

NEWS ARTICLES ON KEY ISSUES – JANUARY 2020

LATEST IMMIGRATION STATISTICS

ICE ARRESTED FEWER IN 2019 AS RESOURCES SHIFTED TO BORDER

By Jake Bleiberg and Colleen Long – *The Associated Press* – December 11, 2019

- ❖ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested fewer people during the 2019 budget year than last year, in part because resources were shifted to help handle the massive surge of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, the agency said Wednesday, December 11. And the average number of immigrants in detention was 50,165 — even though Congress limits funding to cover just 45,000. Over the budget year that ended Sept. 30, officers arrested about 143,000 people, about 13,000 less than last year, and deported more than 267,000. More than 92,000 of the arrests were of people with criminal convictions, including for homicide, kidnapping, sexual assault and assault. ICE officers were diverted to help with the border crisis, which affected overall arrests, ICE acting director Matt Albence said at a news conference in Dallas, where the largest number of arrests occurred — 16,900 — and where there's a high level of cooperation with local law enforcement. There was a drastic increase in the number of families crossing the border last year — at least 473,000 for the budget year, nearly three times the previous full-year record for families. Border crossings are declining amid crackdowns by Mexico at its border plus U.S. policies that have sent more than 50,000 asylum seekers back to Mexico to wait out their claims, and have made anyone who crossed through a third country inadmissible for asylum.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/6c093d2c026fc33dd65dcaba082634fb>



Migrants walk across International Bridge Two into Mexico from Laredo. They requested asylum in the United States but were returned to Mexico to await their court proceedings.
Photo Credit: Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune

IMMIGRATION JUDGES QUIT IN RESPONSE TO ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

By Priscilla Alvarez – *CNN* – December 27, 2019

- ❖ Over the past year, in the heat of a border migration crisis, 45 judges have left, moved into new roles in the immigration court system -- which is run by the Justice Department -- or passed away, according to the department. That's nearly double the number who departed their posts in fiscal years 2018 and 2017, when 24 and 21 judges left, respectively, according to data provided by the judges union. The reasons why individual judges have moved on from their posts on the bench vary, but in interviews with judges who left in recent months, one theme ties them all together: frustration over a mounting number of policy changes that, they argue, chipped away at their authority. Their departures come as the Justice Department faces a backlog that exceeds 1 million cases. The bogged-down system has led to immigration cases being pushed out years in the future, leaving many immigrants residing in the U.S. unsure if they'll be allowed to stay or be ordered removed. The Justice Department has imposed case quotas, given more power to the director charged with overseeing the courts, reversed rulings, curtailed judges' ability to exercise discretion in some cases and moved to decertify the union of immigration judges. Back in December of 2019, the Justice Department announced 28 new immigration judges, bringing the number of such judges to more than 465, a record high. The majority come from government backgrounds.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/27/politics/immigration-judges-resign/index.html>

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY EXPANDS MIGRANT PROTECTION PROTOCOLS TO NOGALES, ARIZONA

By *El Paso Times Staff Report* – January 2, 2020

- ❖ The Department of Homeland Security on Thursday, January 2, began processing migrants for return to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) at the Nogales Port of Entry south of Tucson, Arizona. The department announced on its website that any “migrants making illegal or inadmissible entry at the Southwest Border, regardless of location of entry, may be returned to Mexico” to await immigration court proceedings. Before the change, migrants who were apprehended in the Tucson Sector were returned to Mexico through El Paso for processing under MPP, DHS said. The move brings the total number of ports of entry where MPP returns will be made to seven. The program previously was implemented and expanded in cooperation with Mexico in San Diego, Calexico, El Paso, Laredo, Brownsville and Eagle Pass. The program was first started in January 2019. So far, more than 56,000 migrants have been returned to Mexico to await their immigration hearings.”
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/immigration/2020/01/02/department-homeland-security-expands-migrant-protection-protocols-nogales-arizona-port-entry/2798429001/>

SOME "REMAIN IN MEXICO" MIGRANTS WILL HAVE TO TRAVEL 340 MILES FOR U.S. COURT HEARINGS

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – January 2, 2020

- ❖ Under an expansion of the controversial "Remain in Mexico" (RIM) program, some asylum-seekers returned by U.S. authorities to northern Mexico will have to travel more than 340 miles by car to attend hearings in an American immigration court. The Trump administration announced on Thursday, January 2, that it has started sending asylum-seekers encountered near the border in Arizona to the Mexican city of Nogales as part of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), the official name of the program. Migrants returned to Nogales will be scheduled for court hearings at the immigration court in El Paso, Texas. Since the U.S. is not providing them transportation, these asylum-seekers will have to find a way to travel across hundreds of miles of territory and two Mexican border states to reach Ciudad Juárez, the city neighboring El Paso. A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson confirmed on Thursday (Jan. 2) that those returned to Mexico through Nogales, Arizona, "must provide their own transportation" to their hearings in El Paso, which are usually scheduled months apart. If they secure ground transportation, migrants would need to travel south to reach a highway that traverses a vast swath of remote areas in the Mexican border states of Sonora and Chihuahua, a trip that is about eight hours long. The administration has attributed the drop to restrictive policies like the MPP program, which has required more than 56,000 asylum-seeker to wait in Mexico for the duration of their U.S. immigration proceedings. Tens of thousands of asylum-seekers from Central America and other Latin American countries have been sent by the U.S. to cities like Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo, located in Tamaulipas, a Mexican border state the U.S. government warns Americans not to visit because of rampant criminal activity, including kidnappings, sexual assaults and murders. Migrants returned to Nogales will be in the state of Sonora, which the State Department designates a hub for crime, human trafficking and drug trade in its travel warning for the area. Like in many other parts of Mexico, warring cartels vie for control of the drug trade in Sonora. According to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), the El Paso immigration court has been assigned more than 16,300 "Remain in Mexico" cases — the highest of any court participating in the program.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/remain-in-mexico-some-migrants-returned-to-mexico-will-have-to-travel-340-miles-for-us-court-hearings/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>

