

NEWS ARTICLES ON KEY ISSUES - JANUARY 20, 2021

LATEST NEWS

Number Of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases Among ICE Staff And Detained Immigrants

By U.S. Immigration And Customs Enforcement – January 13, 2021

- ❖ As of **January 8, 2021**, the total detained population is: **15,415**. There have been **536 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among those in ICE custody as of January 11, 2021**. To date, there have been **82,585 total detainees tested**.
- ❖ Data Source: <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus>

Trump Rushes To Enact Asylum Restrictions Ahead Of Biden Presidency

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – January 11, 2021

- ❖ As part of an 11th hour blitz of regulations, the outgoing administration has finalized several asylum restrictions that are set to take effect shortly before or after President-elect Joe Biden takes the oath of office in nine days. The rules represent President Trump's last major effort to reshape the U.S. asylum system. One set of rules, which was slated to take effect Monday [Jan. 11] until a federal court blocked it, would erect restrictions throughout the asylum process and generally disqualify victims of gender-based persecution, domestic abuse and gang violence from U.S. refuge. Another rule set to take effect a day before Inauguration Day would revive a policy struck down in court last summer that bars non-Mexican migrants, including unaccompanied children, from applying for U.S. asylum at the southern border. A third regulation, set to take effect two days after Mr. Biden is sworn in, would allow officials to render asylum-seekers ineligible for U.S. protection if they are determined to exhibit symptoms of a contagious disease, like COVID-19, or if they have hailed from or traveled through countries where a disease is "prevalent or epidemic."
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-asylum-restrictions-biden-presidency/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>



Honduran migrant waits with daughter on at El Chaparra border crossing in Tijuana, Mexico.

Photo Credit: Rodrigo Abd / Associated Press

Trump To Visit U.S.-Mexico Border Tuesday

By Nathaniel Puente – Nexstar Media Wire, and The Associated Press – January 10, 2021

- ❖ President Donald Trump is scheduled to visit the Rio Grande Valley on the border of Texas and Mexico on Tuesday [Jan. 12] to highlight his administration's work on the border wall, the White House said Saturday [Dec. 9]. Trump will travel to the town of Alamo, Texas. He will mark the completion of 400 miles of the border wall and his administration's efforts to reform what the White House described as the nation's broken immigration system. Sources tell KVEO that Trump will land in Harlingen, Texas on Tuesday [Jan. 12] at an unconfirmed time and then take a helicopter to McAllen, Texas. While most of the wall went up in areas that had smaller barriers, the government has built hundreds of miles of fencing as high as 30 feet (9 meters) in a short amount of time — most of it this year.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.abc27.com/news/trump-to-visit-u-s-mexico-border-tuesday/>

DHS Publishes Final Rule To End H-1B Visa Lottery

By Stuart Anderson – Forbes – January 8, 2021

- ❖ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has published its controversial regulation to end the H-1B visa lottery as a "final rule," leaving it to the Biden administration or a lawsuit to stop a significant change in U.S. immigration policy. The rule, published January 8, 2021, goes into effect in 60 days. The regulation would authorize U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to end the H-1B lottery and instead grant petitions based on registrations starting with the highest salary level and working down. Attorneys and businesses argue the regulation violates the statute and makes it difficult to obtain new H-1B petitions for younger workers, particularly international students and information technology professionals.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2021/01/08/dhs-publishes-final-rule-to-end-h-1b-visa-lottery/?sh=6a7f9b2e4af0>
- ❖ To read the proposed rule, go to: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/08/2021-00183/modification-of-registration-requirement-for-petitioners-seeking-to-file-cap-subject-h-1b-petitions>

President Trump Extends Immigrant And Work Visa Limits Into Biden Presidency

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – January 1, 2021

- ❖ President Trump on Thursday [Dec. 31] extended a pandemic-era suspension of certain immigrant and work visas, ensuring that his sweeping limits on legal immigration will remain in place when Joe Biden is sworn in. Through a proclamation issued 20 days before Inauguration Day, Mr. Trump ordered a three-month extension of the visa restrictions, which were first enacted in April as a ban on some prospective immigrants and expanded in June to also halt several temporary work programs. Mr. Trump's proclamation prohibits the issuance of certain immigrant visas to people abroad who seek to move to the U.S. permanently through green card petitions filed by their U.S. family members or prospective employers. Spouses and children 21 or younger of U.S. citizens are not subject to the restrictions, which also exempt some healthcare workers who intend to combat the coronavirus and immigrant investors who agree to invest more than \$1 million in the U.S. Mr. Trump's order also continues the suspension of the diversity visa lottery, a program that allows people from underrepresented countries, many of them in Africa, to move to the U.S. In September, a federal judge in Washington, D.C. ordered the government to issue visas to more than 9,000 would-be immigrants who won the lottery in 2020, but they remain barred from entering the U.S. under the proclamation. The restrictions also halt several temporary visas used by people abroad to work in the U.S., including the H-1B program that is popular in the tech sector and H-2B visas for non-agricultural seasonal workers. Cultural exchange J-1 visas for au pairs and other short-term workers; visas for spouses of H-1B and H-2B holders; and L visas for companies to relocate employees to the U.S. will continue to be suspended as well.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-immigrant-work-visa-limits-extended-biden-presidency/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>

