



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on June 8, 2021

## Harris Blames Migration on Climate Change, Poor Governance. Guatemalan President Blames Biden

Vice President Kamala Harris [claims](#) the current crisis on the U.S.-Mexico border is largely the result of climate change and the economy. The president of Guatemala, Alejandro Giammattei, says it's the Biden administration's immigration policy.

On Sunday, Harris kicked off her first overseas trip since taking office and headed to Guatemala and Mexico in a bid to address "root causes" of migration from those countries.

President Biden [tasked](#) Harris with leading the White House response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis at the southern border fueled by migrants predominantly from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Biden also charged his VP with addressing migration's "root causes" via diplomatic engagements with Central America, which Harris and her team have repeatedly insisted was the cornerstone of her assignment.

Upon her arrival to Guatemala, Harris said that her visit was "a reflection of the priorities that the president and I have placed on this region of our world."

"There are many reasons why this is one of our highest priorities, which I think the people of Guatemala know well and the people of the United States understand well," Harris said during a news conference after a meeting with Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei. "If we are to be effective, if we are to be true to our principles, we must root out corruption wherever it exists, and that is one of our highest priorities for that reason," Harris [stated](#).

Harris has apparently been trying to figure out the driving causes of the "migration" for quite some time.

In April, Harris [insisted](#) the harsh weather conditions were to blame: "We are looking at extensive storm damage because of extreme climate, we're looking at drought in an area in a region where agriculture is one of the most traditionally important basis for their economy, we're looking at what's happening in terms of food scarcity as a result of that and in fact, incredible food insecurity, which we used to call hunger."

The next month, Harris [said](#) there are other driving factors: "I'm thinking of corruption, violence, and poverty, the lack of economic opportunity, the lack of climate adaptation and climate resilience, the lack of good governance."

According to Harris, it's bad weather and bad governance that brings hundreds of thousands of



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migrants to the U.S. southern border.

Before her trip, Harris emphasized the need for increased employment opportunities and better living conditions in Central America. She [announced](#) \$310 million in U.S. aid to support refugees and deal with food shortages as part of Biden's [pledged](#) \$4 billion of aid for Central America. Harris also [called](#) on U.S. companies and organizations to invest in Central American countries to promote economic opportunity and job training, as nearly [16 million](#) Americans remain jobless in the United States.

The U.S. also [said](#) last week that it would send a combined 1.5 million doses of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine to Guatemala and Mexico — a controversial jab almost [nobody](#) in the “civilized world” wants due to safety concerns.

During her Monday meeting with Nicaraguan President Alejandro Giammattei, Harris [said](#) that both countries need to work to improve the situation in Guatemala — whose residents she said don't want to leave, but feel forced to — and called for “tangible outcomes” to convince people to be hopeful about their futures.

But Giammattei, in an [interview](#) aired a day earlier, had pushed back against the “root causes” explanation, and said that he and Harris “are not on the same side of the coin” on the issue.

Instead, he blamed what he saw as a more welcoming message to migrants by the new administration for the surge.

Giammattei also pointed to the Biden administration's pledges not to deport unaccompanied children, and the Biden's efforts to end some of what many saw as “inhumane practices” carried out as part of the Trump administration's immigration enforcement efforts, as factors contributing to the surge of northward-bound “migrants.”

“The message changed too: ‘We're going to reunite families, we're going to reunite children,’” he told CBS News. “The very next day, the coyotes were here organizing groups of children to take them to the United States.”

The Biden administration's repeated statements urging families against migrating to the U.S., he added, were the result of his government and potentially others pushing back against what they saw as a muddled message that was continuing to drive some to leave their home countries.

While standing on Guatemalan soil, Harris [said](#) that anyone thinking of trying to make the dangerous journey should “not come:” “Do not come. Do not come. The United States will continue to enforce our laws and secure our border,” while adding she “believes” that all those who come will be turned back.

Giammattei's request for “more clear messages” has evidently fallen on deaf ears.



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