# Mexican government cracks down on migrant surge ahead of Trump’s inauguration

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The seventh migrant caravan in recent weeks departed southern Mexico on Sunday night amid a surge of migrant workers trying to reach the United States before the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump on January 20.

Between 800 and 1,200 people have been crossing the Suchiate River between Guatemala and Mexico daily since Trump’s election victory, compared to around 300 migrants in previous months.

As a form of protection against the state forces and criminal bands, which often work together, many migrants have been departing in groups of several hundred from the town of Tapachula near the Guatemalan border.

Some joining these caravans have been waiting for months within Mexico for an asylum hearing in the United States through the CBP One mobile app—the only legal option to apply for a visa. This new lottery system implemented by the Biden administration has effectively ended the right to asylum as enshrined in US and international law.

For many it is not their first attempt to move north. One of the nearly 1,500 migrants in the latest caravan told *La Jornada*, “Every time we try to move forward they send us back, every time we try to go north they send us back, they take us supposedly to the immigration office to give us a permit, but it is a trick. They leave us here as prisoners and don't let us continue, we don't want to be here.”

The nominally left-wing government of President Claudia Sheinbaum is now working to disperse the caravans.

She assured Trump during a call last Wednesday that the caravans will simply “not reach the northern border,” according to her account. The call followed threats by the fascist US president-elect of devastating trade tariffs unless Mexico and Canada stem the flow of migrants and drugs.

Trump then boasted on social media that Sheinbaum had “agreed to stop Migration through Mexico, and into the United States, effectively closing our Southern Border.” The Mexican President immediately denied this, crying out in a press conference, “we would never and could never propose shutting down the border in the north.”

But, in the words of *El País*, which is friendly toward Sheinbaum, “Although the outlook under the new Trump administration is one of a totally closed border, as he himself has announced, the reality is that at the moment it is practically already closed.”

Sheinbaum herself suggested that Trump’s threats were because he has not fully appreciated this fact, saying “Perhaps he is not fully aware of everything that has been done in the last year and that we are already strengthening these measures, so it is important that we make known the efforts by Mexico and many others.”

Her administration apprised Trump that, although irregular migration into Mexico has increased 193 percent since December 2023—to record levels this year—the number of migrants reaching the US-Mexico border has dropped 76 percent.

This has been achieved through the deployment of tens of thousands of combat-ready soldiers, who continue to receive US training, and thousands of migration agents to detain migrants or otherwise make their journey a nightmare that often ends in extortion, torture, death or disappearances.

Regarding the caravans, the Mexican authorities have let them get exhausted, hungry and sick before compelling them to get on buses to be sent back south or east, in some cases after promising a ride north.

The Mexican Supreme Court ordered the government last week to begin keeping a record of migrants detained after a lawsuit launched by the Servicio Jesuita de Ayuda al Migrante, which documented that, out of 1,280 cases

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investigated of migrants that have gone missing, 75 percent were staying at migrant detention centers.

In March 2023, 40 migrants were killed in a fire at a detention center in Ciudad Juarez that acted as an "extortion center," where migrants were detained and threatened with deportation merely to extract bribes.

On October 1, 2024, the day of Sheinbaum's inauguration, the National Guard opened fire on a truck carrying over 30 migrants, killing six and injuring twelve in southern Chiapas.

A month later, on November 2, less than 10 miles from the US-Mexico border, near Rumorosa, Baja California, National Guard soldiers opened fire on two trucks carrying seven migrants, killing two Colombians (Yuli Vanessa Herrera Marulanda, 37, and Ronaldo Andrés Quintero Peñuelas, 20) and injuring the rest, including an eight-year-old. In each case, Sheinbaum's Defense Ministry has claimed that the troops were shot at first, only to have testimony of the survivors and inconsistencies explode the official narrative.

In total, the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) documented that 61,620 migrants have been killed or disappeared crossing the American continent between 2014 and 2023, about 80 percent of them between Mexico and the United States. This is undoubtedly a massive undercount.

Sheinbaum has also assured Trump that her administration plans to receive Mexicans subjected to his mass deportations. Like her predecessor and mentor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Sheinbaum will likely take back deportees from other nationalities.

In this context, the promise to "strengthen" such repressive measures can only mean a further brutalization and expansion of the network of detention centers and military surveillance against migrant workers, turning Mexico into a vast concentration camp.

Sheinbaum has at the same time promised a human rights approach to migration and to deal with the "root causes," Similarly, López Obrador declared shortly after taking office that "the right of asylum is sacred for all Mexicans... We will always attend to migrants and give them protection."

There is a deep pride among Mexican workers of the country's long history of accepting political asylees, including Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky and masses of Spanish and other Europeans escaping fascist regimes. A large percentage of Mexicans have personally migrated at some point and/or rely on remittances from the 40 million people of Mexican origin living in the United States.

Meanwhile, Sheinbaum, López Obrador and their party Morena have proven to be a reactionary cabal willing to make any concessions and to abandon whatever sovereign and democratic concerns to secure the profits of the Mexican ruling class and its major partners in Wall Street through the exploitation of the working class.

From the perspective of the Mexican ruling class, there is no barrier between using the military against migrant workers and Mexican workers to meet the demands of the American oligarchy, or for that matter against workers in other countries as part of US-NATO imperialist wars.

In the last period, it has been the Democratic administration of President Joe Biden that has demanded the Mexican government's use of anti-immigrant policies to effectively shut down the border, and laid the groundwork for the fascist onslaught planned by Trump.

Virtually all who arrive to the US-Mexico border without appointments through the CBP One App are returned, and most cases heard by judges are being rejected.

Since June, the percentage of "accelerated expulsions" from the US has tripled, and the number of those liberated within the United States waiting for appointments dropped 80 percent. US immigration judges granted asylum to just 35.8 percent of applicants in October, compared to a high of 52.6 percent in September 2023. In fiscal year 2024, deportations from the US reached 700,000, the highest since 2010.

A public letter issued on November 15 by migrant rights organizations, led by Detention Watch Network, asked Biden to shut down the more than 200 migrant detention centers before Trump's accession, noting that ICE "expanded massively" its network of detention centers in the past year despite the "documented histories of inhumane and abusive conditions."

Instead, Biden's Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas has held meetings with ICE since Trump's election to prepare for an upsurge of migrants by expanding detention and deportation capacity.

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