ICE Arrests And Deportations Dropped Sharply In 2020, Largely Due To The Pandemic

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – December 23, 2020

- ❖ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in 2020 arrested and deported fewer immigrants, and the number of deportations hit a 15-year low, largely as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, according to agency data released Wednesday [Dec. 23]. In fiscal year 2020, ICE said it carried out more than 185,000 deportations, significantly fewer than the 226,000 immigrants deported in 2017. The last time ICE deportations were lower was in 2005, when 180,000 deportations were carried out, according to figures provided by the agency. ICE also conducted 103,000 immigration arrests this past fiscal year, including nearly 24,000 during "at large" operations, which take place in communities, as opposed to transfers from local law enforcement. In fiscal year 2019, the agency arrested 143,000 immigrants, including 35,000 during at-large sweeps. The numbers published on Wednesday [Dec. 23] show that more than 935,000 immigrants were deported during the four fiscal years of the Trump administration, which lifted Obama-era limits on who ICE could arrest and deport. During the first four years of President Obama's tenure, ICE reported more than 1.5 million deportations — including 409,000 in 2012, a record high. The number of immigrants currently being held at the agency's network of for-profit detention facilities and county jails — which form the largest immigration detention system in the world — has also plummeted during the pandemic, decreasing from more than 37,000 in mid-March to 16,000 as of earlier this month [Dec.]. About 123,000 of the migrants deported by ICE this past year were apprehended by U.S. border officials, while the remaining, nearly 63,000, were removed from the interior of the country. Those deported included nearly 15,000 members of migrant families.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ice-arrests-deportations-dropped-2020-covid-pandemic/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Citing The Pandemic, CBP Has Expelled Newborn U.S. Citizens With Their Migrant Mothers

By Felipe De La Hoz – The Intercept – January 2, 2021

- ❖ U.S. Customs and Border Protection has used a controversial Centers for Disease Control and Prevention order authorizing the expulsion of asylum-seekers on supposed public health grounds to send multiple U.S.-born infants — who are by law U.S. citizens — and their migrant families across the southern border to Mexico. In interviews with The Intercept, three asylum-seeking mothers who crossed the border while pregnant described giving birth in U.S. hospitals, only to be swiftly sent back under false pretenses and without an evaluation of their particular humanitarian circumstances or claims of danger. Between mid-March and mid-October, over 204,000 expulsions took place, with only a tiny fraction of people exempted under humanitarian categories. Migrants are either sent across the border to Mexico or on flights to their countries of origin, including minors with their families and unaccompanied minors, prior to the federal injunction.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://theintercept.com/2021/01/02/asylum-seekers-children-expulsion-pandemic/>

Immigrant Families Are Being Deported Without Their Asylum Claims Heard Lawfully, Advocates Say

By Adolfo Flores – BuzzFeed News – December 21, 2020

- ❖ Federal immigration officials on Friday [Dec. 18] were preparing to deport a group of immigrant children and their parents who advocates said were unlawfully denied the opportunity to seek asylum. The families, who have been detained by ICE for more than a year, were subjected to administration policies that have since been blocked by federal courts. Attorneys and advocates want these immigrants to go through a new process, without these policies being applied to them. The children and their parents had been shielded from deportation by a temporary stay of removal from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, but the court vacated it on Monday [Dec. 21]. On Friday [Dec. 18], six families from Guatemala and six families from El Salvador were taken to separate airports to be deported by ICE, said Shalyn Fluharty, an attorney with Proyecto Dilley, which offers legal services to detained families. Some of the families were pulled from the plane at the last minute while asylum officers reviewed their claims, but at least one family was deported. One of the policies the families were subjected to was the asylum transit ban, which required immigrants to first seek protection in another country through which they traveled before asking for refuge in the U.S. Under the transit ban policy, those who crossed through a third country, such as Mexico or Guatemala, before arriving at the U.S. southern border were denied asylum during their credible fear interviews, an initial step in the asylum process. After being denied the chance to be screened for asylum, these children and their families were subjected to expedited removal, which allows the government to deport undocumented immigrants without a hearing in front of an immigration judge.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/immigrants-deported-without-asylum-heard-properly>



