off by buses in front of the official residence of Vice President Kamala Harris on the night of Christmas Eve, the coldest on record in the Washington D.C. area.

On the orders of Texas Republican Governor Greg Abbott, the refugees, mainly from Central and South America and the Caribbean, were loaded onto three buses and shipped like cattle from towns in Texas along the border with Mexico to the US capital, a grueling journey of 36 hours. They were rerouted from their original destination, New York City, due to poor road conditions resulting from the freezing temperatures.

Children and babies were among the migrants, many of whom had only t-shirts, shorts and light blankets to protect against the below-freezing conditions, with temperatures dropping as low as 10 degrees Fahrenheit. A good number were shoeless.

The migrants were dumped on the side of the road near the Naval Observatory, without any provision having been made for food, shelter and other basic necessities. They would have been at the mercy of the elements if not for the generosity of local residents and charities, which provided them with shelter, warm clothing and food.

Speaking to NBC News, Madhvi Bahl—an organizer with the Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network, one of the groups that came to the aid of the migrants—said, “D.C. was prepared and we showed up and welcomed folks, as we’ve been doing for months now.” Denouncing the barbaric treatment of the migrants, she added, “They have been doing that for a few months now; it’s all for the spectacle... The cruelty is the point.”

Abbott justified his actions in a cynical letter sent to President Joe Biden on December 20, in which he demanded that Biden tighten up border controls and crack down on migration. He feigned concern for the migrants, writing: “With cold temperatures gripping Texas, your inaction to secure the southern border is putting the lives of migrants at risk, particularly in the City of El Paso... Your policies will leave many people in the bitter, dangerous cold as a polar vortex moves into Texas.”

His “concern” notwithstanding, he then proceeded to ship the migrants far to the north, where even colder conditions prevailed.

The despicable stunt is the latest in an ongoing fascistic assault on migrants being carried out by Republican governors, who have taken to trafficking refugees fleeing poverty and violence, sending them to Democratic Party-controlled states and cities. Some 15,000 migrants have been shipped out of Texas alone since last April.

In September, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis dispatched two planeloads carrying some 50 migrants to Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts. No provisions for food or shelter were made, and the migrants themselves had no idea where they were being taken. Again, were it not for the compassion of locals, these refugees would have been left to fend for themselves.

The Republican governors demand that Biden keep in place Title 42, a measure put in place by the Trump administration which utilized the COVID-19 pandemic to deny entry to most asylum seekers, while also providing a means for the rapid deportation of those caught crossing the border. Under this policy, some 2.5 million asylum seekers have been denied entry since

March 2020.

Many of the migrants now arriving come from Venezuela and Nicaragua, countries which have been devastated by brutal sanctions imposed by Washington, further immiserating their populations and prompting a wave of migration. While Washington cynically invokes concern for “human rights” in their denunciations of the Nicaraguan and Venezuelan governments, Venezuelans and Nicaraguans coming to the US can expect the most brutal treatment.

Because Washington has no repatriation agreements with these two countries, the migrants cannot be sent back under Title 42, hence the new tactic utilized by the Republicans of moving them out of their states, effectively deporting them northwards rather than southwards.

In a statement put out by a White House spokesman, the Biden administration denounced Abbott’s “cruel, dangerous, and shameful stunt” and then proceeded to extend an olive branch to the fascistic Republicans, saying, “As we have repeatedly said, we are willing to work with anyone—Republican or Democrat alike—on real solutions, like the comprehensive immigration reform and border security measures President Biden sent to Congress on his first day in office, but these political games accomplish nothing and only put lives in danger.”

In reality, the Democrats are not merely complicit; they are active participants in the assault on migrant workers. The day before the migrants arrived in Washington D.C., dozens of migrants were dumped at bus stations in San Diego, California, by the Border Patrol, part of the federal Department of Homeland Security, directed by Biden’s appointee, Alejandro Mayorkas.

Those migrants without nearby family were left effectively stranded on the streets, some without phones or any means of contacting their loved ones. In some cases, small children were among those left to fend for themselves. In others, husbands and wives were separated, including at least one pregnant woman.

What this demonstrates is that while there might be tactical differences between the two capitalist parties and between state and federal authorities as to how to proceed, they all agree that the “border crisis” must be resolved by closing the border and making the conditions of life for migrants so hellish that they serve

as a “deterrent” to immigration.

The huge numbers of desperate migrants are fleeing impossible living conditions and threats of violence and death, themselves the result of the oppressive regimes established by more than a century of military, political and economic subjugation to US imperialism.

Vice President Kamala Harris expressed the real sentiments of the Biden administration last year when she bluntly told Guatemalan migrants, “Do not come.”

The attitude of the US ruling class—represented by both capitalist parties—towards migrant workers, of contempt and indifference, stands in stark contrast with their reception by ordinary workers, who have shown them compassion and generosity.

The propaganda of the fascists, aimed at whipping up chauvinist hatred against immigrants, has not had the result of breaking down the common humanity and objective solidarity of the international working class.

A warning must be made: A significant section of the US ruling class is employing openly fascistic methods, with gratuitous cruelty, against an especially oppressed section of the working class. And they believe that they can do so with impunity.

Today, they bus migrants across the country and dump them like trash on the streets. Tomorrow, they may well load them onto cattle cars and ship them to concentration camps. It must be stated clearly that these measures, while directed now against immigrants, will ultimately be employed against the entire working class.



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