REMAIN IN MEXICO HAS A 0.1 PERCENT ASYLUM GRANT RATE

By Gustavo Solis – The San Diego Union Tribune – December 15, 2019

- ❖ Over the last year, in the name of national security, U.S. asylum policy changes have made it increasingly difficult for migrants to win asylum cases in the U.S. The latest change has effectively made the majority of non-Mexican migrants ineligible for asylum, according to lawyers and activists. One policy in particular, called Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) or Remain in Mexico (RIM), has made it nearly impossible for migrants to receive asylum. Data shows that as of September, of the more than 47,000 people in the program, fewer than 10,000 had completed their cases. Of that group, 5,085 cases were denied while 4,471 cases were dismissed without a decision being made — mostly on procedural grounds. Only 11 cases — or 0.1 percent of all completed cases — resulted in asylum being granted, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University. That 0.1 percent grant rate is significantly lower than the 20 percent of people who were granted asylum outside of the Remain in Mexico (RIM) process, according to data from the Executive Office for Immigration Review. That same data shows a 48 percent denial rate and a 30 percent "other" rate in 2018. The "other" category means that asylum cases either ended without a decision being made, or were withdrawn for some reason. There are more than 10,000 migrants currently in Tijuana waiting to enter the United States and legally asking for asylum. Officially known as Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), the policy requires asylum seekers with immigration court cases in the U.S. to wait in Mexico until their cases are adjudicated. The logic behind Remain in Mexico (RIM) is that forcing people to spend months in Mexico waiting for their cases will deter them from filing false asylum claims. That, in theory, should free up the courts to process legitimate claims.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/border-baja-california/story/2019-12-15/remain-in-mexico-has-a-0-01-percent-asylum-grant-rate>



Migrants arrive in Nuevo Laredo after being returned to Mexico by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The migrants requested asylum and must wait in Mexico for the duration of their immigration proceedings.

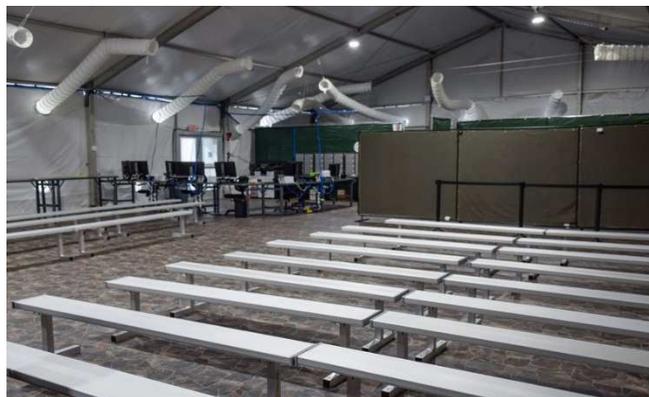
Photo Credit: Miquel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune

DETENTION CENTERS

REPORT: WHISTLEBLOWER SAYS ICE DENIED HEALTHCARE TO MIGRANTS

By *The Associated Press* – December 15, 2019

❖ A whistleblower report provided to BuzzFeed News alleges U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has “systematically provided inadequate medical and mental health care” to detained migrants, leading to complications that included the removal of part of an 8-year-old boy’s forehead. The report published Thursday (Dec. 12) says poor medical care contributed to two preventable surgeries and contributed to four deaths in detention. At the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, a man who was bleeding through his skin continued to receive aspirin even though he had extremely thin blood. The man was eventually taken to a hospital in critical condition and not expected to survive, according to a report summarizing the complaint that was delivered to ICE leadership in March. In Arizona, a detainee at the Eloy Federal Contract Facility had “worsening psychosis-related symptoms, but the psychiatrist failed to treat him,” the report says. And at the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas, a boy was initially diagnosed with an external ear infection, only to have seizures two weeks later. Doctors at the hospital diagnosed him with Pott’s puffy tumor, an infection that leads to abscesses formed under the skull. They treated it by extracting part of the boy’s frontal bone, BuzzFeed reported. ICE said in a statement that it “takes very seriously the health, safety and welfare of those in our care, including those who come into ICE custody with prior medical conditions or who have never before received appropriate medical care.” The BuzzFeed report provides the latest series of allegations that ICE and other immigration agencies don’t properly care for the people in their custody as the Trump administration has ramped up its use of detention. ProPublica last week revealed that surveillance video showed a 16-year-old boy who died of the flu at a Border Patrol station in South Texas laid unresponsive in his cell for several hours before someone noticed. Carlos is one of six children to have died after being detained by border agents since last December. The complaint obtained by BuzzFeed lists four adults who died in ICE custody in 2017 and 2018. After one person at Eloy was listed as dying of coronary heart disease, a person alleged that was “very misleading” and didn’t account for “the lack of readily available emergency medications” or the mistakes of the facility’s psychiatrist. In another case, a man died in what was ruled a suicide after telling jail staff at Stewart that he “would be dead in three days.” The report did not say how he killed himself.