*Clothing hangs to dry at a makeshift migrant camp for asylum seekers in Matamoros, Tamaulipas state, Mexico.
Photo Credit: Alejandro Cegarra / Bloomberg via Getty Images*

MIGRANTS IN MEXICO

Remain In Mexico Policy Needlessly Exposed Migrants To Harm, Report Says

By Tom Phillips – The Guardian – January 6, 2021

- ❖ The initiative – which is officially called the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) - stipulated that asylum seekers would have to await their court hearings in Mexican border towns such as Ciudad Juárez, Mexicali and Matamoros, and not in the U.S. as before. In a report published on Wednesday [Jan. 6], Human Rights Watch described how [this] policy “needlessly and foreseeably exposed [asylum seekers] to considerable risk of serious harm”. The group said those interviewed for its report, including children, “described rape or attempted rape and other sexual assault, abduction for ransom, extortion, armed robbery, and other crimes committed against them”. “In some cases, Mexican immigration officers or police committed these crimes,” the group added.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/06/remain-in-mexico-migrants-trump-biden-human-rights-watch>
- ❖ To read the report published by Human Rights Watch, go to: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/01/06/im-drowning/children-and-families-sent-harm-us-remain-mexico-program>

In Mexico, Shuttered Shelters Hit Migrants As Pandemic Rages

By Laura Gottesdiener and Lizbeth Diaz – Reuters – January 4, 2021

- ❖ Dozens of migrant refuges in Mexico have closed their doors or scaled back operations in recent weeks to curb the ravages of coronavirus, exposing people to greater peril just as migration from Central America to the United States is on the rise again. Reuters spoke to people responsible for over 40 shelters that had offered refuge to thousands on a route where illegal immigrants often face assaults, robberies and kidnappings - before the pandemic forced them to shut or limit capacity. A network of privately funded shelters provides food, legal and medical aid to tens of thousands of migrants traversing Mexico each year. Run by non-governmental agencies or religious organizations, they are subject to government rules, including health laws that have forced some to close in the pandemic. Estimates vary over how many refuges there are, but a 2020 study by bank BBVA Bancomer identified 96 shelters, rest houses and canteens for migrants on Mexico’s main migration routes.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-mexico-coronavirus-idUSKBN2991CX>

Frustration, Rumors Lead Migrants To Attempt Mass Crossing Into The U.S.

By Julian Resendiz – Border Report – December 30, 2020

- ❖ A rumor that U.S. authorities had changed their policy toward asylum seekers prompted a large group of migrants to occupy a border crossing Tuesday [Dec. 29] night, forcing Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to shut it down for eight hours. Trouble started brewing around 8:30 p.m. Tuesday [Dec. 29], when Cuban migrants rushed past the Mexican toll-collection booths at the Paso del Norte Bridge linking Downtown Juarez to Downtown El Paso. CBP closed the U.S. vehicle and pedestrian accesses, but more migrants continued to arrive at the border crossing. At one point, 250 to 300 people gathered in the middle of the bridge over the Rio Grande. The lobbying efforts and the cold weather succeeded in dwindling the crowd overnight. Only a couple of dozen remained. At 4:30 a.m., CBP began allowing some U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to walk back from Mexico and the crossing was fully reopened around 6 a.m. or 6:30 a.m. Mexican officials said the occupation was neither violent nor orchestrated.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.borderreport.com/hot-topics/immigration/frustration-rumors-lead-migrants-to-attempt-mass-crossing-into-the-u-s/>

DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA)

First New DACA Applications Approved In Final Weeks Of 2020

By Larry Neumeister and Nomann Merchant – Associated Press – January 4, 2021

- ❖ Over 170 new applicants have become the first individuals in several years to win approval to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program for immigrants brought to the U.S. as young people, the U.S. government revealed in a court filing Monday [Jan. 4]. A report submitted by the Department of Homeland Security to Brooklyn federal court showed 171 new applications were approved from Nov. 14 through the end of 2020 while 121 applications were denied and another 369 were rejected. In all, 2,713 initial applications were submitted.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-new-york-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-program-immigration-brooklyn-722e78261979f6489ff8074ee0071de6>

