

Asylum Caravan: Turned Away at the Border

For a month, the Trump administration has known that a large caravan of migrants was making its way through Mexico toward the United States border. Two days after the right-wing site **Gateway Pundit** described the caravan as “*a horde*” and an “*illegal migrant army*,” President Donald Trump tweeted angrily, “*Mexico is doing very little, if not NOTHING, at stopping people from flowing into Mexico through their Southern Border, and then into the U.S. They laugh at our dumb immigration laws.*” Not long after that, he mobilized the National Guard to patrol the US-Mexico border.

The group, made up of men, women, and children fleeing violence and persecution in Central America, has walked, hopped trains, and taken buses for more than 2,000 miles to reach Tijuana from Chapachula, Mexico, where the journey began. Many of the caravan’s members seek to make asylum claims at the San Ysidro port of entry in San Diego, California.

Yet when 50 members of the caravan presented themselves at the port of entry on Sunday afternoon, they were turned back by Customs and Border Protection, which claimed that the port of entry was at capacity and could not process any new cases. A week ago, Department of Homeland Security chief Kirstjen Nielsen had announced that the agency was “*sending additional USCIS asylum officers, ICE attorneys, DOJ Immigration Judges, and DOJ prosecutors to the Southern border,*” and that was “*taking a number of steps to ensure that all cases and claims are adjudicated promptly.*”

CBP claims they are at capacity before caravanners started to present. They are not communicating with organizers. Caravan asylum seekers will present regardless, as is their right.

Immigrant rights advocates at the border say migrants seeking asylum are commonly told there is no room to process them by Customs and Border Protection and they have to wait.

Both federal law and international treaties require the United States to process asylum seekers. But the Trump administration has routinely turned them away. Border Patrol officers have been rejecting refugees requesting asylum at US ports of entry. Some have been told, “**Trump doesn’t want you here**” and “**Trump says we don’t have to let you in.**”

In 2017, Human Rights First documented 125 cases of individuals and families who had been illegally denied access to asylum procedures. In some instances, migrants were sent away from border crossings into dangerous border cities where “*cartels, smugglers, and traffickers... have kidnapped, raped, and robbed asylum seekers wrongly turned away by the U.S. government.*”

“The administration’s response to the refugee caravan is simply a manufactured PR crisis designed to mislead the American public into closing the door on those seeking protection,” says Laura Gault, a Human Rights First lawyer currently in Tijuana to observe how the US responds to members of the caravan. “*While Border Patrol claims that it does not have the capacity to admit members of the caravan, there are women and children sleeping on the ground outside the port of entry, with no bathrooms, waiting to lawfully seek refuge in the United States.*” Last year, dozens of migrants who traveled in a similar caravan were admitted at San Ysidro to make asylum claims.

Not all of the migrants who traveled with the caravan are seeking asylum. Some have requested protection in Mexico. Others have split off, including some who may try to cross the border illegally. Organizers say who those who remain represent the “most vulnerable.”

-Bryan Schatz
motherjones.com

"Walls" from front page

Like you, we know the Via Crucis of long marches.

As you are marching to claim your rights as migrants, in Palestine the people of Gaza, the large majority of them refugees expelled from their homes 70 years ago, have started their Long March of Return. Every Friday tens of thousands of people are marching to the militarized border of Gaza that is part of Israel’s wall structure that imposes since over a decade the brutal siege on Gaza. People demand an end to the siege and occupation, they demand their UN sanctioned Right of Return. They demand an end to Israeli apartheid. Regular marches to the military checkpoints at the exits of our cities and Israel’s up to 8 meter high wall that is ghettoising our villages in the occupied West Bank are ongoing as well.

We may be geographically far away from your march but our oppressors are united in the same criminal and cruel policies, mutually supporting each other.

Israeli walls are the example for the US administration when promoting the Wall of Infamy at the US-Mexico border. Not by chance the same Israeli companies build both walls. Not by chance the same drones tested on our people in Gaza are being used to militarize the southern border of Mexico to comply with US dictates.

