



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 31, 2019

## AMLO Against Mexico Becoming a “Safe Third Country”

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Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) said in a July 29 statement that he could not commit to an agreement making Mexico a “safe third country” where Central American migrants could claim asylum.



“We have not accepted the proposal for the so-called third safe country,” AMLO was quoted by Reuters. “We could not commit to this.”

AMLO told the Bloomberg news agency in an interview posted on his Twitter account that the best way to control the migrant problem was cooperation for economic development in Central America, which, he says, Mexico has been doing.

Under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, migrants have the right to apply for asylum in the United States, but not if they can be removed to a safe country via multilateral or bilateral agreement.

Back on May 30, President Trump announced that he would impose tariffs on Mexican imports if our southern neighbor did not adequately stop illegal migrants from traversing its territory and crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. In response, Mexico’s Foreign Relations Secretariat posted a statement on June 3 claiming the country was effectively providing humanitarian visas to Central American migrants and strengthening immigration enforcement operations in southern Mexico.

The standoff was resolved when President Donald Trump announced on June 9 in a tweet that he was suspending his plan to impose steep tariffs on Mexico. The president tweeted that Mexico “has agreed to take strong measures” to halt the use of their country as a highway into the United States for illegal immigration.

The Trump tweet continued: “I am pleased to inform you that the United States of America has reached a signed agreement with Mexico. Tariffs scheduled to be implemented by the U.S. on Monday, against Mexico, are hereby indefinitely suspended.”

According to a joint declaration released by the U.S. State Department and Mexico, the Mexican government has agreed to “unprecedented steps to increase enforcement to curb irregular migration.” Mexico agreed to deploy its National Guard not only on its southern border with Guatemala, but throughout Mexico.

According to a July 30 report in *The Hill*, the United States and Guatemala are still negotiating a deal to establish a “safe third country” agreement.

BuzzFeed News obtained a memo stating that the United States is “working closely” with Guatemala on putting the agreement into effect, which includes “a phased implementation relying upon a mutual understanding and agreement of the number of people who might seek protection in Guatemala and



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what volume of protection seekers the Guatemalan system could process.”

On July 26, the United States and Guatemala established a tentative safe third country agreement, which requires migrants who travel through Guatemala to seek asylum there first.

*Foreign Policy* reported that Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales negotiated the agreement in secrecy, presumably to deflect criticism. On July 14, the country’s Constitutional Court ruled that the safe third country deal required legislative approval.

Morales has refused to define the accord as a safe third country agreement, calling it a “Cooperation Agreement” instead, apparently to circumvent the Constitutional Court’s ruling.

So Mexico, apparently, does not want to take in immigrants from Honduras, preferring instead that they cross into Guatemala and remain there while Mexico helps with economic development in the region. It’s interesting to note that Americans are considered racist if they want the same thing.

*Photo: AP Images*



*Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at [wmass@thenewamerican.com](mailto:wmass@thenewamerican.com).*

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