DETENTION CENTERS

Court Blocks Administration Bid To Detain Migrant Families Indefinitely

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – December 30, 2020

- ❖ A federal appeals court on Tuesday [Dec. 29] blocked a set of rules that would allow the U.S. government to hold migrant parents and children in detention indefinitely and said the administration could not use them to terminate a landmark legal settlement. The San Francisco-based 9th Circuit Court of Appeals said the administration could not discard the Flores Settlement Agreement, a consent decree with protections for minors in immigration custody that the U.S. government agreed to comply with in 1997. The agreement requires border officials to hold migrant minors in safe and sanitary facilities before transferring them to programs licensed by state agencies to house children while the government seeks to release them to family members or other sponsors in the U.S.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/migrant-families-long-term-detention-lawsuit-blocked-flores-agreement/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>

COURT RULINGS

U.S. Judge Blocks Administration's Sweeping Asylum Rules

By The Associated Press – January 8, 2021

- ❖ A U.S. judge on Friday [Jan. 8] blocked the administration's most sweeping set of asylum restrictions less than two weeks before President-elect Joe Biden takes office. The rules had been set to take effect Monday [Jan 11]. The court order has limited immediate impact because the government has largely suspended asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border during the coronavirus pandemic, citing public health concerns. U.S. District Judge James Donato in San Francisco sided with advocacy groups who sued, saying acting Homeland Security secretary Chad Wolf lacked authority to impose the sweeping rules. The rules would narrow the types of persecution and severity of threats for which asylum is granted. Applicants seeking protections on the basis of gender or those who claim they were targeted by gangs, "rogue" government officials or "non-state organizations" would likely not be eligible for asylum. Immigration judges would be directed to be more selective about granting asylum claims and allow them to deny most applications without a court hearing. They also would have weighed several new factors against an applicant's ability to win protections, among them failure to pay taxes. Criminal records would still count against an asylum-seeker even if their convictions were expunged. Also Friday [Jan. 8], the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, ruled against the administration's policy that gave state and local governments the right to refuse to resettle refugees.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/u-s-judge-blocks-trump-administration-s-sweeping-asylum-rules-n1253620>

Miami Immigration Court Ruling Could Mean Green Cards For Large Number Of Cubans

By Monique O. Madan - Miami Herald – January 7, 2021

- ❖ In a surprising court decision, a Miami immigration judge ruled that any immigrant released from detention by the Department of Homeland Security without a deportation order has been paroled as a matter of law. Monday's [Jan. 4] immigration court ruling, which is not publicly available but was obtained by the Miami Herald, could particularly impact Cubans who immigrated to the U.S. since January 2017. That's when the 20-year-old "wet foot, dry foot" policy allowing most Cubans who reach U.S. soil to stay and become legal permanent residents was canceled. Historically, Cubans detained by DHS after entering the U.S. at a port of entry were released and given a Form I-94, also known as a "parole card." That parole card would then serve to apply for a green card. But when "wet foot, dry foot" ended, those protections stopped. Instead, Cubans were detained, released and not given parole cards — stripping them of the opportunity to apply for residency. The new ruling upends that, potentially allowing thousands of Cubans to seek legal status in the country. But so far, it is not binding, meaning it can't be enforced beyond the handful of cases directly under consideration in the decision. Nonetheless, Judge Timothy Cole certified the case to the Board of Immigration Appeals — the highest administrative body for interpreting and applying immigration laws — for further reconsideration. If the BIA agrees with Cole, the decision could become national in scope.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article248321130.html>

BORDER WALL

Fact Check: Mexico Never Paid For It. But What About Trump's Other Border Wall Promises?

By Jane C. Timm – NBC News – January 12, 2021

- ❖ Here's what Trump promised, and what Trump delivered.
 - Promise: 1,000 miles of wall. Status: Not kept. On Tuesday [Jan. 12], the president falsely claimed he'd promised — and delivered — 450 miles of border wall. In fact, that amounts to less than half of his initial promise. And just 47 miles of the 450 miles amounts new structures where none existed before. A Customs and Border Protection spokesman told NBC News that the administration has built 453 miles of new "border wall system," which includes barriers as well as patrol roads for patrol cars and other surveillance efforts. The vast majority of it replaces pedestrian and vehicle barriers erected during previous administrations with much taller steel bollard fencing. President Barack Obama left office with 654 miles of border fencing in existence, according to a Government Accountability Office report from early 2017; Trump will leave with 701 miles of border fencing, according to CBP. Trump on Tuesday [Jan. 12] claimed that another 300 miles are in the works. According to CBP, 285 miles are under construction or in the pre-construction phase. President-elect Joe Biden said during his campaign that he intended to stop border wall construction.
 - Promise: The wall would cost \$8-\$12 billion, and Mexico would pay for it. Status: \$15 billion, and U.S. taxpayers paid for it. Mexico did not pay for the wall; its leaders have refused since Trump first made his promise. After Trump's inauguration, the president began suggesting that the U.S. would initially pay, but that Mexico would reimburse the U.S. for the wall. That has also not happened. Taxpayers foot the bill for Trump's wall.
 - Promise: The wall will be 'big, beautiful' and 'concrete' Status: Not exactly. The Trump administration has continued to use steel bollard fencing designs for border barriers, just like the Obama administration.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/fact-check-mexico-never-paid-it-what-about-trump-s-n1253983>

