

NEWS ARTICLES ON KEY ISSUES – FEBRUARY 2020

LATEST IMMIGRATION STATISTICS

THE NUMBER OF MIGRANTS ARRESTED AT THE BORDER DROPPED AGAIN IN DECEMBER

By Nicole Narea – Vox – January 9, 2020

- ❖ U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced Thursday (Jan. 9) that it had arrested 32,858 migrants at the border and found another 7,762 inadmissible to the U.S. Taken together, those numbers represent a 5 percent decline over November 2019, with the biggest dips in the number of arriving unaccompanied migrant children and families. From October 2018 to October 2019, CBP arrested or turned away 851,508 migrants — the highest level since 2007, but still far short of the 1.64 million all-time high in 2000. Mexicans have replaced migrants from Central America’s “Northern Triangle” — Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador — as the largest demographic arriving at the southern border. Some 14,000 Mexicans arrived in December, compared to 6,400 Guatemalans, 1,800 Salvadorans, and 4,200 Hondurans. A CBP official said that Mexican family units have been arriving in increasing numbers, in part because transnational criminal organizations like drug cartels have started targeting them for exploitation, shifting their focus from Northern Triangle migrants. Instead of detaining families at facilities inside the U.S., the administration has sent about 56,000 migrants back to Mexico to await decisions on their asylum cases under the “Remain in Mexico” (RIM) policy, officially known as the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). The administration has deported 97 Salvadorans and Hondurans seeking asylum to Guatemala under an agreement brokered last year. The Department of Homeland Security said that it would start sending Mexicans to Guatemala as well, but BuzzFeed reported that the effort has been delayed after Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales told reporters that his government had not agreed to accept Mexicans.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/1/9/21058411/migrant-border-arrest-apprehension-cbp-december>



A group of about 30 Brazilian migrants who just crossed the border sit on the ground near U.S. Border Patrol agents on the U.S.-Mexico border in Sunland Park, N.M.
Photo Credit: Paul Ratje/AFP/Getty Images

U.S. OFFICIALS SAY THEY ARE HIGHLY CONFIDENT TO HAVE REACHED TALLY ON SEPARATED CHILDREN: 4,368

By Kristina Davis – Los Angeles Times – January 18, 2020

- ❖ U.S. officials assured U.S. District Court Judge Dana Sabraw on Friday (Jan. 17) that they are highly confident that they have accounted for all of the children who were separated from their parents under the Trump administration’s short-lived “zero-tolerance” policy and precursor programs. The total tally: 4,368. Judge Sabraw has been at the forefront of that accounting effort since 2018, but he raised new concerns over whether it was complete after a November report by the U.S. Office of Inspector General. The report suggested that government computer systems had made it impossible to reach an accurate tally. The effort under Sabraw happened in two stages. The first focused on children in government custody as of June 26, 2018, which came to 2,812 (three additional children have been determined not to have been separated after being initially counted). When it was later revealed that the Trump administration had been separating families in certain border cities as early as July 2017 as part of a pilot program, an effort to tally those separations launched. It was a more challenging prospect, since the children involved were no longer in government custody. Each possible case file was examined by hand — twice — and verified through various agency databases. That tally came to 1,556 children, according to court documents. Commander Jonathan White at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, who oversaw the second count, called the process “very painstaking” and told the judge that he had high confidence that all separated children had been accounted for. Beyond quantifying the separations, Sabraw ordered the government to help track down the separated parents and give them the option to reunite with their children. That effort has largely been completed as to the first group, but attorneys and nonprofit workers are continuing to track down parents of the second group, many of them in Central America. So far, in the course of more than 47,000 phone calls, the lawyers have been able to reach 364 parents or their attorneys. Additionally, on-the-ground efforts by the nonprofit Justice in Motion has contacted 113 parents outside of the U.S., said New York-based attorney Steven Herzog, who is heading the steering committee working on the task. Lawyers have also launched a letter campaign and established toll-free hotlines in key countries to try to establish contact with more parents.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-01-18/u-s-officials-say-they-are-highly-confident-to-have-reached-tally-on-separated-children-4-368>

MIGRANT PROTECTION PROTOCOLS (MPP) / REMAIN IN MEXICO (RIM)

PROTESTERS PICKET MIGRANT JUDICIAL TENT COURTS, LAUNCH DAILY SOUTH TEXAS VIGIL AGAINST MIGRANT PROTECTION PROTOCOLS (MPP)

By Sandra Sanchez – BorderReport.com – January 12, 2020

- ❖ Carrying signs proclaiming the “evils” and “injustices” of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) policy, hundreds of protesters descended upon Brownsville, Texas, on Sunday (Jan. 12) to kick off a daily vigil against the administration’s immigration policy. The protesters came from 30 states, the UK and Mexico, and represented several different organizations, all with one common goal: To end the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) policy that since its inception has sent 60,000 asylum-seekers over the Southwest border into Mexico to await their asylum hearings, federal officials have said. Chanting “Shut them down!” and “End MPP!” the protesters stood outside the judicial tent city at the base of the Gateway International Bridge, where the asylum hearings in South Texas are heard.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.borderreport.com/hot-topics/immigration/protesters-picket-migrant-judicial-courts-in-brownsville-texas-on-sunday-start-vigil-against-mpp-policy/>

DETENTION CENTERS

BORDER PATROL IS DETAINING ASYLUM-SEEKING FAMILIES AT A TEXAS FACILITY FOR LONGER THAN THE LAW ALLOWS

By Adolfo Flores – BuzzFeed News – January 11, 2020

- ❖ Border Patrol has been holding asylum-seeking families it is trying to deport to Guatemala at a Texas border facility for at least 11 days, violating a court settlement and 2008 law, attorneys said. Under federal law and court orders, children can't be detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for more than 72 hours. Lawyers trying to represent two families said they have also been denied access to them because officials told them the temporary tent facilities in Donna, Texas, can't accommodate attorney visits. David Dubrow, one of the attorneys who has been trying to get access to a Honduran family, said every immigrant child held by border authorities should be released after 72 hours, barring extraordinary circumstances. The Honduran family Dubrow is working with, a mother and her two daughters aged 6 and 1, have been detained by CBP since Dec. 30. The youngest, attorneys said, is extremely ill and has diarrhea. They have been trying to get her to a local hospital for treatment. The families are expected to be deported from the southern border to Guatemala, under a "safe third country" deal the administration made to send asylum-seekers to the Central American country instead.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/border-patrol-asylum-seeking-families-guatemala-donna?origin=web-hf>

SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH SUES CITY OVER MIGRANT CHILD FACILITY

By Silvia Foster-Frau – San Antonio Express-News – January 10, 2020

- ❖ The Second Baptist Church has sued the city, claiming San Antonio violated its religious freedom rights when it denied a zoning request to house migrant children at the church’s community center. Second Baptist sought to rezone its East Side property to allow Arizona-based VisionQuest, which runs migrant shelters in several states, to open a shelter for up to 90 migrant boys at its facility. Migration at the southern border has slowed in recent months compared to last fiscal year, when 977,509 migrants either crossed the border or entered through ports of entry — the highest number in seven years. Of those, 80,634 were unaccompanied minors. The Office of Refugee Resettlement, which oversees the shelters, said it housed the largest number of unaccompanied minors in the agency’s history in fiscal year 2019. It awarded VisionQuest a \$14.6 million grant last year to run two facilities in the San Antonio area. As of last fall, there were about 5,000 minors in government care. The San Antonio zoning commission and City Council both rejected Second Baptist’s request for a zoning change last year. “The city’s denial has forced the church to significantly violate its religious beliefs,” the federal lawsuit says. “The church and its congregation have been called by God due to their unique location, facilities, and resources, to use the property as a shelter for these unaccompanied migrant children. The city’s denial forces the church to violate this mandate.” Second Baptist lawyers accuse the city of violating federal and state religious freedom and land-use laws, as well as federal and state fair housing acts. The church says it’s being treated differently than other shelter operators because of its religious affiliation. There are at least six other migrant shelters for children in the San Antonio area. VisionQuest offered to pay the church \$3.2 million to lease its community center for three years, church officials said. The center is equipped with bedrooms, a full-service kitchen, recreational areas and even a bowling alley. The money would help the church meet debt payments for building the center. Under the plan, migrant boys between the ages of 11 and 17 would be kept at the shelter for 30 to 90 days before they are released to the care of sponsors.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/news/us-world/border-mexico/article/Second-Baptist-Church-sues-city-over-migrant-14965827.php>

