

URGENT ACTION

ASYLUM SEEKERS AT RISK OF MASS DETENTIONS

Simultaneous to negotiations between the USA and Mexico around possible tariffs on Mexican goods, hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers were detained on Mexico's southern border on the highway near Metapa in Chiapas state. On 5 June, Mexican migration agents and elements of the National Guard detained approximately 400 people. They were taken to an already overcrowded detention centre, and many were deported the following day without proper explanation to their right to seek asylum or explore other migratory options in Mexico. On 6 June, the government announced the deployment of 6,000 National Guard members to Mexico's southern border.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Olga Sánchez Cordero

Minister of Interior

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Dear Minister Sánchez Cordero,

I write in relation to the disturbing situation on Mexico's southern border including the mass detention of 400 migrants and asylum seekers on 5 June and the announced deployment of 6,000 members of the National Guard.

The mass detention of migrants and asylum seekers without prior individualized assessments violates international law. These detentions and expedited deportations undermine the rights of people fleeing their countries to seek international protection and their due process rights. Also, returning people to territories where their life or safety may be at risk violates international law.

These measures place migrant families and children at great risk and will not stop them from fleeing their countries.

I urge you to immediately prevent arbitrary detentions of migrants and asylum seekers, ensure that children are never detained, and replace the deployment of the National Guard with a humanitarian response that individually assesses the needs of people entering Mexico.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 30 May 2019, US President Trump announced that the United States would impose a 5% tariff on all goods coming from Mexico unless the flow of migrants arriving to the United States' southern border decreased. This provoked a series of bilateral negotiations that continue to date in which the United States continues to threaten an increase in tariffs in coming months if the flow of migrants arriving at the US-Mexico border does not decrease.

In days following the US President's announcement, Mexican authorities have implemented a series of measures aimed at deterring migrants and asylum seekers to enter through Mexico's southern border, including the mass detention and deportation of at least 400 migrants, in violation of Mexican and international law. On 5 June, members of the INM (National Institute of Migration), Federal Police and National Guard detained a group of approximately 400 migrants and asylum seekers walking peacefully along the highway near Metapa, Chiapas. The group included families, adolescents, infants and small children, some holding residence permits in Mexico and others without papers. Many were from Honduras and other Central American countries. According to information received by Amnesty International, people were loaded onto buses and taken to the Siglo XXI Migration Detention Centre in Tapachula, Chiapas.

Amnesty International received information based on testimonies of people detained in this operation, detailing that they were kept on the buses in the parking lot of the detention centre for at least 8 hours without food or water, only to be taken into custody into the detention centre which has been overcrowded. This is particularly worrisome for the hundreds of children and infants are at risk of being detained in conditions that put their physical and mental health at grave risk and violate Mexican law which prohibits the detention of children in migration detention centres.

These heavy-handed tactics add to a series of increasingly harsh responses to thousands of migrants and asylum seekers along Mexico's southern border in recent weeks, which have included holding asylum seekers for months in holding cells designed for stays of 48 hours and expedited deportations carried out without allowing migrants to access legal advice or understand their rights properly.

On 6 June, the Mexican government announced that the heavy-handed tactics will continue with the deployment of 6,000 National Guard elements to its southern border to respond to the entry of migrants and asylum seekers.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 people enter irregularly through Mexico's southern border each year, and at least half of these people could need international protection as refugees. Many of these people come from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, some of the most dangerous countries in the world, given the situations of violence and lack of government protection in their countries.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish or English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 July 2019

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: [They, them, theirs] Asylum seekers at Risk of Mas Detention
[They, them, theirs]

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a