Administration Locks Down Border Wall Contracts, Complicating Biden's Pledge To Stop Construction

By Priscilla Alvarez – CNN – January 5, 2021

- ❖ The administration is continuing to award border wall contracts in the waning days of Donald Trump's presidency, including in areas where private land hasn't yet been acquired, an unusual move that will complicate President-elect Joe Biden's pledge to halt construction. Asked by CNN Tuesday [Jan. 5] whether there are plans to continue to finalize contracts, even in areas where the real estate is not owned by the federal government, acting Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Mark Morgan responded "yes." "We believe that probably by January 17,18,19, we will have well over 700 miles of that 800 funded...The contract will have already been awarded," Morgan said. "The major milestone is having a contract awarded." Striking a contract before privately-owned land -- which makes up a considerable portion of the Rio Grande Valley -- has been acquired by the government is outside of the usual process for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which provides direction and oversight of border projects, according to Charles Tiefer, a government contracting law professor at the University of Baltimore. Attempts to halt construction completely, as Biden promised, will prove difficult, particularly if contracts continue to be struck -- a challenge Morgan acknowledged Tuesday [Jan. 5]. "They could terminate those contracts if they want to, but that's going to be a very lengthy, messy process," Morgan said. "We're going to have to go into settlement agreements with each individual contractor," Morgan added, noting, that payments will have to be made for what they've already done, as well as for materials produced.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/05/politics/border-wall-trump/index.html>

DEVELOPING STORIES

Joe Biden To Pause Border Wall Construction, Issue Protections For DACA Recipients And Roll Back Other Trump Immigration Policies

By Julián Aguilar – *The Texas Tribune* – January 20, 2021

- ❖ On the same afternoon he's sworn in as the nation's 46th president, Joe Biden will take multiple executive actions that will undo several of former President Trump's immigration policies, his transition team announced Wednesday. The list of orders includes reissuing protections established under the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, halting further construction of a border barrier and rolling back interior immigration enforcement priorities put in place by the previous administration. The actions come the same day Biden will reportedly send to Congress a comprehensive immigration bill that, if passed, could provide a legal path to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants, including more than a 1.7 million in Texas. The day-one order on DACA will instruct the homeland security secretary and attorney general to preserve the program, which as of June included about 645,000 beneficiaries, including about 106,400 in Texas, according to federal government statistics. Trump announced an end to DACA in 2017, but the program has endured after series of court challenges, including a 2020 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that ruled the administration did not act properly in its order to end the policy. But the Biden administration will also face a lawsuit from Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who filed a separate challenge that questions the legality of the program.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/01/20/joe-biden-trump-immigration/>

Large Migrant Caravan Dissolves In Guatemala

By Oliver De Ros and Santiago Billy – *Associated Press* – January 19, 2021

- ❖ A once large caravan of Honduran migrants that pushed its way into Guatemala last week had dissipated by Tuesday in the face of Guatemalan security forces. Small groups pressed on toward the Mexican border, while others accepted rides from authorities back to Honduras. Some 25 miles into Guatemala where hundreds of migrants had been stalled at a roadblock in Vado Hondo for several days, traffic flowed smoothly Tuesday and few migrants remained. Guatemala's immigration authorities reported that through Monday more than 2,300 migrants had been returned to Honduras. Guatemala's government had made clear it would stop the caravan for immigration and health reasons before it had even formed in San Pedro Sula, Honduras last week. President Alejandro Giammattei said 2,000 police and soldiers would be sent to the border. Those forces did not stop the caravan at the border, but a series of strategically placed roadblocks where forces deployed tear gas and batons dissolved the mass of people. Mexico had sent thousands of National Guard members and immigration agents to that border last week in preparation. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has promised to respect human rights, but also to enforce an orderly, legal migration.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/large-migrant-caravan-dissolves-guatemala-75347607>

Factbox: U.S. President-Elect Biden Pledged To Change Immigration. Here's How

By Mimi Dwyer – *Reuters* – January 15, 2021

- ❖ **IMMIGRATION REFORM AND 'DREAMERS':** Biden has said he would create permanent protection for young migrants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, known as "Dreamers." Vice president-elect Kamala Harris said in an interview with Univision on Jan. 12 that the administration planned to shorten citizenship wait times and allow DACA holders, as well as recipients of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), to "automatically get green cards," but did not explicitly say when or how these changes would happen.
- ❖ **RESTORING ASYLUM AND REFUGEES:** One Trump program called the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) forced tens of thousands of asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court. Biden said during the campaign he would end the program on day one. His transition team, however, has said dismantling MPP and restoring other asylum protections will take time. Biden has also said he would raise the cap for refugees resettled in the United States from abroad to 125,000 from the historic low-level of 15,000 set by Trump this year.
- ❖ **FAMILY REUNIFICATION:** Biden's transition team promised to immediately create a federal task force to reunify children separated from their parents under one of the Trump administration's most controversial policies.
- ❖ **TRAVEL AND VISA BANS:** Biden has promised to immediately rescind the bans, which were issued by executive actions and could be easily undone, according to policy experts.
- ❖ **BORDER WALL:** Biden pledged to immediately halt construction of the U.S.-Mexico border wall, which Trump touted as a major accomplishment during a Texas visit just days before leaving office. It is not entirely clear what Biden's administration will do with contracts for wall construction that have already been awarded but have yet to be completed, or with private land seized by the government in places where building has stopped.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN29K1X1>

Watchdog: DOJ Bungled 'Zero Tolerance' Immigration Policy

By Colleen Long – Associated Press – January 14, 2021

- ❖ Justice Department leaders under President Donald Trump knew their 2018 “zero tolerance” border policy would result in family separations but pressed on with prosecutions even as other agencies became overwhelmed with migrants, a government watchdog report released Thursday has found. The report from the inspector general for the Justice Department found that leadership failed to prepare to implement the policy or manage the fallout, which resulted in more than 3,000 family separations during “zero tolerance” and caused lasting emotional damage to children who were taken from their parents at the border. About 5,500 children have been separated from their parents since Trump took office, and many of those parents were deported without their children. The American Civil Liberties Union sued to stop the separations and a federal judge ordered the families to be reunited, but some are still not. Attorney Lee Gelernt, who has been working for years on the issue, said the practice was “immoral and illegal.” According to the report, department leaders underestimated how difficult it would be to carry out the policy in the field and did not inform local prosecutors and others that children would be separated. They also failed to understand that children would be separated longer than a few hours, and when that was discovered, they pressed on.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/article/aclu-doj-zero-tolerance-policy-failure-b8e6e0a189f5752697335f51d57b1628>
- ❖ To read the Inspector General’s report, go to: https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/21-028_0.pdf



*Honduran migrants trying to reach the U.S. hold a Honduran flag while standing in front of Guatemalan soldiers blocking a road to stop migrants from reaching Mexico's border, in San Pedro Cadenas, Izabal, Guatemala October 2, 2020.
Photo Credit: REUTERS / Luis Echeverria*

Immigration Court Fees Set To Jump Dramatically Unless Judge Intervenes

By Farida Jhabvala Romero – KQED – January 14, 2021

- ❖ Unless a federal judge intervenes after a hearing Thursday, a new Trump administration rule will dramatically increase the court fees asylum seekers and other immigrants must pay to defend themselves from deportation. The changes, scheduled to take effect the day before President-elect Joe Biden takes office, would triple the filing costs for some forms and motions in deportation — also known as “removal” — proceedings. Other types of forms could be even seven or eight times as expensive. The fee for green card holders and other immigrants to apply to immigration courts for cancellation of removal, for example, would rise from \$100 to \$305 if the changes are implemented. But the biggest fee hike would be for appealing an immigration judge’s ruling, which would jump from \$110 to \$975. The rule would also introduce a new \$50 fee to apply for asylum in immigration court, according to the complaint.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.kqed.org/news/11855277/immigration-court-fees-set-to-jump-dramatically-unless-judge-intervenes>