The main holding area in a tent courtroom in Laredo.
Photo Credit: Ulysses Romero/The Texas Tribune

❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/7748654b0ae920835c778f8013c90839>

❖ To read the whistleblower report go to: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/ice-immigrant-surgeries-deaths-jails-whistleblower-secret> ; <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6575024-ICE-Whistleblower-Report.html>

DHS INSPECTOR GENERAL FINDS ‘NO MISCONDUCT’ IN DEATHS OF TWO GUATEMALAN MIGRANT CHILDREN

By *Robert Moore* – *The Washington Post* – December 20, 2019

❖ Year-long investigations found “no misconduct or malfeasance” by U.S. immigration officials in the deaths of two Guatemalan children who were in U.S. Border Patrol custody last year, according to inspector general reports released Friday, December 20. The Department of Homeland Security’s inspector general released one-page reports in the deaths of Jakelin Caal Maquin, 7, and Felipe Gómez Alonzo, 8. The children are not identified by name in the reports, but the details match their descriptions and the circumstances of their deaths in December 2018. Each report concluded that the “investigation found no misconduct or malfeasance by DHS personnel.” Three other Guatemalan children, ranging in age from 2 to 16, died after being taken into Border Patrol custody in April and May. DHS officials have not released results of internal investigations into those deaths. Jakelin died on Dec. 8, 2018, two days after she and her father entered the United States in a remote part of southwestern New Mexico and were taken into custody. Jakelin died as a result of “sequelae of Streptococcal sepsis,” a massive infection, according to her autopsy. Felipe entered the United States with his father on Dec. 18, 2018, in El Paso. They were moved to a Border Patrol facility in Alamogordo, N.M., about 90 miles north of El Paso, five days later. He was taken to a hospital in Alamogordo, where “hospital staff diagnosed the child with an upper respiratory infection, prescribed amoxicillin and acetaminophen, and discharged the child,” the report said. He was taken back to a Border Patrol facility. Felipe improved briefly but his condition soon worsened, the report said. He was taken back to the Alamogordo hospital, where he died shortly before midnight on Christmas Day.

❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/dhs-inspector-general-finds-no-misconduct-in-deaths-of-two-guatemalan-migrant-children/2019/12/20/505c0814-2387-11ea-a153-dce4b94e4249_story.html

ASYLUM SEEKERS

STEPHEN MILLER PUSHED TO EMBED ICE AGENTS IN REFUGEE AGENCY TO TARGET PARENTS OF UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN FOR DEPORTATION: REPORT

By *Khaleda Rahman* – *NewsWeek* – December 21, 2019

❖ Stephen Miller pushed to embed agents from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at a refugee agency in a bid to target the parents of unaccompanied migrant children for deportation, a new report has revealed. The Washington Post reported that according to six current and former Trump administration officials, the White House sought to plant ICE agents at the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which cares for migrant children who cross the border without a parent as part of the The Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) Program. The plan was not publicly revealed, but according to the newspaper, it was crafted by Miller, a White House senior policy advisor who has been the architect behind some of President Donald Trump's most controversial immigration policies, including the "zero tolerance" policy that separated migrant children from their parents. According to the Post, Miller has long claimed that the ORR is being exploited by parents who hire smugglers to bring their children into the U.S. illegally. Three officials familiar with Miller's plan said it was part of his wider effort to dismantle the barriers between ICE and the refugee program. Senior officials at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which oversees the ORR, ultimately rejected Miller's plan, the Post reported. However, they allowed ICE agents to collect fingerprints and other biometric data from adults attempting to claim custody of migrant children staying at government shelters. According to the Post, if those adults aren't permitted to take custody of the children, their data could be used to target them for arrest and deportation—which appears to go against laws that prohibit the use of refugee programs for deportation enforcement. But officials have insisted that adults who are denied custody of their children lose their status as "sponsors" or "potential sponsors" and are eligible for arrest by ICE agents. ICE and HHS officials say the information shared with immigration enforcement agents would be used to check if the adults had a criminal record or other "red flags," the Post reported. According to HHS spokesman Mark Weber "...with the largest number of UAC referred to ORR for care in the program's history in Fiscal Year 2019, the program and shelter network staff must be recognized for their ability to rapidly expand, care for and unify the largest number of children ever (72,593), all in an incredibly difficult environment." The latest data from the ORR, from October, said approximately 4,200 children were in the care of the government. Unaccompanied migrant children spent an average 57 days in ORR custody, according to data from September this year. That figure was down from a recent high of 93 days in November last year.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.newsweek.com/stephen-miller-pushed-embed-ice-agents-refugee-agency-1478621>

