

8-year-old dies in CBP custody as Biden administration escalates attack on asylum seekers

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18 May 2023

In the week since the Biden administration lifted Title 42, the Trump-era border policy utilized to deny asylum seekers entry at the US-Mexico border, conditions facing migrants have only worsened.

An eight-year-old girl died while in US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody in Harlingen, Texas, the agency said Wednesday. The unidentified girl and her family were being detained at a CBP facility when she “experienced a medical emergency,” the agency said in a news release Wednesday night, without providing details.

“Emergency Medical Services were called to the station and transported her to the local hospital where she was pronounced dead,” the release said. According to CBP officials, the Office of Professional Responsibility is investigating the girl’s death, per department protocol.

The child’s death comes only days after an unaccompanied Honduran 17-year-old held at a Florida detention center died while under the care of the US Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement, according to a congressional notice obtained by CNN last week.

Title 42, the Trump-era pandemic public health restrictions that became a key tool officials used to turn back migrants at the border, expired May 11. Title 42 allowed US immigration agents to cite the COVID-19 pandemic to summarily expel hundreds of thousands of migrants without hearing their asylum claims, a flagrant violation of international law. Migrants encountered under Title 42 were either returned to their home countries or sent back to Mexico. Under the policy, authorities carried out more than 2.8 million deportations, according to CBP data.

Immigrant advocacy groups identified more than 13,000 incidents of kidnapping, torture, rape or other violent attacks on people blocked or expelled to Mexico under Title 42 from the time Biden took office.

Since the end of the policy, the Biden administration has increased regular deportations and returns to migrants’ home countries and Mexico, which recently agreed to accept Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans turned away from the US. Unlike Title 42, formal deportations ban immigrants from reentering the US for at least five years and make them subject to criminal prosecution if they attempt to enter again.

The Biden administration is also planning several changes to federal immigration policy. The Department of Homeland Security previously released a six-point plan that outlined the agency’s operations post-Title 42. This includes setting up additional detention facilities along the US-Mexico border and using a fast-track deportation process called “expedited removal.”

Last week, immigration officials said in a court filing that surging migration coupled with the termination of Title 42 “is overwhelming US Customs and Border Protection facilities, risking widespread health and safety risks to migrants, government employees, and the public.”

In reality, the number of unauthorized entries along the southern border has dropped by 60 percent to an average of 4,400 per day, after briefly rising to 10,000 last week ahead of the expiration of Title 42 border restrictions, according to officials. A senior US official reported that the Biden administration attributed the sharp drop to increased deportations, tighter asylum rules and efforts by other countries to stop US-bound migrants.

“We attribute the reduction in encounters at our border both to the consequences that we have strengthened and put in place for unlawful entry, and the lawful pathways that we have expanded, but also to the actions of our foreign partners,” said Blas Nuñez-Neto, the Department of Homeland Security’s top immigration policy official.

Nuñez-Neto also made reference to efforts by the Mexican and Guatemalan governments, which have dispatched law enforcement and military units to their southern borders at the behest of the United States.

Contrary to the ravings of numerous fascistic figures, including Donald Trump, the Democrats are no friends of immigrants. Nuñez-Neto’s comments prove the Democrats utilized the end of Title 42 to escalate the war against migrants. The Democrats are consciously creating brutal conditions at the border as a form of deterrence.

Despite claims of Republican politicians, the expiration of Title 42 has not led to an upsurge in attempted crossings. Nevertheless, fascist politicians like Texas Governor Greg Abbott continue to whip up a virulent anti-immigrant atmosphere. Abbott announced Thursday that Texas is now busing migrants to Denver, Colorado, the fifth city targeted by Abbott since launching his busing program more than a year ago as part of “Operation Lone Star.”

Abbott’s program began last April when he began transporting migrants to Washington D.C. He later added New York City, Chicago and Philadelphia as drop-off locations. According to official records, the state has sent more than 19,000 migrants to the Democratic-led cities.

The Governor’s office announced the first group of immigrants shipped to Denver arrived Thursday afternoon in downtown Denver near Civic Center Park.

“Until the President and his Administration step up and fulfill their constitutional duty to secure the border, the State of Texas will continue busing migrants to self-declared sanctuary cities like Denver to provide much-needed relief to our small border towns,” Abbott said in a statement.

The brutal and anti-democratic policies of both capitalist parties have produced a harrowing scene at the southern border. Enduring extreme heat, hunger and more, some 65,000 migrants are gathered along the border. Reports from the border accuse authorities of

corralling migrants into makeshift open-air camps.

The expiration of Title 42 directly coincides with the Biden administration’s declaration of an end to the COVID-19 national emergency and the further escalation of the US-NATO war with Russia in Ukraine. The border policy’s end was a direct consequence of Biden’s decision to end the national emergency in order to terminate all financial support for COVID-19 testing and treatment.

As the war in Ukraine develops into what is becoming all but an open conflict between NATO and Russia, the imperialist Western powers are demanding a war economy to facilitate the complete subjugation of Russia by military means. This requires a parallel escalation of the war against the working class, of all nationalities, under conditions of a global rise in workers’ militancy.



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