

Biden, Democrats offer virtual destruction of asylum rights in return for Ukraine war funding

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The Biden administration is pushing to sacrifice the democratic rights of immigrants and refugees in return for an agreement by congressional Republicans to pump another \$100 billion-plus into US-backed wars overseas. The bulk of this funding would go to the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, with lesser amounts to Israel, Taiwan and the further militarization of the US-Mexico border.

On Sunday, after the Senate delayed its holiday recess, congressional negotiators and White House officials failed to reach an agreement on substantial changes in border policy Republicans are demanding in exchange for approving the \$106 billion in supplemental funding for the US military.

For weeks, the Biden administration's urgent bid to inject fresh funds into US imperialism's wars has stalled on Capitol Hill, as Republicans demand sweeping changes to immigration policy. Last week, Democratic Representative Pramila Jayapal, chair of the House Progressive Caucus, called the plan being devised behind closed doors "the most exclusionary, restrictive immigration legislation since the racial quota laws of the 1920s."

In response to Donald Trump's weekend outpouring of neo-Nazi vomit—he declared again that immigrants are "poisoning the blood of our country," and specifically named South America, Africa and Asia as the source of the poison—the White House issued a statement rebuking Trump's choice of words. Meanwhile, it continued efforts to satisfy Republican demands that Trump's anti-immigrant policies be reestablished and enforced by the Democratic administration.

The ongoing talks demonstrate that the first and only priority for which Biden & Co. are willing to fight is the escalation of the military bloodbaths in Ukraine and

Gaza, and the preparation of an even greater bloodbath in the Far East.

Since the supplemental war funding bill was first introduced in October, President Biden has repeatedly called on Congress to pass his request, claiming that the funds are imperative for Ukraine, and more broadly, for US national security.

Negotiating senators met for three hours on Sunday, alongside Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, but a concrete agreement has yet to emerge.

Republicans have demanded more funding for border security, but the impasse is centered on whether the United States will completely abolish the legal right to asylum established in federal and international law.

Among the measures under consideration are turning back migrants at the US-Mexico border without giving them the chance to seek asylum, expanding a fast-track deportation procedure to include more undocumented immigrants, and raising the credible fear standard for those seeking asylum.

The White House has remained mum on details of the agreement being forged, but multiple capitalist press outlets have cited sources claiming Democrats and Republicans remain divided in three key areas: restricting the president's ability to admit refugees under humanitarian parole, mandating family detention as migrants wait for a decision from immigration courts, and expanding executive authority to expel immigrants nationwide.

The details that have been made available have incensed immigrant advocacy groups, which have compared the proposed policy changes to Trump's Title 42, the COVID-era order that made it easier for the US to expel migrants under the guise of public health. The pro-immigration group FWD.us called the latest proposal "Title 42 on

steroids.”

Republicans have also sought to bring back the Trump-era “Remain in Mexico” policy, which forced migrants into makeshift camps on the Mexican side of the border while awaiting immigration proceedings. Reportedly, the Democrats have resisted this demand so far.

Nevertheless, the Biden administration and Democrats have signaled they are willing to go along with some of the GOP’s most stringent demands. Calling the current immigration policy “broken,” Biden has indicated he is open to reinstating a Title 42-like power to turn back migrants immediately and expanding detention capacity to hold more migrants.

Demonstrating the reactionary character of the backroom dealings, a senior administration official told NBC news that Biden’s top negotiators have so far failed to meet with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, which is publicly opposed to the Republican demands.

Rather, White House officials have prioritized communication with lawmakers directly involved in the negotiations, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), James Lankford (R-OK), Chris Murphy (D-CT) , and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, who defected from the Democratic Party and became an Independent last December.

“I thought I entered a time machine back to the Trump era,” Democratic Senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey said at a Congressional Hispanic Caucus rally held last week.

“I could not comprehend how a Democratic president who vehemently countered Trump’s policies as a candidate is seriously putting forward the most Trumpian anti-immigrant proposal,” he added.

The Democrats have adapted their rhetoric on immigration policy to the vicious and racist diatribes of the Republicans, claiming the US-Mexico border has grown dysfunctional since it allows migrants to enter the country, file claims that they fear for their lives, and remain for years as their cases make their way through immigration court.

Speaking on the matter, the Biden administration has claimed that the asylum claims of many migrants are not legitimate. In a regulation issued earlier this year, federal officials noted that while 83 percent of people who claimed asylum based on fear for their lives from 2014 to 2019 were able to enter America, just 15 percent of them were ultimately able to obtain asylum in immigration court.

“The fact that large numbers of migrants pass the credible fear screening, only to be denied relief or protection on the merits after a lengthy adjudicatory process, has high costs to the system in terms of resources and time,” the report issued by the Biden administration said.

These figures, if accurate, only demonstrate that the immigration court system is rigged against immigrants, since those who qualify at screening have their claims picked apart as they are processed by the courts.

The truth is that immigrants are fleeing conditions of oppression, violence and mass poverty that are the product of the plundering of Latin America by American imperialism for over a century. The same imperialist government that caused their flight has no credibility in assessing whether the fears of these immigrants are legitimate.

All of the Democrats’ talk of costs and resources are political camouflage for their joining with the Republicans to attack democratic rights in the United States, so that American imperialism can implement its war aims abroad.

While hopes that a deal could be reached before the Senate adjourns for the holiday season have been dashed, it is clear that Biden is just as concerned about “red lines” at the border as he is about Israel’s genocidal onslaught against the Palestinians in Gaza. Comments from senators involved in negotiations indicate massive concessions are being prepared.

While the Ukraine-US southern border deal continues to be worked out, the Biden administration is preparing to send further supplemental aid to Ukraine. John Kirby, a White House spokesperson for national security, announced on Monday that the White House plans to issue another package of military aid for Ukraine before the end of the month. However, it could be the final one until Congress approves additional funds.



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