Census Bureau Stops Work On Trump's Request For Unauthorized Immigrant Count

By Hansi Lo Wang – NPR – January 13, 2021

- ❖ The U.S. Census Bureau has halted all work on President Trump's directive to produce a state-by-state count of unauthorized immigrants that would have been used to alter a key set of census numbers, NPR has learned. Senior career officials at the bureau instructed the internal team assigned to carry out Trump's presidential memo to stand down and cease their work immediately on Tuesday night, according to a bureau employee who spoke to NPR on the condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation in the workplace for speaking out. The move by civil servants effectively ends the bureau's participation in Trump's bid to make an unprecedented change to who is counted in the 2020 census numbers that will be used to reallocate each state's share of congressional seats and Electoral College votes for the next decade. According to the 14th Amendment, those counts must include the "whole number of persons in each state." In a court filing Friday, Justice Department attorneys confirmed that none of the data Trump would need to alter the congressional apportionment counts would be released before Trump's term ends. It is "impossible" now for the administration to carry out Trump's plan, DOJ attorney Brad Rosenberg told U.S. District Judge Lucy Koh during a virtual court conference for a National Urban League-led lawsuit over the census schedule.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/13/956352495/census-bureau-stops-work-on-trumps-request-for-unauthorized-immigrant-count>

Interfaith Welcome Coalition Selects First Coordinating Director

By the Interfaith Welcome Coalition – January 11, 2021

- ❖ The Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) is pleased to announce the selection of Victoria (Tori) Salas as our first Coordinating Director. Since its inception, IWC has been made up entirely of volunteers. Sister Denise LaRock was provided at no cost to IWC by her order, Daughters of Charity, and acted in a director capacity until she relocated to Missouri. IWC's Board of Directors recognized the need for a Coordinating Director to grow the impact of our migrant justice work, so a new position was created. After fielding many candidates, the Board chose Ms. Salas to help bring our ministries into a new year of challenges and hope for asylum seekers, refugees and at-risk immigrants. Ms. Salas, who has been a non-profit leader in San Antonio for years, believes that assisting those who desperately need us is "the truest Christian loving act we could do."
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://interfaithwelcomecoalition.org/2021/01/interfaith-welcome-coalition-selects-first-coordinating-director/>

Migrant Caravan Will Not Be Allowed To Pass, Says U.S. Border Official

By Gustavo Palencia – Reuters – January 8, 2021

- ❖ The United States, its Central American allies and Mexico will not allow a group of migrants that is readying a trip north from Honduras to travel to the U.S. border, a senior U.S. border official said on Friday [Jan. 8]. Hondurans have taken to WhatsApp and Facebook groups, some of which have thousands of subscribers, to organize another caravan scheduled to leave from the country's northern city San Pedro Sula on Jan. 15, despite the coronavirus pandemic. "Do not waste your time and money, and do not risk your safety and health," Mark Morgan, acting commissioner at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, said in a statement. "Migrant caravan groups will not be allowed to make their way north in violation of the sovereignty, standing public health orders, and immigration laws of the respective nations throughout the region." In one Facebook group that boasts more than 5,500 members, people exchange advice on how to reach "paradise", how to protect themselves against fraudsters and the coronavirus on their trip north, and share prayers. It would be the second such caravan leaving Honduras since the hurricanes. In December, a caravan got to Guatemala but was dispersed by authorities before reaching Mexico.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-honduras-idUSKBN29E05O>

New DHS Report Paints Picture Of Biden's Immigration Challenges

By Charles Fain Lehman – The Washington Free Beacon – January 8, 2021

- ❖ New data from the Department of Homeland Security capture the changing face of illegal immigration, revealing dramatic shifts that will shape President-elect Joe Biden's hopes for comprehensive immigration reform. The report from the Office of Immigration Statistics captures a transition as the share of lone adults, particularly from Mexico, declined, replaced by children and adults traveling with them from the "northern triangle" countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. That change in turn has led to a dramatic decline in the number of individuals reported, as members of the latter group rely on more accommodative legal protections to remain in the country far longer than the former. The report also shows that individuals who were not detained after apprehension are much more likely to still be in the country. That's a sign, acting deputy homeland security director Ken Cuccinelli wrote, that "catch and release" policies do not work. The report combines data from myriad sources to track the "lifecycle" of would-be entrants apprehended over the past five years at the southwestern border, providing information on the immigration status of some 3.5 million apprehensions. Its coverage bookends two major migrant crises: a surge of unaccompanied minors in 2014, and a much larger surge of both families and unaccompanied kids in late 2018 and early 2019.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://freebeacon.com/policy/new-dhs-report-paints-picture-of-bidens-immigration-challenges/>

Mexican President Offers To Vaccinate Unlawful Migrants In U.S.