LAWSUIT ALLEGES 2 MIGRANT KIDS SEPARATED FROM DADS AT ARIZONA BORDER WERE SEXUALLY ABUSED

By Chelsea Curtis – Arizona Republic – January 11, 2020

❖ The Southern Poverty Law Center filed a lawsuit in federal court on Friday (Jan. 10) on behalf of two migrant fathers who were separated from their children at the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona. The organization said in a press release that the Trump administration's zero-tolerance policy, which resulted in nearly 3,000 migrant children being taken from their parents at the border, terrorized and traumatized the two parents and their children. Abel and his son Obet, as well as José and his daughter Herlinda fled persecution from their home country of Guatemala to seek asylum in the U.S., according to a complaint filed in the U.S. District Court of Arizona. The families' last names were not disclosed. In May 2018, the two fathers were separated from their children for more than two months after they were detained at the border in Arizona, court documents said. At the time, Herlinda was 5 years old and Obet was 7 years old and had a serious heart condition, court documents said. The lawsuit claims that both of the children were abused while in U.S. government custody. Obet was sexually abused in a foster home in New York, according to the court filing. Herlinda also faced unwanted sexual contact while in government custody. "Herlinda was watching television at her foster home when a male minor residing at the same home inappropriately touched her chest," and, later on, the same boy "attempted to grab Herlinda's face and kiss her." "Plaintiffs suffered, and continue to suffer, physical, mental and emotional harm because of the intentional, reckless and negligent acts of U.S. government policymakers at the highest levels, whose goal was to inflict harm and instill terror," the court documents say.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/border-issues/2020/01/11/lawsuit-2-migrant-kids-separated-dads-az-border-were-abused/4437865002/>

MIGRANT KIDS WERE RESTRAINED TO CHAIRS WITH BAGS OVER THEIR HEADS AT A JUVENILE HALL IN VIRGINIA

By Samantha Michaels – Mother Jones – January 22, 2020

❖ Back in 2017, a group of immigrant teens told stories about the conditions at the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center near Staunton, Virginia, as part of a lawsuit by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. The lawsuit argued that the immigrant teens required trauma-informed mental health care, given the hardships they faced fleeing their home countries. But, the suit alleged, they were instead "subjected to unconstitutional conditions that shock the conscience," including violence by staff, isolation, and excessive use of the restraint chair. The case received national attention after the Associated Press reported on it, prompting Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam to order an investigation in 2018. A former child-development specialist who worked at the facility told the Associated Press she saw kids with bruises and broken bones. In court filings, lawyers for the detention center denied all allegations of physical and verbal abuse; they admitted staffers restrained children in a chair after fighting or self-harm, but rejected the kids' accounts about specific instances. In December 2018, a federal judge found there were grounds to allow a trial over claims of excessive force, but ruled against the claim for better mental health care. Now, as the teens' lawyer appeals to a higher court, they have some new allies. On January 13, 2020, dozens of elected prosecutors and criminal justice reform advocates filed a brief on their behalf, arguing that the court erred in ruling against them. The prosecutors include some of the country's most famous reformist district and state's attorneys: Larry Krasner of Philadelphia; Kim Foxx of Cook County, Illinois; Chesa Boudin of San Francisco; Wesley Bell of Saint Louis County; Rachael Rollins of Suffolk County, Massachusetts; and Marilyn Mosby of Baltimore. They are joined by a handful of attorneys general, including Keith Ellison of Minnesota, the former deputy chair of the Democratic National Committee. The lawsuit claims that immigrant teens at Shenandoah were repeatedly confined to their rooms for minor infractions like not participating in class, complaining about a headache, or accidentally hitting the ceiling with the ball while playing soccer. It says they were sometimes "stripped of their clothes, including, at times, even their underwear, while restricted to their rooms in solitary confinement."

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2020/01/district-attorneys-raise-concerns-about-treatment-of-migrant-teens-at-a-virginia-juvenile-hall/>



A group of migrants walks next to the U.S.-Mexico border fence after crossing the borderline while a Border Patrol agent looks through the fence in El Paso, Texas.
Photo Credit: Jose Luis Gonzalez/REUTERS

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION JUST OPENED A NEW IMMIGRANT PRISON IN RURAL MICHIGAN

By Brian Dolinar – TruthOut.org – January 22, 2020

- ❖ In May 2019, the administration awarded a ten-year, \$398 million contract to The GEO Group, to reopen a shuttered Michigan prison. Located in rural Baldwin, Mich., the North Lake Correctional Facility opened in late 2019 with a capacity of 1,800. Unlike detention centers, which are managed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the North Lake facility is a Criminal Alien Requirement (CAR) prison, which are managed by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). These facilities are specifically for non-citizens who have been convicted of federal crimes. Often, the crime is “felony reentry,” or a second unauthorized border crossing, which carries a typical sentence of two years (more for those with prior criminal records). After they serve their time, they are still deported.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://truthout.org/articles/the-trump-administration-just-opened-a-new-immigrant-prison-in-rural-michigan/>

ICE QUIETLY LOWERS (ALREADY LOW) STANDARDS AT SOME IMMIGRANT DETENTION FACILITIES

By Isabela Dias – The Texas Observer – January 21

- ❖ On December 19, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) made public changes to its National Detention Standards (NDS), which govern the conditions and management of some of its detention facilities. The agency says the updates to the standards streamline its focus on “essential requirements.” Among the wide range of changes, ICE broadened the reasons a detainee can be placed in solitary confinement and removed language preventing officers from using “hog-tying, fetal restraints, [and] tight restraints.” The agency also extinguished requirements for new facilities to have outdoor recreation areas and provisions guaranteeing that nonprofit organizations have access to the detention centers. There were also significant revisions to protocols in the case of serious injury, illness, or death, such as allowing guards to notify ICE “as soon as practicable” (as opposed to immediately) that a detainee needs to be transferred to a hospital and removing any mention of how to proceed if a detainee dies during the transfer. Under the new weaker standards, chances are that local jails and prisons will have an easier time passing inspections and keeping their lucrative contracts with ICE in place. ICE adopts different guidelines for facilities depending on the type of contract, population size, staff size, and operational costs. After the NDS were considered insufficient for some ICE facilities, the agency developed Performance-Based National Detention Standards, which cover most of the dedicated facilities—those housing exclusively immigrants— and others with larger populations. Among other improvements, those rules added guidelines to improve reporting and prevention of sexual abuse and assault, medical and mental health services, and language access based on input from immigrants’ rights organizations.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.texasobserver.org/ice-immigrant-detention-low-standards/>

ASYLUM SEEKERS

GOV. ABBOTT SAYS TEXAS WON’T ADMIT REFUGEES, MAKING IT 1ST STATE IN NATION TO OPT OUT OF FEDERAL PROGRAM

By Lomi Kriel – The Houston Chronicle – January 10, 2020

- ❖ Republican Gov. Greg Abbott said Friday (Jan. 10) that Texas will no longer consent to resettling refugees, making it the only state so far to opt out of the federal program. The decision puts Abbott in the minority, even within his own party: 42 states, including 17 led by Republican governors, have agreed to continue resettling refugees as part of a new Trump administration requirement that state and local authorities opt into the federal program. The new veto power is unprecedented in decades of U.S. resettlement and comes as the White House has slashed the number of refugees allowed into the country to a record low of 18,000 for 2020 — down from 30,000 in 2019 and an average of 102,000 annually during the program’s peak in the 1980s. In his letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Abbott wrote that since 2010, more refugees have been sent to Texas than any other state and about 1 in 10 are resettled here. At the same time, the governor wrote, the state has been the focus of immigrants crossing the southern border. At its peak last May, more than 144,000 people — mostly Central American families and children — were apprehended or turned themselves into Customs and Border Protection agents to ask for asylum across the southern border. But that number has since dropped every month to just 40,600 in December after the Trump administration implemented a new policy requiring migrants to wait in Mexican border cities for their U.S. court proceedings. Resettlement organizations said they were devastated by the announcement. About 2,500 refugees were resettled in Texas in fiscal year 2019, a 70 percent decrease from the 7,800 admitted during 2016, the last year of President Barack Obama’s administration. Fewer still were expected this year even before Abbott pulled out of the program. Since the beginning of the fiscal year in October, 259 refugees have come to Texas, more than half from Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Republican governors of conservative states — including Oklahoma, North and South Dakota, Arkansas and Idaho — have also consented to continue admitting refugees. Even Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, whose state has litigation pending against the federal government over forcing it to resettle refugees, overrode disapproval from his state legislative leaders to permit more this year.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Gov-Abbott-says-Texas-won-t-admit-refugees-14966052.php>