IN CHRISTMAS DAY MESSAGE, POPE FRANCIS SHINES LIGHT ON MIGRANT SUFFERING

By *Laurel Wamsley* – *NPR* – December 25, 2019

❖ In his annual Christmas Day address, Pope Francis offered a message of hope and a call for kindness to migrants around the world. "May the Son of God, come down to earth from heaven, protect and sustain all those who, due to these and other injustices, are forced to emigrate in the hope of a secure life," the pontiff said from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica. "It is injustice that makes them cross deserts and seas that become cemeteries," he said. "It is injustice that turns them away from places where they might have hope for a dignified life, but instead find themselves before walls of indifference." The Christmas speech is titled "Urbi et Orbi": to the city and the world. "May Christ bring his light to the many children suffering from war and conflicts in the Middle East and in various countries of the world". "May he bring comfort to the beloved Syrian people who still see no end to the hostilities that have rent their country over the last decade. Today may he stir the consciences of men and women of good will. May he inspire governments and the international community to find solutions to allow the peoples of that region to live together in peace and security, and put an end to their unspeakable sufferings." The pontiff concluded his message with a call to recognize the suffering around us and act to help those in need. "May he soften our often stony and self-centered hearts, and make them channels of his love," he said. "May he bring his smile, through our poor faces, to all the children of the world: to those who are abandoned and those who suffer violence. Through our frail hands, may he clothe those who have nothing to wear, give bread to the hungry and heal the sick. Through our friendship, such as it is, may he draw close to the elderly and the lonely, to migrants and the marginalized. On this joyful Christmas Day, may he bring his tenderness to all and brighten the darkness of this world."

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.npr.org/2019/12/25/791300471/in-christmas-day-message-pope-francis-shines-light-on-migrant-suffering>



Migrants walk across International Bridge Two into Nuevo Laredo from Laredo.
Photo Credit: Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION WILL BEGIN DEPORTING ASYLUM-SEEKERS FROM MEXICO TO GUATEMALA

By Hamed Aleaziz – BuzzFeed News – January 6, 2020

❖ The Trump administration will now deport Mexican nationals — including families — who come to the U.S. southern border seeking asylum to Guatemala, according to documents obtained by BuzzFeed News. The program, which was signed in July, was implemented in late November. Emailed guidance was sent to asylum officials across the country in recent days detailing how Mexicans were now to be included in the process. The plan was initially only focused in El Paso but was later expanded to the Rio Grande Valley, according to documents seen by BuzzFeed News. "Certain Mexicans seeking humanitarian protections in the United States may now be eligible to be transferred to Guatemala and given the opportunity to seek protection there, under the terms of the Guatemala Asylum Cooperative Agreement," the spokesperson said. As of late December 2019, 43 asylum-seekers from El Salvador and Honduras have been deported to Guatemala under the agreement, according to government data obtained by BuzzFeed News. The plan was initially limited to adult asylum-seekers but was expanded to families on Dec. 10, according to documentation seen by BuzzFeed News. In recent months, the administration has been concerned about an increase of Mexican nationals arrested at the border. In December, Ken Cuccinelli, the second in command at the Department of Homeland Security, said that Mexicans could be sent to Guatemala as part of the agreement. The interviews with asylum officers determine if a person is eligible to be deported to Guatemala. The immigrants are told they will be deported to Guatemala and can obtain protections there, instead of in the U.S. Before this interview with an asylum officer, immigrants have no access to legal counsel — unlike their initial asylum screening, when they first arrive at the U.S. border. The asylum-seeker must explicitly state that they fear persecution or torture in Guatemala in order to have an opportunity to avoid deportation, the email said. They must prove it is "more likely than not" that they will be persecuted or tortured there.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/trump-immigration-deporting-refugees-mexico-guatemala-border>

BRAZILIANS ARRIVE IN WAVES AT THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

By Cedar Attanasio and Philip Marcelo – The Associated Press – December 13, 2019

❖ The quiet migration of around 17,000 Brazilians through a single U.S. city (El Paso, Texas) in the past year reveals a new frontier in the Trump administration's effort to shut down the legal immigration pathway for people claiming fear of persecution. Like hundreds of thousands of families from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, known collectively as the Northern Triangle, Brazilians have been crossing the border here (in El Paso) and applying for asylum. They now make up a quarter of immigrants apprehended in El Paso, the most commonly apprehended migrants after Mexicans. Nationwide, some 18,000 Brazilians were apprehended in the fiscal year ending in October, a 600% increase from the previous high in 2016. Brazilians crossing in the El Paso Sector, which covers southern New Mexico and west Texas, accounted for 95% of the apprehensions nationwide, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. On Monday, December 9, acting CBP chief Mark Morgan vowed to try to shut down asylum for migrants from outside Spanish-speaking Central America and South America. He pledged to implement rules to bar migrants from those countries "with the same level of commitment that we came up with initiatives to address the issue with the Northern Triangle families." Those initiatives included making families wait in often dangerous Mexican border towns for months to apply for asylum, returning them to Mexico to await court hearings and a recent rule that effectively rejects nearly all asylum claims regardless of merit. Brazilian families are not held indefinitely in detention but instead released to Annunciation House, a network of shelters, where they can stay for a few days while they arrange flights to other cities in the U.S. Brazil plunged into its worst-ever recession in 2015 and 2016 and is headed toward its third consecutive year of roughly 1% growth. The economy's persistent failure to gain steam means joblessness has remained stubbornly in the double-digits, with the most recent reading at 11.6%. Adding underemployment, the figure more than doubles to almost one quarter of the work force, or 27 million people. Massachusetts officials and community leaders say they've felt the surge in Brazilian migrants this past year, with more families seeking immigration services and enrolling their children in public school. The state has the second largest population of Brazilians in the U.S. after Florida, according to 2015 U.S. Census data.

❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/06c09bc61c3cbd4432d1dfe751e90914>



Olvin Alexander Buezo, wearing a grey shirt, boards a Monterrey-bound bus at an immigration checkpoint in Nuevo Laredo. Buezo requested asylum in the United States but was returned to Mexico to await his court date.

Photo Credit: Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune

U.S. TO SEND ASYLUM SEEKERS TO HONDURAS, BYPASSING AMERICAN ASYLUM

By Molly Hennessy-Fiske, Molly O'Toole – Los Angeles Times – December 16, 2019

❖ The U.S. is preparing to send asylum seekers to Honduras, even if they are not from the Central American country, and effectively end their chances of seeking asylum in the United States, according to documents obtained by the Los Angeles Times. Under an agreement signed in New York on Sept. 25 by Kevin McAleenan, at the time the secretary of Homeland Security, and Honduras' foreign minister, María Dolores Agüero, adults and families seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border could be sent to Honduras without the chance to seek asylum in the U.S. Earlier in 2019, the administration reached a similar agreement with Guatemala to take asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border, even if they were not Guatemalan. Since the Guatemala agreement took effect on Nov. 22, U.S. officials have forcibly sent a number of Honduran adults to Guatemala, and began sending some Honduran families, according to communications obtained by The Times and several U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials. What's significant about the Honduras agreement is that it is the first to explicitly state that if Honduras or another country rejects the individuals' asylum claims, they won't get another chance to apply in the United States, according to the text. Previously, the administration had suggested that if, say, a Guatemalan were forcibly sent to Honduras and denied asylum there, she might get another chance in the United States. The text of the U.S.-Honduras agreement makes clear that is not the case. The agreements were signed after the Trump administration announced a new rule in July deeming ineligible for protection in the U.S. virtually any migrant who passes through another country before reaching the U.S.-Mexico border and does not seek asylum there first. That rule currently faces legal challenges.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-12-16/us-poised-to-send-asylum-seekers-to-honduras>



A Mexican soldier patrols a makeshift migrant camp at the base of Paso del Norte International Bridge in Ciudad Juárez. Migrants wait close to the port of entry so they don't lose their spots in line to legally cross into the U.S. and seek asylum.
Photo Credit: Ivan Pierre Aguirre/The Texas Tribune

UNDER SECRET STEPHEN MILLER PLAN, ICE TO USE DATA ON MIGRANT CHILDREN TO EXPAND DEPORTATION EFFORTS

By Nick Miroff – The Washington Post – December 20, 2019

❖ The White House sought to embed immigration enforcement agents within the U.S. refugee agency that cares for unaccompanied migrant children, part of a long-standing effort to use information from their parents and relatives to target them for deportation. Though senior officials at the Department of Health and Human Services rejected the attempt, they agreed to allow Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to collect fingerprints and other biometric information from adults seeking to claim migrant children at government shelters. If those adults are deemed ineligible to take custody of children, ICE could then use their information to target them for arrest and deportation. The arrangement appears to circumvent laws that restrict the use of the refugee program for deportation enforcement; Congress has made clear that it does not want those who come forward as potential sponsors of minors in U.S. custody to be frightened away by possible deportation. The plan has not been announced publicly. It was developed by Stephen Miller, President Trump's top immigration adviser, who has long argued that HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement is being exploited by parents who hire smugglers to bring their children into the United States illegally. The agency manages shelters that care for underage migrants who cross the border without a parent and tries to identify sponsors — typically family members — eligible to take custody of the minors. Bryan Cox, an ICE spokesman, said his agency will help HHS ensure that children are not placed with sponsors until the sponsors have been thoroughly vetted, a review process that includes using biometric data. Arrests on the U.S. side of the border with Mexico have fallen more than 70 percent since May, when 144,116 migrants were taken into custody amid a record influx of families and children from Central America. Since the beginning of the year, border officials have sent more than 53,000 migrants back to Mexico to wait outside U.S. territory while their asylum claims are processed. The government also has started sending asylum seekers to Guatemala under the terms of one of several new agreements that will allow Homeland Security officials to send those seeking refuge in the United States to the same crime-plagued region they are fleeing. The number of unaccompanied minors taken into custody increased 17 percent from October to November, to 3,321, while two other significant demographic categories — family groups and single adults — continued to show declines, the latest enforcement figures show.

❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/under-secret-stephen-miller-plan-ice-to-use-data-on-migrant-children-to-expand-deportation-efforts/2019/12/20/36975b34-22a8-11ea-bed5-880264cc91a9_story.html

THE OVERLOOKED UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS: FROM INDIA, CHINA, BRAZIL

By Miriam Jordan – *The New York Times* – December 1, 2019

❖ Nearly half of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants now in the country did not trek through the desert or wade across the Rio Grande to enter the country; they flew in with a visa, passed inspection at the airport — and stayed. Of the roughly 3.5 million undocumented immigrants who entered the country between 2010 and 2017, 65 percent arrived with full permission stamped into their passports, according to new figures compiled by the Center for Migration Studies, a nonpartisan think tank. During that period, more overstayers arrived from India than from any other country. “A big overlooked immigration story is that twice as many people came in with a visa than came across the border illegally in recent years,” said Robert Warren, the demographer who calculated overstay estimates by using the Census Bureau’s annual American Community Survey and shared those figures with *The New York Times*. Overstayers represent about 46 percent of the 10.7 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, according to the migration center’s data. The largest number of overstayers — about 1 million — hail from Mexico, a neighboring country with a long history of commercial and family ties and substantial flows of people across the border. Between 2010 and 2017, 330,000 Indians overstayed their visas, more than from any other country. Large numbers of people from China, Venezuela, the Philippines, Brazil and Colombia also overstayed. The government reported that nearly 670,000 travelers who arrived by air or sea and were supposed to depart in the 2018 fiscal year had not left by Sept. 30, 2018. That number had dropped to nearly 415,700 by March 2019, because many people overstay by just a few months. But developing policies to curb overstays requires accurate data, experts say, and Homeland Security officials still lack a reliable system to track them.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/01/us/undocumented-visa-overstays.html>

TRUMP GAVE STATES POWER TO ADMIT REFUGEES. AS OTHER GOP GOVERNORS SIGN ON, ABBOTT IS SILENT.

By Lomi Kriel – *Houston Chronicle* – December 26, 2019

❖ For years, more refugees have resettled in Houston and Texas than any other city or state in the country. Now that may end. Under a new requirement imposed by President Donald Trump’s administration, state and local governments must consent in writing before refugees can arrive next year. At least 34 governors, including 13 Republicans, and 86 county and city executives have given their approval. Mayors and county leaders of all Texas’ biggest cities —including Houston, San Antonio, Dallas and Austin — sent letters opting in. But Gov. Greg Abbott, who has lead efforts to block Syrian refugees and withdrew from the federal resettlement program in a largely symbolic move in 2016, has not. If he does not agree, no refugees could be placed in the state, despite what local authorities may want. This 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. The drastic cuts this year forced the closure of more than 51 resettlement programs and 41 offices suspended refugee services across the nation. The State Department has told resettlement organizations that it will not renew contracts in 2020. A State Department spokesperson said in an email that decisions on resettlement funding will be based on proposals the agencies submit and the overall need. About 2,500 refugees were resettled in Texas in the 2019 fiscal year, a 70 percent decrease from the 7,800 admitted during the last year of President Barack Obama’s administration in 2016. Fewer still are expected this year —even if Abbott consents.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Trump-gave-states-power-to-admit-refugees-As-14932174.php>

CONGOLESE WOMAN, 41, DIES AFTER ENTERING U.S. BORDER CUSTODY

By Nomaan Merchant – *The Associated Press* – December 27, 2019

❖ A 41-year-old Congolese asylum seeker died Wednesday (Dec. 25) in U.S. government custody shortly after she entered a border station in South Texas, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said Thursday (Dec. 26). CBP says the woman, who the agency did not identify, had arrived at an official port of entry in Laredo, Texas, early Tuesday (Dec. 24) afternoon. The woman came with paperwork that documented a “previous medical condition,” CBP said. According to information CBP gave members of Congress, the woman was diagnosed at the hospital with acute kidney failure.

❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/78270361fdd9b6ecd75316defa9e5a42>



The camp near the Gateway International Bridge, which connects Matamoros and Brownsville, began forming last year. Media reports say Mexican officials plan to move the migrants to a stadium farther from the river.

Photo Credit: Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune

BORDER WALL

TRUMP HAS BUILT NEARLY 100 MILES OF BORDER WALL BY END OF 2019, WITH 350 MILES TO GO IN 2020

By Chantal Da Silva – NewsWeek – December 31, 2019

❖ Over the course of the year, the president has vowed to see at least 450 miles of the border barrier completed before the end of 2020. In a border wall status report provided to Newsweek, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency said that as of December 27th, the Trump administration had overseen the construction of 98 miles of "new border wall system." Those 98 miles have all been constructed "in place of dilapidated and outdated designs," however, the Trump administration technically speaking has yet to build a single mile of brand new border wall. CBP has said that construction on brand new barriers is currently underway. However, crews will still need to see a total of 352 miles built before the end of 2020. The Trump campaign team said that it was still confident that the president would reach his goal of overseeing the construction of 450 miles of border barrier before 2020's end. It added, there are already 140 miles currently under construction, with plans for further development to get underway.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-border-wall-u-s-mexico-2020-goal-1479821>



U.S.-Mexico border wall construction near Ciudad Juarez in May 2019.
Photo Credit: Herika Martínez/AFP/Getty Images

