

Lopez Obrador and Sheinbaum in Mexico agree to cooperate with Biden's illegal asylum ban

Andrea Lobo
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In a statement invoking the “spirit of alliance and friendship that reflects the lasting bonds between our two countries,” US President Joe Biden congratulated Mexico’s president-elect Claudia Sheinbaum for her election victory. A day later, on June 4, in violation of US and international law, he signed a decree shutting down the border between the two countries to asylum seekers.

In making the announcement, he said: “We are going to continue working closely with our Mexican neighbors instead of attacking Mexico. And it has worked. We have built a strong partnership of trust between the Mexican President López Obrador, and I am going to do the same with Mexican elected President [Claudia Sheinbaum], whom I spoke with yesterday.”

The decree halts all asylum processes and allows deportations within hours without a proper asylum request for those detained crossing the border. It leaves at the discretion of the fascistic Border Patrol officials the decision on whether the asylum seekers have a legal basis to remain in the US. The ban will not be lifted until the seven-consecutive-calendar-day average of migrant encounters at the border drops below 1,500.

The ruthless and deadly measures employed by the administrations of both Biden and his fascistic predecessor Donald Trump, along with those employed by Texas Governor Greg Abbott and pliant governments across the region have failed to stop the flow of migrants. The conditions of widespread violence, war and utter misery, created by more than a century of US imperialist oppression and deepened by the crisis of global capitalism, have pushed growing waves of migration to the US southern border, reaching record numbers in the past year.

Latin America, in particular, has seen its worst economic decade on the record, with a 0.9 percent growth

rate in 2014-23, which is even worse than the infamous “Lost Decade” of the 1980s.

The US Border Patrol has recorded 2.47 million detentions at the southern border in the past 12 months—an average of 6,765 per day.

While migrant detentions have dropped continuously so far this year and reached the lowest level in 40 months this May, this is not due to reduced attempts to reach the border.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has proudly attributed the drop to his government’s increased crackdown against defenseless migrants, deploying tens of thousands of military and police, and detaining 368,000 migrants in just the first four months of the year, unheard of for Mexico.

The response by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his protégé Sheinbaum to the new policy has again unmasked their nationalist bluster about standing up to US imperialist “disrespect” and defending “national sovereignty” and the rights of migrants.

The Mexican government has officially agreed to accept the return of migrants, except for Mexican nationals, who continue to make up over a third of those detained at the border, the largest national group. However, the decree applies equally to Mexicans.

In a press conference last week, López Obrador said he spoke with Biden, who was “very respectful” and “very kind.” He asked Biden “that if they make a decision to deport, why not do it directly? They come to Mexico and we have no problems, we treat the migrants very well, all of them, but why triangulate?”

The Mexican President said his government is helping the United States reach deals with other countries to allow for direct deportations, as if sending asylum seekers back to where they are escaping from was any better.

The mention of “kindness” was an open acceptance of a bribe in exchange for helping Biden end asylum rights. In the same call, Biden said he had approved the construction of new border crossings in Matamoros-Brownsville and Piedras Negras-Eagle Pass, and the expansion of the most important trade crossing in Nuevo Laredo-Laredo.

López Obrador thanked Biden for the measure to expedite the growing volume of trade between the two countries on Wednesday and announced a delegation to Washington to encourage investments in the Tehuantepec Isthmus Inter-Oceanic Corridor—a rail and highway system launched this year that connects the Pacific Ocean with the Gulf of Mexico (and Atlantic Ocean) at the narrowest point in southern Mexico and seeks to compete with the Panama Canal.

“In any case, we cooperate with and assist President Biden,” López Obrador said, adding that the American “will go down in history as the president who does not build walls, but bridges.”

Having previously claimed that Trump was “respectful to the Mexican people,” López Obrador will go down in history as the Mexican President who has disgraced himself most shamefully before US imperialism.

Sheinbaum has not issued any statement denouncing the asylum ban. During her campaign, she declared: “Whoever the people of the United States choose, whether it’s President Biden or President Trump, we’re going to come to an agreement.” This is despite Biden’s sweeping attacks against migrants and his support for the genocide in Gaza, or Trump’s proposals to act as a “dictator” and deploy hundreds of thousands of troops to deport millions of migrants.

Couched in the phrase “investments for development,” one of Sheinbaum’s stated goals is to expand the use of migrants as cheap labor in southern Mexico. “This development of southeastern Mexico will be very important for the southeast itself, for Mexicans, and also to contain migration in terms of job prospects within Mexico,” she said during her campaign.

This economic policy, which is also advocated by the openly right-wing opposition parties, explains why virtually all migrants detained in Mexico are not deported, but rather sent back to the impoverished south of the country. Many have reported to the media being thrown out in the streets without any money or information as to where to go. The Mexican government and media use the Orwellian term “humanitarian rescues” for these cruel detentions.

López Obrador, Sheinbaum and the Morena regime represent the interests of the Mexican oligarchy, which subordinates all considerations to competing for greater investments from Wall Street and transnational corporations.

Acknowledging that US capital would rather exploit the majority of migrants as cheaper labor within Mexico than north of the border, the Mexican ruling class seeks to become slave runners for US imperialism by exploiting the endless pool of desperate and mostly young workers escaping the social catastrophes around the world.

This is a natural extension of the near-shoring strategy of US imperialism, which has worked for three decades to set up a profitable North American economic platform to prepare for economic and military war against rivals in Europe and Asia, above all, China.

The asylum ban will rapidly worsen the already nightmarish conditions for migrants in Mexico who are being compelled to stay there against their will.

Josué Martínez, a psychologist at the only migrant shelter in Villahermosa, in the southern state of Tabasco, warned the Associated Press (AP), “We know that people are going to come to Villahermosa ... we are going to reach a point of collapse.” He concluded: “México is the wall.”

Angel, a young worker who recently arrived to the United States from Venezuela, told the WSWS that Mexico was the most dangerous part of the journey, even worse than the Darien jungle between Colombia and Panama: “My brother and his wife are still stuck in Mexico. They have been detained several times and deported to the south. They often ask for bribes, and the intention is clearly to wear us down.”

The AP interviewed a migrant in southern Mexico being paid \$25 for 12 hours of work under the scorching sun and precarious conditions in a mango plantation. “Another said that employers tried to force her into prostitution,” the report adds, while others fear becoming forced labor for the drug cartels.



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