

Mexico's AMLO joins Biden in escalating attacks on migrants

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The government of Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known as AMLO, has put into effect a transnational agreement with the Biden administration to carry out mass deportations of migrants from border cities. The move comes in response to what the UN has described as an “unprecedented” surge of migrants and refugees crossing the Americas to reach the United States.

Scenes of thousands of workers and their children crossing dense jungles scattered with rotting corpses, facing heavily armed troops in one country after the other, marching in record temperatures across US and Mexican deserts, hopping on moving trains and crawling through razor wire, and even swimming through floating barriers, are a daily part of the news and viral videos on social media.

While this surge is breaking records, for years, growing waves of migration have taken place every few months across the entire continent. As masses of workers push daily against the obsolete national borders, the urgent need arises to tear them all down and integrate the already globalized economy on the basis of meeting human needs.

US imperialism and its regional client states, where fascistic ultranationalism is everywhere on the rise, are organically incapable of providing a solution, let alone a humane one.

Announced last week by Biden’s Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Acting Commissioner Troy Miller, the new agreement will allow US agents to summarily expel migrants into Ciudad Juárez, where Mexican authorities will deport them in coordination with their countries of origin.

Migration checkpoints will be set up along the routes of the main rail operator in Mexico, Ferromex, which recently suspended cargo services in northern Mexico, citing a “significant increase in the number of migrants” trying to ride train cars, leading to numerous cases of

injuries and deaths. An analyst warned AP that this was having a “very important” impact on trade.

Mayors and border patrol officials on both sides of the border are warning of “breaking points.” The busy commercial crossing between Piedras Negras, Coahuila, and Eagle Pass, Texas was already shut down to reassign border officials to processing migrants.

The new deal further undermines claims by the Biden administration of respecting “lawful migration pathways” and human rights. It continues to deny the right to asylum enshrined under both international and US law, while trying to cover this up with the assistance of AMLO, whose corrupt and repressive security forces are increasingly undertaking US border patrol functions.

The decision to task Mexico with more deportations takes place after the country already deported 788,000 migrants so far this year. Mexican authorities were responsible only last March for a fire that killed 40 refugees at a detention center in Ciudad Juárez, where roundups will rapidly increase as part of the new deal.

The war on migrants has already turned the US-Mexico border into the “deadliest land route for migrants worldwide on record,” according to the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Biden also announced last week that Venezuelans who arrived in the country as of July 31 can apply for Temporary Protected Status, which facilitates getting work permits. The temporary character of the program, however, keeps migrant workers in a limbo of long-term uncertainty, while the hundreds of thousands more migrants from Venezuela and other countries fleeing similar conditions will be arbitrarily excluded.

Biden simultaneously deployed 800 active-duty soldiers to join the 2,500 National Guard troops already along the southern border to facilitate the crackdown, with the CBP threatening last month with increased expedited removals.

Meanwhile AMLO has increased the deployment of Mexican troops to the northern and southern borders from 8,000 to 34,000 in three years, with thousands more carrying out “migrant containment duties” in the interior. Monthly migrant detentions surpassed 70,000 for the first time on record in July.

After being elected promising to send the military back to their barracks, given its horrible record of extrajudicial executions, torture and other abuses, AMLO today maintains 261,644 soldiers deployed as part of the war against migrants and ostensible repression of drug cartels, whose operations and violence are higher than ever. There are more soldiers trained for combat than police on the streets.

The Network of Migrant Defense Organizations (Redodem) concluded in a thorough report issued earlier this month that soldiers are treating migrants “as enemies,” leading to hundreds of human rights complaints, including arbitrary detentions, shootings with live ammunition (the killing of a Cuban and a Guatemalan are cited), and numerous cases of rape and sexual abuse.

Following the waves of mass protests between 2014 and 2017 in Mexico and a global upsurge of the class struggle, this massive militarization of the entire country in coordination with US imperialism undeniably constitutes preparation for repressing workers struggles.

The Biden and AMLO administration, along with the Central American and Colombian governments, have also adopted a joint script that emphasizes human smugglers as the main cause of the surge. However, the fact is that hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants face growing misery, violence and countless other consequences of the sharpening contradictions of global capitalism in a region that suffers rampant inequality and has been historically oppressed by US imperialism.

Migrants are again leaving en masse out of Mexico itself. The number of Mexican families detained at the US-Mexico border had quadrupled in a year compared to July 2022, with analysts pointing to growing violence. Venezuelan and Central American migrants point to rampant poverty as well as violence, kidnappings and extortions from Mexican security and criminal organizations as a reason for merely seeking Mexican asylum papers to cross undisturbed to the US border.

From Central America, migrants are escaping the consequences of decades of military dictatorships and counterinsurgency wars prompted by US imperialism. An estimated 6,000 migrants are crossing into southern Mexico daily, half of them Central American.

Meanwhile, successful crossings of the deadly Darien jungle between Colombia and Panama en route to the US are expected to reach a record 500,000 this year, compared to less than half that number in 2022.

These are mostly Venezuelans escaping a humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and lack of safe and stable living conditions in other countries. More than 7 million Venezuelans have been displaced since 2014 by the combined impact of a fall in oil prices, corruption and mismanagement by the Chavista government, and—most significantly—punitive sanctions imposed as part of a US regime-change operation continued under Republican and Democratic administrations alike.

Venezuelan migrants have explained that after paying for guides to smuggle them across the dangerous Darien jungle between Colombia and Panama, the authorities in Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua have been mostly pushing them along on buses. However, amid growing xenophobic campaigns in the corporate media, the right-wing Panamanian and Costa Rican governments have also responded to US pressures by announcing ramped-up border surveillance and deportations. Migrants also report “repeated sexual abuse and extortion by Guatemalan police.” By the time they get to Mexico, families have spent over \$1,000 per person.

“The bourgeoisie has managed to convert our planet into a foul prison,” in the words of Leon Trotsky. But the same crisis of decaying capitalism is pushing masses of workers globally into struggle, and the fight waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) for the international unity of these struggles is pointing the way forward for overthrowing the capitalist nation-state system.



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