



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 21, 2020

Latest Central American “Migrant Caravan” Stopped by Mexican National Guard

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After being blocked by Mexican National Guard troops from crossing a bridge over the Suchiate River that separates Mexico and Guatemala, large numbers of Central American migrants waded across the river on January 20, only to be stopped again by members of the National Guard.



The guardsmen, who were dressed in riot gear, fired tear gas toward the migrants as they approached, and some migrants threw rocks at the troops.

Reuters cited a report from Mexico’s National Migration Institute (INM) stating that about 500 of the migrants crossed the river and made it to the Mexican bank. They were part of a caravan numbering roughly 4,000 migrants who began traveling from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, last week. The INM said five National Guard police were injured in the confrontation.

The INM said it had detained 402 migrants and transferred them to immigration stations where they will receive food, water, and shelter while their legal status is being evaluated. Those who are not eligible for asylum in Mexico will be returned to their home countries via airplane or bus.

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A spokeswoman at the INM said the institute had no reports of children going missing during the apprehensions.

Reuters cited a statement from the Honduran ambassador to Mexico, Alden Rivera, who said that Mexican authorities have some 1,300 Hondurans in migration centers and will start deporting them back home on January 21.

NPR reported that the leaders of the Honduran caravan gave the police a letter to Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador requesting that “all the members of the caravan receive the permission to move freely through Mexican territory. We are committed to you and your government to maintain order and discipline in the places where we transit.”

When the caravan started forming in Honduras five days ago, Fox News noted that the migrants hoped to repeat the journey of a similar caravan that traveled through Mexico and inundated U.S. border agents in 2018.

However, since then, Mexico has begun stepping up efforts to block migrants at its southern border because of pressure from the Trump administration.

“The truth is, it is going to be impossible for them to reach the United States,” Fox quoted human rights



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activist Itsmania Platero. “The Mexican police have a large contingent and they are going to catch all the migrants without documents and they will be detained and returned to their home countries.”

The Fox report noted that the United States has entered into bilateral agreements with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador requiring their citizens to apply for asylum in their home countries, rather than after entering the United States illegally.

The New American [reported on January 17](#) that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is challenging the “safe third country” asylum agreement that the Trump administration arranged with Guatemala. The agreement gives migrants the opportunity to claim asylum in a country other than the United States. It is one of a number of agreements signed with Central American countries, including El Salvador and Honduras.

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.

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.

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