While many of you have been driven from your homes in Honduras by Juan Orlando Hernández regime, Israel has signed a military agreement with JOH. Israel has invited him as the first foreign president to participate in the celebrations of Israel’s 70 years of establishment on the ethnic cleansing of our people, ironically then cancelling the invitation because of human rights abuses for which Israel has provided assistance since the coup against Manuel Zelaya.

Just as Donald Trump has ordered a military troops to be deployed at the US-Mexico Wall to defend the US racist and exclusionary policies against your legitimate claims for rights, Israel has stationed its military and snipers behind the border wall to Gaza against unarmed civilians. Over 30 people have been killed so far by Israeli snipers inside Gaza, thousands injured while the international community remains in complicit silence. The US veto against any condemnation of Israel’s ongoing massacre of civilians at the #GazaReturnMarches aims to protest as well its own criminal policies. Yet, Palestinian popular mobilization will persist and grow.

We know that we share a struggle for our rights and dignity, for the right to freedom of movement, for the right to live on our lands and homes, for the right to self-determination.

For us all existence is resistance.

**We know that our struggles united can achieve a #WorldwithoutWalls
and Justice, Freedom and Equality for all.**

In solidarity,

**-Palestinian Grassroots
Stop the Wall Campaign**

As Palestinians in Gaza started the #GreatReturnMarch,
migrants from all over Central America started their march towards the US border.

TEEN ISRAELI DRAFT REFUSENIKS

A total of 63 draft-age Israeli teenagers have penned an open letter to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, publicly refusing to be conscripted into the Israeli army. The 18-year olds slammed the army and the Israeli regime, stating, “*We have decided not to take part in the occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people. The ‘temporary’ situation has dragged on for 50 years, and we will not go on lending a hand,*” the group went on to declare in their damning criticism of the ongoing occupation and oppression of their neighbours.”

The “Refuseniks” called out the racism and apartheid-nature underpinning the Israeli regime and its occupation, writing that, “*the army is carrying out the government’s racist policy, which violates basic human rights and executes one law for Israelis and another law for Palestinians on the same territory.*”

Referring to the 1949 armistice line dividing Israel and the West Bank, the high school students criticized “*intentional institutional incitement against Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line, (dividing Israel and the West Bank) and we here - draft-age boys and girls from different areas of the country and from different socioeconomic backgrounds - refuse to believe the system of incitement and to participate in the government’s arm of oppression and occupation.*”

The letter went on to appeal to fellow Israeli citizens, asking them to rethink their decision to join the armed forces. “*We refuse to be drafted and to serve in the army out of an obligation to values of peace, justice and equality, with the knowledge that there is another reality that we could create together,*” they wrote. “*We call on girls our age to ask themselves, will army service work toward this reality?*”

One of the signatories was Matan Helman, a 20-year-old student currently imprisoned for refusing to be drafted into the Israeli army. These objectors, dubbed ‘refuseniks’, are often met with multiple jail terms, as in last year’s high-profile



case of Tamar Zeevi and Tamar Alon. Zeevi spent 115 days in military prison, and Alon 118. Zeevi was eventually released on grounds of moral objection, as a small number of army exemptions are granted due to objectors holding pacifist views. Alon however, was not granted exemption on these grounds, as her objection was deemed ‘political’. She therefore received a longer jail term and was eventually released on grounds of unsuitability.

Israeli regulations dictate that when citizens reach 18 years of age, men must serve two years and eight months in the army, and women two years. The issue of conscription has been an ongoing point of contention in Israel

An ideological refusal to maintain the occupation of Palestine strikes in the heart of the current Israeli administration’s policies of annexation of Palestinian land, usurpation of Palestinian resources and oppression of the Palestinian people. Conscientious objectors however, who refuse to serve on political or ideological grounds, are met with much more resistance from the Israeli authorities.

Thanks to

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