By David Alire Garcia – Reuters – January 6, 2021

- ❖ Mexico's president said on Wednesday [Jan. 6] he was ready to provide coronavirus vaccines to undocumented migrants in the United States, after the governor of the U.S. state of Nebraska said they would likely not get vaccinated due to immigration status. "It's a universal right. We would do it," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador told a regular government news conference when asked if Mexico would vaccinate undocumented migrants in the United States, many of which are Mexican nationals. He did not elaborate on how his government would execute such a plan, or which migrants would qualify. The comments on Tuesday [Jan. 5] about workers at Nebraska's meat-packing plants by state governor Pete Ricketts, a member of the Republican party, had provoked criticism from public health and migrant advocates. "You're supposed to be a legal resident of the country to be able to be working in those plants, so I do not expect that illegal immigrants will be part of that vaccine with that program," Ricketts told a coronavirus briefing. The Washington-based Migration Policy Institute estimates 11% of Nebraska's meat-packing workers - and 10% of the workers nationwide - lack legal immigration status.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-mexico-immigration-vaccines-idUSKBN29B2IN>

Let America Be An Island Of Mercy For Immigrants, Refugees

By Tim Kaine – *National Catholic Reporter* – January 4, 2021

- ❖ Our world is facing a refugee crisis of a magnitude not seen since the Second World War ... On this continent, too, thousands of persons are led to travel north in search of a better life for themselves and for their loved ones, in search of greater opportunities. Is this not what we want for our own children? We must not be taken aback by their numbers, but rather view them as persons, seeing their faces and listening to their stories, trying to respond as best we can to their situationLet us remember the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). – Pope Francis, Sept. 24, 2015. While the urgency to care for displaced persons hasn't diminished in the past five years, our government's capacity to welcome them in a Christ-like manner regrettably has. Children at the border are ripped from their mothers' arms. Migrants are detained in unlivable conditions where COVID-19 rampages. Young adults brought here as children have been thrust into a years-long legal limbo with the elimination of the deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) program in 2017. Hundreds of thousands of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients in our country remain in jeopardy as a result of efforts to terminate their protections. And religious bigotry masquerades as national security with the banning of travelers from multiple African and Muslim-majority nations.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/let-america-be-island-mercy-immigrants-refugees>

How To Ensure The Success Of Your U.S. Immigration Application

By Andy J. Semotiuk – *Forbes* – December 20, 2020

- ❖ The Initial Application
 - The first way to improve your chance of success is in how you file your application to start with. Here are a few good tips:
 - 1) Read the instructions provided with each form thoroughly and follow them carefully. Don't skip this step because 'you know how to do it.' Just buckle down and follow this step. Ensure your submission includes every item required. Check through it twice.
 - 2) Make sure to sign the documents where a signature is required.
 - 3) Translate all foreign documents into English.
 - 4) Tripple-check to make sure you send the package to the correct U.S. Citizenship and Immigration address. If possible, submit your package by courier so you can be certain it arrives where it should arrive and you can prove it.
 - 5) Tripple-check to ensure you pay the correct fee with the application package.
 - 6) Always apply before your current status expires in the United States if you are in the country.
 - 7) Answer all questions truthfully, including any questions related to a criminal record. If you have a criminal record you may need a waiver of inadmissibility - research using Google or other search engines to inform yourself about that.
 - 8) Make a complete copy of your application and make a copy of the courier delivery tracking information from the internet to keep on your file.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andyjsemotiuk/2020/12/20/how-to-ensure-the-success-of-your-us-immigration-application/?sh=1a917c007672>

Mexican President Defends Restrictive Immigration Policies

By the Associated Press – December 17, 2020

- ❖ Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Thursday [Dec. 17] defended Mexico's restrictive immigration policy, which has prevented many Central American migrants from crossing Mexico to reach the U.S. border. Mexico has sent National Guard officers and immigration agents to the southern border with Guatemala to prevent migrant caravans from entering Mexico and detain those who do manage to cross. López Obrador denied that the U.S. government had pressured Mexico to impose the restrictions, including the 'Remain in Mexico' (RIM) policy on asylum seekers. Formally known as the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), the policy sends asylum seekers from other countries back to Mexico while they await court dates on their U.S. requests. "It was our own decision, that we made, foreign governments do not impose anything on us," the president said. López Obrador's willingness to assume ownership of the immigration policies despite evidence of U.S. pressure reflects his nationalist stance on most issues; he has made defending Mexico's sovereignty a central issue.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexican-president-defends-restrictive-immigration-policies-74784237>