U.S. HEADS TO COURT TO BUILD TRUMP BORDER WALL IN TEXAS

By Nomaan Merchant – The Associated Press – December 21, 2019

❖ Three years into Donald Trump's presidency, the U.S. government is ramping up its efforts to seize private land in Texas to build a border wall. Trump's signature campaign promise has consistently faced political, legal, and environmental obstacles in Texas, which has the largest section of the U.S.-Mexico border, most of it without fencing. And much of the land along the Rio Grande, the river that forms the border in Texas, is privately held and environmentally sensitive. Almost no land has been taken so far. But Department of Justice lawyers have filed three lawsuits this month seeking to take property from landowners. On Tuesday (Dec. 17), lawyers moved to seize land in one case immediately before a scheduled court hearing in February. The agency says it's ready to file many more petitions to take private land in the coming weeks. While progress has lagged, the process of taking land under eminent domain is weighted heavily in the government's favor. The U.S. government has built about 90 miles (145 kilometers) of walls since Trump took office, almost all of it replacing old fencing. Reaching Trump's oft-stated goal of 500 miles (800 kilometers) by the end of 2020 will almost certainly require stepping up progress in Texas. Opponents have lobbied Congress to limit funding and prevent construction in areas like the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, an important sanctuary for several endangered species of jaguars, birds, and other animals, as well as the nonprofit National Butterfly Center and a historic Catholic chapel. They have also filed several lawsuits. A federal judge prevented the government from building with money redirected to the wall under Trump's declaration of a national emergency. Also, two judges recently ordered a private, pro-Trump fundraising group to stop building its own wall near the Rio Grande. Even on land the government owns, construction has been held up. In another federal wildlife refuge, at a site known as La Parida Banco, work crews cleared brush this spring and the government announced in April that construction would soon begin. Eight months later, the site remains empty. According to a U.S. official familiar with the project, work crews discovered that the land was too saturated. The planned metal bollards installed on top of concrete panels would have been unstable because of the water levels in the soil, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the person did not have authorization to share the information publicly. In a statement, CBP says it continues to need a border wall for "the enduring capability it creates to impede and/or deny attempted illegal entries while creating additional time to carry out successful law enforcement resolutions." The agency says it plans by the end of 2020 to have 450 miles (724 kilometers) of walls built and another 59 miles (95 kilometers) under construction, "pending availability of real estate." The Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution requires the government pay "just compensation" to anyone whose land is taken for public use. But the government can deposit an amount it deems fair with the court, then seek to take the land immediately on the basis that a border wall is urgently needed. Even as border crossings have plummeted from record highs for families earlier this year, Justice Department attorneys argue the government needs to take land as quickly as possible. In the case of the land targeted on Tuesday (Dec. 17), the government has deposited \$93,449 with the court for 12.6 acres (5 hectares). U.S. District Judge Micaela Alvarez has not yet ruled on the motion.

❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/082c873c8b32972217caa1eebf167ab9>

PENTAGON WATCHDOG INVESTIGATING \$400M BORDER WALL CONTRACT

By Colleen Long – The Associated Press – December 12, 2019

- ❖ The Defense Department's internal watchdog is investigating a \$400 million border wall contract awarded to a firm that used multiple appearances on Fox News to push for the job. The Pentagon's inspector general sent a letter Thursday (Dec. 9) to House Homeland Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson telling him the contract awarded to North Dakota-based firm Fisher Sand and Gravel Co. would be audited. Thompson, D-Miss., asked for the review last week, in part over concerns the proposals did not meet operational requirements and prototypes came in late and over budget. Tommy Fisher, the head of the family business, said Thursday (Dec. 9) there would be "nothing to find" in an audit. "We were told we were the lowest price and the best value," he said. "We look forward to working with the Army Corps of Engineers." The border wall is one of Trump's top priorities. He campaigned on a promise to build a "big beautiful wall" between the U.S. and Mexico," said Mexico would pay for it, and promised to build 450 to 500 miles by the end of 2020. Mexico is not paying for the wall and, as of Nov. 1, Trump had built 78 miles. Trump's effort to push through funding, using money from the Pentagon after Congress refused to fund the wall has been met with resistance and lawsuits. A federal judge this week blocked the administration from spending some Defense Department money on the the barrier — the money includes the contract for Fisher. The company was awarded a contract Dec. 2 to build 31 miles of wall in Arizona, part of a series of contracts to push out increased mileage. Fisher had made a number of appearances on Trump's favorite cable news channel — Fox News — talking about his desire to win a contract. His firm, though, has little experience with such construction and a previous proposal was rejected. Fisher said his company could do the work for \$13 million a mile. He said the next closest bid was \$20 million a mile.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/d2474701743e9cc9f7fda888b5371e9>



Women share a room at El Buen Pastor shelter in Juárez.
Photo Credit: Ivan Pierre Aguirre/The Texas Tribune