REFUGEES WILL NO LONGER BE ALLOWED TO RESETTLE IN TEXAS, GOV. ABBOTT TELLS FEDS

By Tessa Weinberg – Fort Worth Star-Telegram – January 10, 2020

- ❖ In a letter Friday (Jan. 10) to U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, Gov. Greg Abbott said the state will not allow refugees to resettle in Texas this fiscal year. Under President Donald Trump's Sept. 26 executive order, cities and states must provide their written consent to allow refugees to resettle within their areas. Nationwide, over 40 governors have consented or signaled their willingness to allow refugees in their states, making Texas the first known state to bar their settlement. Texas has long led the country as one of the states that resettles the largest number of refugees. "Since FY2010, more refugees have been received in Texas than in any other state. In fact, over that decade, roughly 10% of all refugees resettled in the United States have been placed in Texas," the letter reads. But Texas has been "left by Congress to deal with disproportionate migration issues resulting from a broken federal immigration system," Abbott wrote. Abbott pointed to the fact that 100,000 migrants were apprehended crossing the Texas-Mexico border in May 2019, and that individuals from 52 countries were apprehended in Texas in June 2019, as "consequences" that the state has been left to work through. Refugees who have been resettled in other states may still come to Texas after they have reached the U.S., a fact that Abbott acknowledges in his letter. Abbott's decision comes ahead of the Jan. 21 deadline for local officials and governors to inform the federal government of their decisions. Mayors of many of Texas' largest cities had already submitted their local consent, including Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price, who had previously urged Abbott to do the same for the state as a whole. Russell Smith, the CEO of Refugee Services of Texas, said in a statement that Abbott's decision reflects an ongoing confusion between border security, immigration processes and the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. "Refugees who arrive in the U.S. have legal documentation, have been fully vetted and security screened, and represent one of the most resilient, hard-working, entrepreneurial, and successful segments of the population," Smith said. In fiscal year 2019, Texas led the nation in resettling 2,458 refugees, or 8.19% of all refugees resettled in the U.S. during that time, according to federal figures. However, it's a sharp decline from just a few years ago. In fiscal year 2016, 7,802 refugees resettled in Texas, and at its peak, 8,212 refugees resettled in the state in fiscal year 2009. In addition to the urging of mayors and religious groups, nine Democratic state lawmakers had also sent a letter to Abbott, asking him to continue permitting refugees. Meanwhile, the Trump administration's executive order is being challenged in court
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/politics-government/article239118873.html>



Migrants cross the Suchiate River.
Photo Credit: Isaac Guzman/AFP/Getty Images

TEXAS' CATHOLIC BISHOPS DENOUNCE ABBOTT'S PLAN TO REFUSE REFUGEES ENTRY

By Taylor Goldenstein, Allie Morris and John MacCormack – San Antonio Express-News – January 13, 2020

- ❖ Texas' 16 Catholic bishops Monday (Jan. 13) called Gov. Greg Abbott's decision to reject resettlement of new refugees "deeply discouraging and disheartening," joining other religious and secular groups pressing the governor to reconsider. Abbott, who is Catholic, said the state is already overburdened with immigrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border and Friday (Jan. 10) made Texas the first and so far only state to opt out of the federal program facilitating refugee resettlement. Forty-two other states, including 17 led by Republican governors, have said they'll remain a part of the program. States have until Jan. 21 to decide whether they'll remain in the program. "While the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops respects the governor, this decision is simply misguided," the bishops' statement says. "It denies people who are fleeing persecution, including religious persecution, from being able to bring their gifts and talents to our state and contribute to the general common good of all Texans. The refugees who have already resettled in Texas have made our communities even more vibrant." San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller underlined the bishops' stance on Twitter. "People are suffering, hoping the U.S. is a safe place to live and to breathe," he wrote, adding: "We oppose Abbott's position. Let's have hope. We are ready to help those in need." The White House has slashed the number of refugees resettled in the U.S. to a record low of 18,000 in 2020, critics of Abbott's move have noted. During the Obama administration, the figure exceeded 100,000 a year.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/politics/article/Texas-Catholic-bishops-denounce-Abbott-s-14972648.php>

U.S. PROPOSES DENYING WORK PERMITS TO ASYLUM SEEKERS WHO ENTER ILLEGALLY

By Ted Hesson – U.S. News – November 13, 2019

- ❖ The Trump administration proposed a regulation on Wednesday (Nov. 13) that would bar most asylum seekers from applying for a work permit if they entered the United States illegally. Immigration officers could grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis. In addition, the proposal would allow immigration authorities to reject an asylum application or work permit request made by migrants who miss related immigration appointments. The administration issued a proposed rule that would add a \$50 fee to certain asylum applications, the first time the United States has charged for such requests. In September, the administration rolled out a proposal to eliminate a 30-day deadline for processing work permit requests by asylum seekers. Along those lines, the latest proposed rule also would increase a standard waiting period for asylum seekers to receive a work permit. Under existing regulations, asylum seekers must wait 180 days from the date of submitting an application for protection before they can receive a work permit. The rule proposed Wednesday (Nov. 13) calls for a 365-day waiting period from the date an asylum application is received.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.usnews.com/news/top-news/articles/2019-11-13/us-proposes-denying-work-permits-to-asylum-seekers-who-enter-illegally>

U.S. BORDER AUTHORITIES SEE SPIKE IN UNACCOMPANIED MINORS FROM MEXICO

By Wendy Fry – The San Diego Union Tribune – January 19, 2020

- ❖ At Casa YMCA de Menores Migrantes, three Mexican teenage boys — aged 15, 16 and 17 — check their phones as they slowly sit up and stretch their feet out over the edge of their bunk beds. “About 80 percent of the kids we receive here are Mexicans, girls and boys and adolescents, between the ages of 12 and 17 who are deported from the United States and they arrive every morning,” said Valeria Ruiz, the new director of Casa YMCA, the only shelter in Tijuana for under-aged migrants. Typically, U.S. immigration authorities process unaccompanied Mexican minors and release them to Mexican authorities. Then, the kids wait in one of the most dangerous cities in the world to be reunited with their families. In the San Diego Sector, across the border from Tijuana, there has been a 40 percent increase in the number of unaccompanied Mexican children trying to cross the border alone and undetected, during the first quarter of this fiscal year compared to the previous quarter, according to the U.S. Border Patrol. Unlike unaccompanied minors in the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) program, U.S. border authorities are able to deport these kids back to Mexico because they are not making an asylum claim, according to Supervisory Border Patrol Agent Jeffery Stephenson. Mexican migrant children who do make an asylum claim often end up detained for many months in U.S. facilities. Stephenson said border agents routinely work with the Mexican Consulate, Mexican immigration authorities, and the DIF, the Sistema de Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, Mexico’s child welfare agency, to turn unaccompanied children back over to Mexican authorities, who are responsible for reuniting them with their families. Some boys at Casa YMCA confirmed last week they were not trying to flee violence or political persecution in their home states of Oaxaca and Guerrero. Most said they were trying to find a job in the United States to support their families back home. Both the United States and Mexico say the numbers of minors trying to cross into the United States and getting deported back into Mexico is steadily increasing, although it has not reached the high numbers seen in 2005, when nearly 5,000 Mexican minors were deported back. According to Mexico Consul General Carlos González Gutiérrez, a total of 1,573 unaccompanied Mexican minors were returned to Mexico or “repatriated to the national territory” in 2019, through Baja California ports of entry. He said the figure represents a 19 percent increase compared to 2018 and an 84 percent increase compared to 2017. In 2019, Border Patrol agents in the San Diego area caught 993 unaccompanied Mexican minors trying to cross the border in this specific region.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/border-baja-california/story/2020-01-19/unaccompanied-mexican-minors-in-tijuana>

U.S. WEIGHS SENDING BRAZILIAN MIGRANTS TO MEXICO AMID SPIKE IN ARRESTS

By Ted Hesson and Frank Jack Daniel – Reuters – January 16, 2020

- ❖ The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has considered sending Brazilian migrants crossing the border from Mexico back there to await their U.S. court hearings, according to a U.S. official and a Mexican official familiar with the discussions. If the plan moves forward, Brazilians could be sent to Mexico under a program known as the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). More than 57,000 non-Mexican migrants have been returned to Mexico under that effort since it launched a year ago, according to the DHS. The program previously had covered Spanish-speaking migrants. But the addition of people from Brazil, where Portuguese is the official language, would expand its reach further. DHS spokeswoman Heather Swift did not confirm or deny the possibility Brazilians could be sent to Mexico, but said the department “is always looking at ways to expand and strengthen the program to include new locations, populations, and procedures.” Border Patrol caught roughly 17,900 Brazilians at the southwest border in the last fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, 2018. The figure was a sharp increase from 1,500 arrests a year earlier. Brazilians made up a small portion of the more than 850,000 people picked up at the border last year, but the surge of Brazilians has continued in recent months, even as overall arrests have declined, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-brazil/u-s-weighs-sending-brazilian-migrants-to-mexico-amid-spike-in-arrests-idUSKBN1ZF2VU>

RETIRING BORDER PATROL CHIEF: CRISIS AT SOUTHERN BORDER DEMANDS ACTION BY CONGRESS

By Carla Provost, Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol – CNN – January 27, 2020

❖ *Editor's Note: Carla L. Provost has served as the chief of the U.S. Border Patrol, located in Washington DC, since August of 2018, and will be retiring at the end of this month. The views expressed in this commentary are her own.*

❖ I [Carla L. Provost] joined the Border Patrol 25 years ago because of my strong belief in our border security mission. Our mission is to address all threats at our border, to stop everyone and everything from crossing between authorized points of entry. The threat of transnational criminal organizations is ever-present as they smuggle drugs, weapons, cash and people in support of their criminal enterprises. Last fiscal year, agents apprehended more than 850,000 people along the southern border. For the first time in our history, 321,000 of those apprehensions were children. Last year, agents encountered 213 large groups of more than 100 people; in 2017, we encountered only two such groups. On one occasion, more than 1,000 adults and children crossed the border at one time. Last spring, when apprehensions skyrocketed, CBP and our partners asked Congress for emergency funding because they could not keep up. Unaccompanied children, who by law can only be transferred to U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services, were left in limbo when our partners ran out of shelter space. We rapidly put up temporary facilities, expanded medical support, and purchased humanitarian supplies like food, hygiene products, portable sinks and shower and laundry trailers, but the volume of apprehensions increased daily and we, too, began to run out of operating funds. Border Patrol agents often risked their own safety to rescue more than 4,900 people, many of whom were placed in perilous situations by smugglers. Tragically, too many vulnerable individuals fell ill or lost their lives on the dangerous journey or after crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. Last fiscal year alone, agents accompanied more than 26,000 people to hospitals or medical facilities. At the peak of the crisis, my agents spent as much as 60% of their time processing, transporting, feeding and providing medical care to those we apprehended rather than patrolling and securing the border. Smugglers seized on that opportunity. Even with fewer agents on the border, Border Patrol agents still seized 28% more methamphetamine, 42% more heroin and 78% more cocaine than the previous year. Agents arrested more than 9,000 criminals, gang members, or individuals with active warrants and warrants. Most alarming, we detected more than 150,000 people who successfully evaded arrest -- what we call "got aways." The current state of illegal immigration -- and its impact on border security -- is not sustainable. Southwest border apprehensions have dropped by 75% since May. However, we are heavily reliant on agreements with other countries to maintain this progress. Only Congress can tackle the tough task of updating our immigration laws and providing more resources to our partners in the immigration system, but they seem unwilling or unable to do so.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/27/opinions/border-patrol-crisis-at-border-provost/index.html>

U.S. SENDING MEXICAN MIGRANTS 1,000 MILES FROM BORDER

By Astrid Galvan and Elliot Spagat – The Associated Press – January 14, 2020

❖ The Trump administration said Tuesday (Jan. 14) it will start deporting about 250 Mexicans a week on flights from Tucson, Arizona, to Guadalajara, over 1,000 miles (1,640 kilometers) from the border. Immigration authorities began the repatriation flights to Mexico's interior in December. The Department of Homeland Security said there will be two flights a week, starting Jan. 24. Mexicans are exempt from a U.S. policy introduced a year ago to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court. More than 56,000 asylum-seekers had been turned back by the end of November, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, about two-thirds of them Guatemalan or Honduran. The policy, called "Migrant Protection Protocols," (MPP) has expanded across the border as the number of Central Americans arriving at the border has plunged. Mexicans accounted for half of the arrests and people stopped at the U.S. border in December, more than three times more than any other nationality and a shift from much of last year, when Guatemala and Honduras were the top countries of origin. A similar program in place from 2004 to 2012 also flew Mexicans who had crossed the border through Arizona deep into Mexican cities at the cost of \$100 million over its lifespan. The repatriation program was meant as a deterrent for border-crossers who might attempt the trek again. Over 125,000 people were flown at no cost to them. The program ended when the number of migrants began to drop.

❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/55da2039f0037f1afa158b007683cde9>



A U.S. border patrol boat rescues migrants crossing the Rio Bravo towards the United States, seen from Piedras Negras, Mexico.
Photo Credit: REUTERS

TRUMP SAYS MOST ASYLUM SEEKERS DON'T SHOW UP FOR THEIR COURT HEARINGS. A NEW STUDY SAYS 99% DO.

By Nicole Narea – Vox – January 10, 2020

- ❖ President Donald Trump has often claimed that the only way to ensure that migrants show up for their court hearings rather than vanish into the U.S. is to keep them in detention or else make sure that they never step foot on American soil in the first place. But the president's theory doesn't hold up: About 99 percent of asylum seekers who were not detained or who were previously released from immigration custody showed up for their hearings over the last year, according to new data from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) at Syracuse University. Studies from previous years have also disproven the idea that most migrants will choose to live in the U.S. without authorization rather than see their immigration cases through. The latest data from TRAC shows that nearly every migrant who applied for asylum and whose case was completed in 2019 showed up for all of their court hearings. TRAC's report doesn't account for every migrant in immigration court: those who sought other kinds of relief from deportation or who didn't apply for any relief at all aren't included. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has also previously raised concerns about the accuracy of TRAC's analysis, which relies on data obtained via the Freedom of Information Act, since the organization does not disclose its methodology. Data from the DOJ suggests that the rate at which migrants overall show up for their immigration court proceedings is lower than the rate TRAC cites. In 2018, the most recent year for which data is available, about 75 percent of migrants showed up for their court hearings in 2018 — similar to rates over the previous five years. Migrants can end up in immigration court in one of two ways: turning themselves in to immigration agents or getting caught while trying to cross the border without authorization. In both cases, officials will initiate deportation proceedings against them and give them a date to appear in court, where they can ask a judge for asylum and other protections that would allow them to remain in the U.S. with legal status, or else be ordered deported. On average, immigrants with currently pending cases have been waiting almost two years for their court hearings, and cases take even longer to complete.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.vox.com/2020/1/10/21059924/trump-asylum-seekers-show-up-court-hearing>

TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS) FOR SOMALIA AND YEMEN EXTENDED, BUT NOT REDESIGNATED – A LIFE-THREATENING MISTAKE

By the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota (ILCM) – January 22, 2020

- ❖ On January 17, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that it will extend, but not redesignate, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Somali nationals living in the United States for an additional 18 months through September 17, 2021. The administration's decision to extend but not redesignate TPS for Somalia means that only Somali nationals who currently reside in the United States and who already have TPS are eligible for continued protections. Those who have arrived in the United States since 2012 cannot apply for TPS protection. Earlier in January, DHS announced that it will extend, but not redesignate, TPS for an additional 18 months for Yemeni nationals living in the United States who already have TPS status, despite the worsening humanitarian situation in Yemen. One of the reasons for granting TPS is an ongoing armed conflict that poses a serious threat to the personal safety of nationals of the affected country.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.ilcm.org/latest-news/temporary-protected-status-tps-for-somalia-and-yemen-extended-but-not-redesignated-a-life-threatening-mistake/>

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ADDS SIX COUNTRIES TO TRAVEL BAN

By Zolan Kanno-Youngs – The New York Times – January 31, 2020

- ❖ President Trump on Friday, January 31, added six countries to his list of nations facing stringent travel restrictions, a move that will virtually block immigration from Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria, and from Myanmar, where the Muslim minority is fleeing genocide. Beside Nigeria, three other African countries, Eritrea, Sudan and Tanzania, will face varying degrees of restrictions, as will one former Soviet state, Kyrgyzstan. All six countries have substantial Muslim populations. The total number of countries now on the restricted travel list stands at 13. Immigrant visas, issued to those seeking to live in the United States, will be banned for Nigeria, Myanmar, Eritrea and Kyrgyzstan. The ban will also prevent immigrants from Sudan and Tanzania from moving to the United States through the diversity visa lottery, which grants green cards to as many as 50,000 people a year. The proclamation will take effect on Feb. 22. Nonimmigrant visas, including those for students and certain temporary workers, as well as visas reserved for potential employees with specialized skills, will not be affected by the ban. The expansion of the restrictions, which already affected more than 135 million people in seven countries, is likely to hinder more than 12,300 potential immigrants in the next year from resettling, finding work or reuniting with their families in the United States.
- ❖ News Article Source: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/31/us/politics/trump-travel-ban.html?emc=edit_na_20200131&ref=cta&nl=breaking-news&campaign_id=60&instance_id=0&segment_id=20884&user_id=17f12e73eae14f98610bfe32205d547®i_id=54832992

BORDER WALL

U.S. COURTS RULE FOR BORDER WALLS BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

By Nomaan Merchant and Kevin Freking – The Associated Press – January 9, 2020

❖ Crews could start building a private border wall in South Texas within the coming days following a federal judge's ruling Thursday (Jan. 9) that lifted a restraining order against the project. U.S. District Judge Randy Crane's order was the second federal ruling in two days in favor of border barriers. On Wednesday (Jan. 8), the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals lifted a lower court's stay that had prevented President Donald Trump's administration from diverting \$3.6 billion from military construction projects to fund 175 miles (280 kilometers) of border wall. Fisher Industries, a North Dakota-based construction firm, wants to install 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) of steel posts about 35 feet (10 meters) from the U.S. bank of the Rio Grande, the river that forms the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas. At the 5th Circuit, the 2-1 ruling announced Wednesday allows the government to move forward with 11 projects in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The longest and most expensive by far would span 52 miles (83 kilometers) in Laredo, Texas, at an estimated cost of \$1.27 billion.

❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/494015fbbd5422e409cdef048112c1e9>



Construction workers place a panel of new bollard wall with the help of heavy machinery in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, as seen from the Mexican side of the border in San Jeronimo, on the outskirts of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

Photo Credit: Jose Luis Gonzalez/REUTERS

TRUMP PLANNING TO DIVERT ADDITIONAL \$7.2 BILLION IN PENTAGON FUNDS FOR BORDER WALL

By Nick Miroff – The Washington Post – January 13, 2020

❖ President Trump is preparing to divert an additional \$7.2 billion in Pentagon funding for border wall construction this year, five times what Congress authorized him to spend on the project in the 2020 budget. The Pentagon funds would be extracted, for the second year in a row, from military construction projects and counter-narcotics funding. According to the plans, the funding would give the government enough money to complete about 885 miles of new fencing by spring 2022, far more than the 509 miles the administration has slated for the U.S. border with Mexico. Trump took \$2.5 billion from military counterdrug programs for border barrier construction in 2019, but this year his administration is planning to take significantly more — \$3.5 billion. Trump administration officials also are planning to take \$3.7 billion in military construction funding, slightly more than the \$3.6 billion diverted in 2019. The move would bring the total amount of federal funds allocated to border fencing to \$18.4 billion under Trump, who made the border barrier a priority during his campaign for the presidency in 2016. The Trump administration has completed 101 miles of new barriers so far, according to the latest figures, far less than the 450 miles the president has promised to erect by the end of the year. But construction along the border — largely on land the federal government already owns — has been continuing even as legal challenges have aimed to disrupt it. A federal-district court in El Paso ruled last month that the White House broke the law when it commandeered funds for the border wall that had been authorized by Congress for another purpose. The court froze \$3.6 billion the administration budgeted for new barriers. But the Trump administration appealed that ruling, and last week the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, in New Orleans, lifted the injunction, saying work could proceed while legal challenges to the government are pending.

❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/trump-planning-to-divert-additional-72-billion-in-pentagon-funds-for-border-wall/2020/01/13/59080a3a-363d-11ea-bb7b-265f4554af6d_story.html

U.S. GOVERNMENT ACQUIRES CITY-OWNED LAND TO BOLSTER BORDER SECURITY

By Dorian Hargrove – NBC News San Diego – January 17, 2020

❖ The United States Government plans to boost security and rebuild the border wall at the U.S. Mexico border in San Diego. They will do so by taking more than 3 acres of land owned by the city of San Diego to do so. According to the court documents, the federal government will pay \$300,000 for 3.39 acres of city land located directly east of the Otay Mesa Port of Entry. Customs and Border Protection will use the land to, according to the filing, “construct, maintain, and repair barriers, roads, lighting, cameras and sensors to help secure the United States/Mexico border within the State of California.” In August 2019, immigration officials celebrated the construction of a replacement wall in Otay Mesa and the U.S. border. The 14-mile border wall replacement cost the government \$147 million. The Administration has also spent millions on a secondary wall along the border in San Diego.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/us-government-acquires-city-owned-land-to-bolster-border-security/2246153/>

PRIVATE BORDER WALL IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY MEETS WIDE OPPOSITION — INCLUDING THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

By Silvia Foster-Frau – San Antonio Express-News – January 24, 2020

- ❖ Blocked in court until a judge recently lifted a restraining order, an 18-foot high-wall of galvanized steel bollards, a privately funded project, is gaining about 1,000 feet a day as crews race to build 3 miles along a bend in the river. Built by North Dakota-based Fisher Sand and Gravel Co. on land it agreed to purchase, the wall is about 11 yards from the river on the floodplain. The U.S. government joined the nearby National Butterfly Center and other opponents in suing to block construction, citing concerns the barrier will worsen flooding and could change the river's course. The wall hasn't been approved by the International Boundary and Water Commission, a treaty organization that regulates construction and water use along the Rio Grande by both the U.S. and Mexico. The commission also sued Fisher, arguing that hydrology tests the company submitted "contained very little substance." Despite the opposition, Fisher Sand and Gravel is plowing ahead, spending \$40 million of its own funds to demonstrate it can build the wall faster than the government and in a way that will provide greater security. Because the barrier is close to the river, the company says, migrants will have little room to maneuver between river and wall. The company gained attention last year when it built a short stretch of privately funded wall near El Paso. After failing to win government bids, the company filed a complaint with the Government Accountability Office. As Fisher was promoting his wall design on Fox News, Trump reportedly urged Homeland Security officials to consider Fisher Sand and Gravel for a wall contract funded with Defense Department money that the president diverted for wall construction. Soon after, the company won a \$400 million government contract to build 31 miles of a border wall in Arizona.
- ❖ News Article Source: https://www.expressnews.com/news/us-world/border-mexico/article/Private-border-wall-in-the-Rio-Grande-Valley-15001735.php?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=SAEN_210Report&utm_term=news&utm_content=headlines

