



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 18, 2019

Mexican Officials Rescue More Than 800 U.S.-bound Migrants Held by Human Traffickers

Mexico Foreign Affairs Secretary Marcelo Ebrard said on June 17 — following the rescue of nearly 800 migrants packed into semi-trailers — that the government operation will send a message to human traffickers that the authorities are getting serious about combating human trafficking.

“We can’t allow human trafficking,” Ebrard said, charging that for many years such activities were tolerated by Mexican officials. “We might be experiencing one of the greatest human trafficking [situations] in the world.”



Ebrard said that more than 150 of the 785 migrants found inside the double trailers of the four trucks in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz were children. He described the operation as a “rescue” because the migrants could have suffocated inside the trailers if authorities had not found them.

An AP report cited Ebrard’s statement that each of the migrants paid \$3,500 to be smuggled to the United States, with some paying an extra \$1,500 to be entitled to a second attempt if they were caught.

Ebrard estimated the smugglers would have received more than \$3.5 million, and that from that amount they would have paid approximately \$500,000 to \$800,000 in “commissions” — bribes to corrupt authorities and extortions paid to cartels that control the territory along Mexico’s northern border with the United States.

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In response to threats from President Trump to impose heavy tariffs on Mexican goods if Mexico does not do more to prevent migrants from reaching the U.S. border, the government of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has stepped up activity to stem the tide.

Further indication that the Mexican government is attempting to stop those smuggling people through Mexico to the U.S. border was noted in a Reuters report on June 6. The report cited a statement that day from the Mexican Finance Ministry that it had blocked the bank accounts of 26 people for their alleged involvement in human trafficking.

The ministry’s Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) said in a statement that it froze the accounts due to “probable links with human trafficking and illegal aid to migrant caravans.”

Reuters reported that the United States wants Mexico to target people-smuggling organizations as part of a package of actions on immigration to stave off the punitive tariffs threatened by Trump.



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