MIGRANTS IN MEXICO

'I'M KIDNAPPED': A FATHER'S NIGHTMARE ON THE BORDER

By Miriam Jordan – The New York Times – December 21, 2019

- ❖ A 28-year-old migrant from Honduras, whose name is José, had been walking with his son down a street in Reynosa, Mexico, having been turned back at the border by the United States. Suddenly three men grabbed him, shoved a hood over his head and thrust him and his son into a vehicle. The abduction on Nov. 25 set off hours of intense negotiations as José's wife in the United States, forced to listen to the sounds of her husband being tortured, tearfully negotiated a ransom over the phone. In a series of phone conversations, and in several voice messages reviewed by The New York Times, the wife, a woman named Cindy who works at a bakery in Elizabeth, N.J., promised to get the \$3,000 the kidnappers were demanding. Cindy managed to transfer the money. José's abductors stripped the tape from his eyes and put the hood back over his head. They dropped him and his son at the Reynosa bus station, warning that if he notified the police, "You're both dead. We have pictures of you." With no phone and no money, José said, he staggered across the bridge that leads to the United States to seek out Border Patrol agents. He pleaded to stay in the United States. He said the agents took him to an office, where he remembers that they photographed his wounds and gave him a tranquilizer before sending them to spend the night at a holding facility. The next day, José was escorted to a room where, over the phone, he expressed fear of returning to Mexico to an asylum officer. About 40 minutes later, an immigration official told José that they would have to go back to Mexico. He handed him a document that said that José "did not establish a clear probability of persecution or torture in Mexico." Hundreds of thousands of people fled Central America over the past year, many of them seeking asylum in the United States from threats of extortion, murder and forced recruitment into gangs. But instead of allowing them to enter, the Trump administration has forced more than 55,000 asylum seekers to wait for months in lawless Mexican border towns like Reynosa while it considers their requests for protection, according to Mexican officials and those who study the border. Drug-related violence has long plagued these areas but this bottleneck of migrants is new — and because many asylum seekers have relatives in the United States, criminal cartels have begun kidnapping them and demanding ransoms, sometimes subjecting them to violence as bad or worse than what they fled. There have been 636 documented cases of violent attacks, including abduction and rape, against migrants who were returned to Mexico by United States authorities since the Remain in Mexico (RIM) policy began in January, with 293 attacks in the last month alone, according to Human Rights First.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/21/us/border-migrants-kidnapping-mexico.html>

DEVELPING STORIES

FRANCISCO GALICIA, DALLAS-BORN TEEN HELD BY BORDER PATROL, ICE, GETS HIS U.S. PASSPORT

By Obed Manuel – Dallas News – December 20, 2019

❖ Francisco Erwin Galicia, the Dallas-born teen who was held for nearly a month by the U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, is one major step closer to having his U.S. citizenship fully recognized by the U.S. government. Galicia, whose story made national headlines and who is still technically facing ICE deportation proceedings, received his U.S. passport from the State Department by mail on Thursday, December 19, just days before his 19th birthday. Galicia and his attorney, Claudia Galan, filed an application for the passport back in

November. Galan said she filed a collection of documents, including both a copy of his U.S. birth certificate and a later copy of a Mexican birth certificate, letters of support and photos, as proof that he was born in Dallas in December 2000. His mother, Sanjuana Galicia, has said she filed for the Mexican birth certificate in 2003 after Mexican school officials told her that Francisco

needed proof of Mexican citizenship in order to attend school. The Dallas-born 18-year-old high school senior who spent nearly a month in the custody of U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement learned last week that an immigration court in Harlingen, TX has ordered him to appear in August 2020. His Dallas birth certificate was registered in early 2001 by the City of Dallas' Vital Statistics Division. He was born at Parkland Memorial Hospital. Galan said the issuance of the passport is a clear signal that the U.S. government is recognizing his citizenship, even as he faces pending deportation proceedings. She learned in October that he's been scheduled for an immigration court date in Harlingen in August 2020. She added that her immediate next step is to file a motion in immigration court to terminate the proceedings against Galicia. Galicia was detained June 27 at a Border Patrol checkpoint in Falfurrias, TX, about 75 miles north of McAllen in the Rio Grande Valley. He was traveling to Ranger College in North Texas with his younger brother, Marlon Galicia, and three other friends for a soccer scouting event. Border Patrol agents pulled the car aside for inspection and discovered that Marlon and another one of the passengers were in the country without authorization. Galicia told agents that he is a U.S. citizen and presented them with a Texas ID, a Social Security card and a wallet-sized copy of his birth certificate, but he said agents doubted his claim and the validity of his documents. Agents fingerprinted Galicia and discovered a visitor's visa that his mother had requested for him when he was a minor. For the more than three weeks he was in Border Patrol custody, Galicia said he was forced to sleep in a crowded cell with about 60 other men and wasn't allowed to shower. He also said that he wasn't allowed to make any phone calls and that conditions were so bad he almost opted to self-deport just to get out. A Border Patrol chief confirmed at a July 25 House Judiciary Oversight Committee hearing that the visa confusion was indeed why Galicia was initially detained, but did not explain why his detention lasted 23 days.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/immigration/2019/12/20/francisco-galicia-dallas-born-teen-held-by-border-patrol-ice-receives-us-passport/>



Vanessa Ramos Chavez rested in a tent at Senda de Vida migrant shelter in Reynosa, Mexico. She said she arrived at the shelter from El Salvador more than a month ago with her infant son.

Photo Credit: Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune