

Mexican police detain hundreds of Central American migrants during mass raid

By Alex González
26 April 2019

Mexican federal police carried out a mass raid in the southern state of Chiapas on Monday, arresting over 370 immigrants from Central America. The migrants were part of a caravan of asylum seekers composed primarily of women and children who were traveling to the US-Mexico border to escape conditions of poverty and war in their home countries.

The mass arrest, the largest in recent years, shows that the Mexican ruling class is subserviently implementing the Trump administration's fascistic attacks on immigrants. Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO)—a supposed “leftist” capitalist politician—is openly breaking with due process and the international right to asylum by deporting tens of thousands of immigrants, restricting humanitarian visas, and forcing asylum seekers to remain in Mexico while their cases drag out in US courts.

Monday's raid outside of the town of Pijijiapan, Chiapas, was designed to inflict as much terror on the migrants as possible. It was only after the group decided to rest in the shade that police and federal agents descended on the tail-end of the caravan, wrenching men, women and children into their vans.

“They waited until we were resting and fell upon us, grabbing children and women,” a 59-year-old farmer from Honduras told the *Washington Post*. “They grabbed us ruthlessly, as if we were animals,” said another Salvadoran immigrant. “This is a barbarity, we are all human.” While fleeing immigration agents, a 27-year-old Honduran youth yelled, “Why do you want to arrest me?”

Showing how Mexico's police have, for all effective purposes, turned into the southern arm of US Border Patrol, videos of the event showed agents yanking wailing children from their mothers' arms. These same

actions triggered protests across the United States in June of last year.

Several immigrant groups have already noted a shift in travel patterns by migrants away from caravans and towards more dangerous routes in recent weeks. This includes the increased use of the freight train known as “The Beast” (La Bestia), in which countless immigrants have lost limbs or fallen prey to illness, hunger, rape, gangs or human traffickers.

Amid international outrage following the raid, Interior Secretary Olga Sánchez Cordero attempted to defend these illegal actions by claiming that migrants had behaved “aggressively” towards police. AP journalists who were at the scene denied these allegations and reported that only one rock was thrown, and only after the initial attack by police.

For his part, López Obrador shamelessly claimed that deporting immigrants back to the wretched conditions in their home countries would somehow guarantee their safety. “We do not want migrants to move freely. We have had problems with migrants getting murdered, and we do not want this ... we will continue to respect their human rights,” AMLO said Tuesday.

Refugees who are being sent back to unbearable conditions of domestic abuse, gang attacks and corporate exploitation should react with nothing but contempt to AMLO's “concern” for their safety.

The marked crackdown by Mexican authorities is a bow to Trump's authoritarian threats to shut down the US-Mexico border. Trump praised the raid over Twitter on Wednesday, declaring that the caravans had been “reduced in size by Mexico” but more had to be done to “apprehend the remainder or we will be forced to close that section of the Border & call up the Military.”

Trump also denounced an incident in April where

Mexican soldiers inadvertently pointed their guns at US soldiers while patrolling the border. “Better not happen again! We are now sending ARMED SOLDIERS to the Border. Mexico is not doing nearly enough in apprehending & returning!”

Mass raids are being combined with a record level of deportations and a sharp halt of humanitarian visas. Over 11,800 migrants have been deported from Mexico in the first three weeks of April, an increase of over two thirds compared to January. The Mexican government issued about 13,000 humanitarian visas in January, a few thousand in February, and none since, according to a National Immigration Institute (INM) official.

Mexican authorities are also forcefully preventing asylum seekers from traveling past the southern states of Mexico, where the isthmus is narrowest and immigrants are trapped without a visa or a safe way to travel. About 5,000 Central American immigrants are being illegally detained in the state of Chiapas. Most, including women and children, are staying in makeshift shelters with improper hygiene and food.

The criminal actions of the Mexican government are not the result of a “preferred” policy, but rather a class response that flows from their role as junior partners of US imperialism. The Mexican ruling class is dependent on US finance capital for its wealth and privilege, including from the 80 percent of Mexican exports bound for the US. The closure of the US-Mexico border or mass strikes like those of the maquiladora workers in Matamoros would jeopardize billions of dollars in profits. Therefore, neither AMLO nor any other capitalist politician can be pressured to act on behalf of the working class because this would go against their own objective interests.

All workers must draw conclusions from the criminal actions of the Mexican government and López Obrador. Workers must judge AMLO not by his populist verbiage and “leftist” pretensions, but by his actions in persecuting impoverished immigrants, slandering striking teachers who defend public education, and maneuvering to end the strikes of the maquiladora workers in Matamoros.

The working class across North and Central America is already objectively united by a thousand economic and social strings. Genuine socialists insist that immigrants are not the enemies of workers, but

common allies that face the same problems and have the same interests. If corporations and manufactured goods can readily cross borders without visas or restrictions, that too must be the right of the international working class, the class that produces all the wealth in society. All immigrants must be immediately freed and given free passage to the destination of their choice, with full citizenship rights.

No faction of the ruling class stands to gain from the defense of democratic rights. The defense of immigrants, the fight for open borders and the expropriation of the wealth of the rich to end poverty and exploitation once and for all falls to the only revolutionary force in society: the international working class.

To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>