PORTION OF U.S. BORDER WALL IN CALIFORNIA FALLS OVER IN HIGH WINDS AND LANDS ON MEXICAN SIDE

By Andy Rose and Paul LeBlanc – CNN – January 29, 2020

- ❖ Newly installed panels from the U.S. border wall fell over in high winds Wednesday, January 29, landing on trees on the Mexican side of the border. The area is part of an ongoing construction project to improve existing sections of the wall. Agent Carlos Pitones of the Customs and Border Protection sector in El Centro, California, told CNN that the sections that gave way had recently been set in a new concrete foundation in Calexico, California. The concrete had not yet cured, according to Pitones, and the wall panels were unable to withstand the windy conditions.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/29/politics/us-border-wall-falls-over-high-winds/index.html>

COURT RULINGS

JUDGE BLOCKS TRUMP POLICY ALLOWING STATES TO REFUSE REFUGEES

By Lomi Kriel – The Houston Chronicle – January 15, 2020

- ❖ A federal judge on Wednesday (Jan. 15) temporarily blocked an executive order allowing state and local authorities to refuse to resettle refugees, just days after Republican Gov. Greg Abbott made Texas the only state to withdraw from the program. In a strongly-worded 31-page decision, U.S. District Judge Peter J. Messitte said that the new consent requirement is likely "unlawful" for violating the 1980 Refugee Act, which sets conditions for refugee resettlement and grants the federal government authority over where to send them. "Giving states and local governments the power to consent to the resettlement of refugees — which is to say veto power to determine whether refugees will be received in their midst — flies in the face of clear Congressional intent," Messitte wrote. "One is left to wonder exactly what the rationale is for doing away entirely with a process that has worked so successfully for so long." Abbott is the only governor to opt out of the federally funded program while seven other states —including Georgia, Florida, and Alabama —had not yet notified the State Department of its decision before the injunction. The new veto power for states and cities, required by an executive order President Donald Trump issued in September, is unprecedented in decades of U.S. resettlement. It comes as the White House has slashed the number of refugees allowed into the country to a record low of 18,000 for 2020 — down from 30,000 in 2019 and an average of 102,000 annually during the program's peak under President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. This year, about 2,000 refugees were expected to be resettled in Texas, compared to 7,800 admitted during the last year of President Barack Obama's administration in 2016. The U.N. estimates there are an unprecedented 25.9 million refugees globally — over half of whom are under the age of 18 —and most go to Turkey, Jordan and Pakistan. Of the 30,000 refugees admitted into the United States in the 2019 fiscal year ending in September, 60 percent were from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Myanmar.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Judge-blocks-Trump-policy-allows-states-to-stop-14977697.php>

JUDGE ORDERS ATTORNEY ACCESS FOR MIGRANTS WHO FEAR RETURN UNDER REMAIN IN MEXICO PROGRAM

By Kristina Davis – Los Angeles Times – January 15, 2020

- ❖ U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw in a pair of decisions Tuesday (Jan. 14) ruled that asylum seekers who have expressed fear about being returned to Mexico to await their U.S. immigration proceedings must be allowed access to attorneys to argue their cases. The rulings center on a crucial interview process that determines whether such asylum seekers should be part of the Trump administration's so-called Remain in Mexico (RIM) program, or whether the likelihood of persecution or torture south of the border means they should remain in the U.S. for the duration of their immigration cases. A Guatemalan family who filed the federal lawsuit complained that they were not allowed adequate access to attorneys before or during the interview with the asylum officer — a process called a “non-refoulement interview.” The family — a couple and their five children — had been assaulted at gunpoint during their trek through Mexico. In November, Judge Sabraw ordered border authorities to grant the family access to attorneys. The family has since been allowed to stay temporarily in the U.S. On Tuesday (Jan. 14), Sabraw approved class certification, widening the lawsuit to include all individuals who are detained in U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody in California, who are awaiting or undergoing non-refoulement interviews under Remain in Mexico (RIM) and who have retained lawyers. In a separate ruling, Sabraw also granted a preliminary injunction that requires the government to allow all class members access to legal representation before and during such interviews.

- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-01-15/attorney-access-immigrants-remain-in-mexico-trump>

SUPREME COURT ALLOWS TRUMP TO ENFORCE 'PUBLIC CHARGE' IMMIGRATION RULE

By Susannah Luthi – Politico – January 27, 2020

- ❖ Justices in a 5-4 vote along ideological lines said they would let the “public charge rule” go forward even as lower courts wrestle with multiple legal challenges against them. The policy in question would expand the government's ability to refuse green cards or visas for legal immigrants determined to be a “public charge,” or dependent on public assistance. Those using or likely to use Medicaid, food stamps and other safety net programs would face greater scrutiny from immigration officials. Multiple federal judges blocked the rules before they were slated to take effect last October. Federal judges in California, Maryland, New York, and California blocked implementation, but appeals courts later lifted all but New York's freeze, which was then removed by the Supreme Court on Monday (Jan. 27), allowing the policy to take effect almost everywhere. The State Department disqualified more than 12,000 visa applicants on public charge grounds last year, according to preliminary data reviewed by POLITICO, after rejecting just 1,033 people in fiscal year 2016 under the Obama administration.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2020/01/27/supreme-court-allows-trump-to-enforce-public-charge-immigration-rule-1256279>

MIGRANTS IN MEXICO

MIGRANTS SCUFFLE WITH MEXICAN TROOPS ALONG BORDER RIVER

By Maria Verza and Sonia Perez D. – The Associated Press – January 20, 2020

- ❖ Hundreds of Central American migrants waded across the Suchiate River into southern Mexico on Monday (Jan. 20). Over the weekend, (Jan. 18-19) Government officials convinced about 1,000 people they should enter legally over the border bridge. After the river crossing Monday (Jan. 20), Mexico's National Immigration Institute issued a statement saying that it would detain any migrants without legal status, hold them in detention centers and deport those who did not legalize their status. They urged the migrants to enter legally, registering at the bridge and seeking protection and work permits if they wished to remain in Mexico. The Guatemala government issued new data Monday (Jan. 20) showing that 4,000 migrants crossed into that country through the two primary crossings used by the migrants last week (Jan. 13-19), and over the weekend (Jan. 18-19) nearly 1,700 entered Mexico at two crossings. It said 400 had been deported from Guatemala.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/migrants-marooned-guatemala-plan-surge-mexico-68396925>



Migrants applying for asylum in the United States go through a processing area at a new tent courtroom at the Migration Protection Protocols (MPP) Immigration Hearing Facility in Laredo, Texas, in September.

Photo Credit: Eric Gay/The Associated Press

MEXICO BEGINS FLYING, BUSING MIGRANTS BACK TO HONDURAS

By María Verza and Sonia Pérez D. – The Associated Press – January 21, 2020

- ❖ Hundreds of Central American migrants who entered southern Mexico in recent days have either been pushed back into Guatemala by Mexican troops, shipped to detention centers or returned to Honduras, officials said Tuesday (Jan. 21). The latest migrant caravan provided a public platform for Mexico to show the U.S. government and migrants thinking of making the trip that it has refined its strategy and produced its desired result: This caravan will not advance past its southern border. What remained unclear was the treatment of the migrants who already find themselves on their way back to the countries they fled last week. “Mexico doesn’t have the capacity to process so many people in such a simple way in a couple of days,” said Guadalupe Correa Cabrera, a professor at George Mason University studying how the caravans form. The caravan of thousands had set out from Honduras in hopes Mexico would grant them passage, posing a fresh test of U.S. President Donald Trump’s effort to reduce the flow of migrants arriving at the U.S. border by pressuring other governments to stop them. Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard said 2,400 migrants entered Mexico legally over the weekend (Jan. 18-19). About 1,000 of them requested Mexico’s help in returning to their countries. The rest were being held in immigration centers while they start legal processes that would allow them to seek refuge in Mexico or obtain temporary work permits that would confine them to southern Mexico. Honduran officials said more than 600 of its citizens were expected to arrive in that country Tuesday (Jan. 21) by plane and bus and more would follow in the coming days. Of an additional 1,000 who tried to enter Mexico illegally Monday (Jan. 20) by wading across the Suchiate river, most were either forced back or detained later by immigration agents, according to Mexican officials. Late Tuesday (Jan. 21), the first buses carrying Hondurans left Tecun Uman with approximately 150 migrants heading back to their home country.
- ❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/mexico-begins-flying-busing-migrants-back-to-honduras/2020/01/21/962fe696-3cad-11ea-afe2-090eb37b60b1_story.html

DEVELOPING STORIES

INTERFAITH WELCOME COALITION ON THE FRONT LINES OF MIGRANT AID IN SAN ANTONIO

By Silvia Foster-Frau – San Antonio Express-News – January 10, 2020

- ❖ Volunteers for the Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) for years have provided humanitarian aid to migrant families released from nearby detention centers and dropped off at the downtown Greyhound bus station. The previously small coalition of faithful volunteers has become one of the most prominent organizations dedicated to migrant aid in the city. Immigration arrests surged after the brief family separation policy which overwhelmed detention space and led to other crackdowns, including a policy forcing migrants to wait in Mexico for their U.S. asylum hearings. Since 2018, about 32,400 migrants released at the border have passed through San Antonio. The border crisis thus placed the Interfaith Welcome Coalition on the front lines. IWC’s budget of \$243,300 has more than quadrupled since 2016, and its backpack program has grown 10 times over the same time period — from 2,465 backpacks of food and clothing handed out to asylum-seekers in 2016, to 25,577 last year. Its roster of vetted volunteers has soared from 250 in 2018 to 866 by the end of last year. People have come from across the country to lend a hand. IWC’s mailing list grew to 1,850 email addresses. IWC also started a fundraiser for the pastor, who feeds, transports and cares for migrants waiting in Nuevo Laredo. The effort has raised more than \$17,380 for him.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/Interfaith-Welcome-Coalition-on-the-front-lines-14965392.php>

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS VISITS IMMIGRANT COURTS ACROSS U.S., FINDS NONSTOP CHAOS

By Kate Brumback, Deepti Hajela and Amy Taxin – The Associated Press – January 16, 2020

- ❖ Immigration courts run by the U.S. Department of Justice have been dysfunctional for years and have only gotten worse. A surge in the arrival of asylum seekers and the Trump administration’s crackdown on the Southwest border and illegal immigration have pushed more people into deportation proceedings, swelling the court’s docket to 1 million cases. The Associated Press visited immigration courts in 11 different cities more than two dozen times during a 10-day period in late fall. In courts from Boston to San Diego, reporters observed scores of hearings that illustrated how crushing caseloads and shifting policies have landed the courts in unprecedented turmoil: (a) Chasing efficiency, immigration judges double- and triple-book hearings that can’t possibly be completed, leading to numerous cancellations. Immigrants get new court dates, but not for years; (b) young children are everywhere and sit on the floor or stand or cry in cramped courtrooms. Many immigrants don’t know how to fill out forms, get records translated or present a case; (c) frequent changes in the law and rules for how judges manage their dockets make it impossible to know what the future holds when immigrants finally have their day in court. Paper files are often misplaced, and interpreters are often missing.
- ❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts_ap-visits-immigrant-courts-across-us-finds-nonstop-chaos/2020/01/16/6132b2e8-387f-11ea-a1ff-c48c1d59a4a1_story.html

ACLU FILES LAWSUIT TO HALT TRUMP POLICY OF SENDING ASYLUM-SEEKERS TO GUATEMALA

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – January 15, 2020

❖ The American Civil Liberties Union on Wednesday (Jan. 15) mounted the first legal challenge against the Trump administration's policy of sending migrants who seek protection at the U.S.-Mexico border to Guatemala, a country with a skeletal asylum regime that has seen an exodus of hundreds of thousands of its own citizens in the past two years because of extreme poverty and endemic violence. The lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., seeks to halt the implementation of a controversial asylum agreement with the Guatemalan government. Under the deal forged last summer, the U.S. has sent more than 150 asylum-seekers from Honduras and El Salvador to Guatemala, denying them access to America's asylum system and requiring them to choose between seeking refuge in the Central American country or returning home. As of last week (Jan. 5-11), 158 Honduran and Salvadoran migrants have been rerouted by the U.S. to Guatemala, including dozens of families and at least 43 children, according to the Guatemalan migration institute. Nine people initially chose to request protection in Guatemala, but five of them have since abandoned their claims, the institute said. The rest have asked for help returning to their home countries.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/aclu-files-lawsuit-to-halt-trump-policy-of-sending-asylum-seekers-to-guatemala/>

NEW TRUMP ADMINISTRATION RULE COULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR SOME PREGNANT WOMEN TO GET U.S. VISAS

By Carol Morello, Abigail Hauslohner and Maria Sacchetti – The Washington Post – January 22, 2020

❖ The U.S. State Department plans to issue new guidance that could make it more difficult for some pregnant women to obtain visas to visit the United States, a department official and a congressional aide said Wednesday, January 22. The forthcoming regulations are aimed at cracking down on what the Trump administration calls "birth tourism". It is unclear how many people travel to the United States to give birth each year with the intention of obtaining citizenship for their children, as the U.S. government does not publish statistics on the matter. The guidelines, which the State Department will circulate to U.S. consular officers, will impact B1 and B2 nonimmigrant visas, otherwise known as temporary visas for business, tourism or medical treatment. The U.S. government issued 5.7 million B1 and B2 visas in fiscal year 2018. The official said the new guidelines will not prohibit pregnant women from obtaining visas, but will extend discretion to consular officers, who will have to determine whether a woman is planning a visit to the United States solely for the purpose of giving birth. The Center for Immigration Studies, a right-wing think tank that advocates for lower immigration levels, estimated that there are approximately 33,000 births per year to women who arrived in the United States on tourist visas and then left the country. The organization said its estimate was "based on a combined analysis of birth certificate records and data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/new-trump-administration-rule-could-make-it-more-difficult-for-some-pregnant-women-to-get-us-visas/2020/01/22/caf582c4-3d65-11ea-b90d-5652806c3b3a_story.html

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO EXPAND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS TO SEVEN COUNTRIES

By Michelle Hackman – The Wall Street Journal – January 21, 2020

❖ The Trump administration plans to add seven countries to a group of nations subject to travel restrictions, including Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, along with others in Africa and Asia, according to administration officials who have seen the list. The new restrictions would apply to travelers and immigrants from Belarus, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan and Tanzania. The countries wouldn't necessarily face blanket bans on travel to the U.S., but could have restrictions placed on specific types of visas, such as business or visitor visas, administration officials said. Some countries could be banned from participating in the diversity visa lottery program, which awards green cards to people in countries with low levels of immigration to the U.S. The officials said the list isn't final, and on Tuesday (Jan. 21) the White House was still debating whether to include one or two of the countries.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-administration-plans-to-add-seven-countries-to-travel-ban-list-11579638341?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=5&ns=prod/accounts-wsj>



Central American migrants stand outside their tents in an encampment in Matamoros, Mexico.
Photo Credit: Henry Romero/ REUTERS

‘REMAIN IN MEXICO’: HOW A SINGLE POLICY TRANSFORMED THE U.S. ASYLUM SYSTEM

By Kate Morrissey – The San Diego Tribune Union – January 29, 2020

- ❖ Over the past year, the Trump administration has dramatically changed the way that the U.S. asylum system processes many of the people coming to the southwest border to seek protection. The beginning of those changes, known officially as Migrant Protection Protocols, or MPP, was the first major asylum-related policy that the administration managed to implement despite legal challenges in federal court. The program, more widely known as “Remain in Mexico,” (RIM) requires asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their immigration court cases in the U.S. It started a year ago Wednesday (Jan. 29) with one person — a 55-year-old Honduran man. After one year of operation, MPP is now in effect in seven ports of entry along the border in California, Texas and Arizona, and it has returned more than 57,000 people, according to the Department of Homeland Security.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/immigration/story/2020-01-29/remain-in-mexico-one-year-later-how-a-single-policy-transformed-the-u-s-asylum-system>

ICE HAS FLOWN MORE THAN 450 MIGRANTS TO THE INTERIOR OF MEXICO SINCE DECEMBER

By Daniel Gonzalez – Arizona Republic – January 31, 2020

- ❖ According to a tweet by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency (CBP), “since December 19, CBP and ICE have returned more than 450 Mexican nationals to Guadalajara as part of the Interior Repatriation Initiative.” The most recent flight left Jan.24 from Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport carrying 106 migrants, including 97 men and nine women. The first flight left Dec. 19 from Tucson International Airport with approximately 150 undocumented immigrants from Mexico, ICE officials said in a statement.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/01/31/ice-has-flown-over-450-undocumented-immigrants-interior-mexico/4627790002/>

PRESIDENT TRUMP, DON’T IGNORE THE SUFFERING AT THE BORDER CAUSED BY YOUR POLICIES

By Sister Norma Pimentel – The Washington Post – February 5, 2020

Norma Pimentel, a sister of the Missionaries of Jesus, is executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

- ❖ President Trump, I was thankful to be able to attend the State of the Union address Tuesday (Feb. 4) night, where I hoped to hear you mention your policies at our southern border in a human-focused way. But while you covered a number of topics, I did not hear about the human suffering we are witnessing at the border as a result of the Migration Protection Protocols (MPP). I realize your attention is needed in multiple areas, Mr. President. However, I invite you to take a closer look at what is happening along the border due to the MPP, which requires migrants seeking asylum to remain in Mexico while their applications are considered. If you visit my community in Brownsville, Tex., the first thing you will see as you cross the Rio Grande into Matamoros, Mexico, is what has become a “tent city” along the riverbank. Some 2,500 people, many of them women and children waiting in harsh open air, are finding shelter in donated tents. As you walk through the makeshift camp, you might want to wear rubber boots, because when it rains the entire area becomes a mud pit. Some children have slipped and broken a leg or an arm, but they run around playing, being children. Most likely they are dirty as they have not had an opportunity to get clean or shower, due to limited facilities. Some families risk the polluted river waters and go there to wash themselves. If you stop to meet the families and talk to the mothers, you will learn many of them are there because they fear for their children’s lives in their own country. If you had come last week, you would have heard the story of a 14-year-old girl who was raped in her home country and is now five months pregnant. Her mother knows that the man who raped her child is looking for her. You might have also heard about a man who heroically saved a young girl from being kidnapped — and who now fears that the men he thwarted will come back and hurt him. And finally, you also would have seen another mother who had just returned from her asylum hearing after having been told her asylum request was denied. I would hope that you could also spare a moment to hear from the lawyers who are tirelessly working to help these people pursue their asylum cases. The lawyers are dedicating hours and hours of work with crushing caseloads to prepare families as best as they can, but under the MPP, whether you win or lose an asylum case mostly depends on the judge you happen to draw. Even though you touched on none of this in your speech, Mr. President, please don’t look away from the human suffering that is occurring because your MPP policy is keeping people out of our country. Remember that they are human beings. They are desperate to protect their loved ones from harm. Listen to their stories and be present. Don’t turn away from what is happening. Mr. President, you still have an opportunity to come and see. Hopefully it will help you determine that the impact of a policy such as the MPP is not defined only by reducing the numbers of immigrant/refugees entering our country; it is just as important to consider how the policy contributes to human suffering. The suffering it is causing clearly indicates this policy is detrimental and therefore should be stopped. I urge you to consider other options. In September, we are hosting a CARE Summit in McAllen, Tex., for opinion leaders and people of action from around the country where together we will look at best practices from around the world and seek viable solutions to the reality of human displacement. I invite you and others to come see for yourselves that reality on the border.
- ❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-trump-dont-ignore-the-suffering-at-the-border-caused-by-your-policies/2020/02/05/e2-4834-11ea-ab15-b5df3261b710_story.html

ASYLUM-SEEKERS TAKE CHARGE OF LARGE MATAMOROS ENCAMPMENT

By Silvia Foster-Frau – San Antonio Express-News – February 14, 2020

❖ Dozens of Nicaraguan migrants wearing donated clothes held garbage bags and roamed among a couple of thousand tents at an encampment in this border city (Matamoros, Tamaulipas) to pick up trash. Each day, a different nationality cleans the nearly 9-acre encampment, which is occupied by more than 2,500 asylum-seekers who are subject to the Trump administration's Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), or "Remain in Mexico," policy. Under the protocols, the U.S. has returned more than 60,000 migrants to Mexico to await their asylum hearings. The cleaning routine is one of many practices put in place by a newly formed migrant council made up of two representatives from each nationality in the encampment. After languishing for months in Mexico as they wait for their asylum cases to close, the migrants have begun to organize to improve their living conditions. The council is the latest migrant effort to meet standards similar to those found in refugee camps around the world. The United Nations High Commissioner (UNHCR) of Refugees provides some aid to the camp, though it would be up to the Mexican government to request further UNHCR intervention. In Nuevo Laredo and elsewhere along the border, thousands of migrants live in religious-affiliated shelters. In Matamoros, their homes are donated tents patched with black garbage bags and clustered on dusty, federal land alongside the Rio Grande. The U.N. agency began offering services about a year ago in Tijuana and Mexicali, which share a border with Southern California. But, citing safety concerns, it has not set up offices in Matamoros. U.N. staff in Monterrey visit about once every two weeks, mostly to provide legal assistance on asylum cases. The U.N. has provided legal counseling to more than 1,000 migrants borderwide, U.N. refugee camps are supposed to have one toilet for every 20 people. Matamoros has about one for every 60. And many of the asylum-seekers here still resort to bathing and washing clothes in the unsanitary Rio Grande, creating a breeding ground for infections and rashes. In other parts of the world, refugee camps typically are in a secured, fenced area. Here the migrants are exposed to the elements and criminals. People have disappeared from the camp. Some moved away. Some were kidnapped. Nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations and volunteers on both sides of the border have donated time and money to improve the camp. The leadership council has been meeting once a week for more than a month. It's establishing sanitation guidelines, taking inventory of the donations stored in locked tents and asking each nationality to keep a censo, the count of migrants living in the camp — their ages, family members, clothes sizes and length of stay. The council has made the camp cleaner, more orderly and community-minded. But its creation also is an unnerving acknowledgment to the migrants that their life here isn't as temporary as they'd hoped. The Mexican government has relied on nonprofits to improve the camp, though it did install a few showers and wash stations. The federal government opened a couple of shelters for MPP migrants in other border cities. The camp has swelled since MPP expanded to Brownsville last July. More migrants continue to arrive at the border, and the court process has grown lengthier amid the more than 1 million cases in the backlogged U.S. immigration court. The asylum-seekers have divided the encampment into three regions, each getting its own "tiendita," or small store, where donations are kept. Big cardboard signs for the stores hang on trees. The asylum-seekers planted gardens. At the medical tent run by Global Response Management, a handful of asylum-seekers who are trained as medics, gynecologists and pharmacists also help provide care. The camp has started offering school classes. About 100 kids gather at a nearby plaza every weekday, eagerly awaiting the arrival of six Cuban asylum-seekers, who come with tubs of donated books and markers.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/news/us-world/border-mexico/article/Asylum-seekers-take-control-of-large-Matamoros-15056883.php>



A line forms as Iglesia Puerta del Cielo provides sweet bread and coffee to the migrants. The camp recently was moved from the sidewalk to land that was used as soccer fields by the Rio Grande.

Photo Credit: Jerry Lara /San Antonio Express-News