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Stop the deportation of Haitian refugees!

Scenes of border agents on horseback charging and whipping defenseless immigrants on the US southern border have provoked shock and revulsion across America and around the world.

Even the White House was compelled to feign moral qualms, with Biden's press secretary Jen Psaki on Monday describing videos of these naked acts of cruelty as "horrible" and "devastating." In other words, it would have been best had these images of horsemen in cowboy hats knocking migrants into the river or grabbing them by their shirt collars, invoking the memory of the Ku Klux Klan or Russian Cossacks, never been made public.



U.S. Customs and Border Protection mounted officers attempt to contain migrants as they cross the Rio Grande from Ciudad Acuña, Mexico, into Del Rio, Texas, Sunday, Sept. 19, 2021. (AP Photo/Felix Marquez)

But the Border Patrol's mounted Cossacks were deployed to the river crossing in Del Rio, Texas for a reason. There is no "humane" method for imprisoning nearly 15,000 migrants, most of them Haitians, in a makeshift concentration camp under a bridge, in boiling heat and without access to shelter, food, water or toilets. The migrants who were charged and toppled by the US agents were carrying food and water for their families that they were able to obtain only by making a perilous trip across the river to Mexico to purchase it and wade back again.

Nor is there some "merciful" means of herding these same migrants onto airplanes in order to dump them in Haiti, a country that most of them fled over a decade ago in the wake of the catastrophic 2010 earthquake, seeking jobs and new lives in Brazil, Chile and other countries that have since been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis. In the meantime, the crisis in Haiti has only grown ever more dire.

Those enforcing these policies on the ground in Texas saw no reason to adopt the morally troubled tone of the White House press secretary. Biden's appointee as chief of the Border Patrol, Raul Ortiz, told reporters that the entire episode was merely a demonstration of the challenges of "operating in a river marine environment on horseback."

Whether the fascistic border agents on horseback enjoy whipping Haitians like animals or not, in the end, they are "only following orders." Their brutality, like the unspeakable squalor in which the migrants have been held under the bridge linking the US and Mexico, is designed to terrorize and intimidate anyone thinking of seeking asylum in the US, a right guaranteed by both US and international law.

Even as the scenes of brutality were playing out on America's southern border, US President Joe Biden was at the United Nations intoning before the opening session of the General Assembly: "... the United States will champion the democratic values that go to the very heart of who we are as a nation and a people: freedom, equality, opportunity, and a belief in the universal rights of all people."

What hypocrisy! The “values” of US imperialism and its ruling oligarchy have been on full display in Del Rio, Texas, where those seeking freedom, equality and opportunity were trampled under horses’ hooves. As for any “belief in the universal rights of all people,” this a myth meant for export only. Similar scenes playing out in any one of a number of countries perceived as obstacles to Washington’s geostrategic interests would have provoked savage denunciations, if not demands for “humanitarian intervention.”

The Biden administration is utilizing the very same legal pretext for carrying out mass deportations that was introduced by Trump: Title 42, a World War II-era health ordinance allowing the temporary barring of immigration from countries where the spread of communicable diseases poses a threat to public health. This provision was turned into universal means of turning back all immigrants and refugees, introducing summary deportations and denial of the right to asylum.

Health experts have stated that its use provides no public health benefit in combating the spread of COVID-19, particularly given that the US is the epicenter of the pandemic. The deportation of thousands of people potentially infected with the virus, however, can prove catastrophic for Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with just 126 intensive care unit beds, 68 ventilators and 25 doctors per 100,000 inhabitants, one tenth the number in the US.

On September 16, a federal judge ruled that the government can no longer use Title 42 to expel families, though it can still do so to deport single adults. The judge’s order, which the Biden administration is appealing, does not go into effect for two weeks following September 16, however, providing a window of opportunity for the mass deportation of the thousands of refugees trapped in Del Rio, Texas.

Immigration authorities have vowed to mount as many as seven deportation flights a day to Haiti, four to the capital Port-au-Prince and three to Cap-Haïtien, the largest city in the north of the country.

Dumping some 1,000 immigrants a day in Haiti, most of them with nothing but the clothes on their backs and who haven’t set foot in the country in more than a decade, is an act of abject criminality. The first of these flights to arrive in Haiti on Monday carried 45

children, none of them born in Haiti and therefore not even citizens of the country. Among the deportees were women carrying babies in their arms.

These barbaric deportations are in line with earlier ones carried out under Biden of Central Americans flown to and dumped in southern Mexico. In both cases, those seeking asylum in the US were trying to escape inhumane conditions created by a century of imperialist oppression, US invasions and Washington-backed dictatorships.

Nowhere is this truer than in Haiti, which was subjected beginning in 1915 to a 20-year occupation and brutal counter-insurgency war by the US Marines. This was followed by the domination of a US-organized army and then, beginning in 1957, a three-decade-long dictatorship by the Duvaliers, embraced by Washington as a bulwark against communism, under which tens of thousands of Haitians were murdered and tortured by the military and the dreaded Tontons Macoute secret police.

Since the toppling of the dictatorship, US imperialism has sought in vain to create a stable puppet regime in Port-au-Prince capable of defending US interests. To that end, it backed two bloody coups and sent US troops back into Haiti twice over the course of two decades.

Biden has continued this policy, providing support against the revolt of the Haitian masses for the corrupt and dictatorial regime of President Jovenel Moïse – assassinated in July – and now for that of President Ariel Henry.

To send thousands of refugees back to Haiti, where there are no jobs or basic resources, armed gangs control the streets, a criminal regime is barely holding onto power and the masses are stalked by both hunger and COVID-19 is a crime against humanity.

Biden's vicious persecution of the Haitians on the US-Mexican border underscores the fact that there is no faction within the US ruling class and its two major parties that is prepared to observe even the most elementary democratic and legal rights of migrants and refugees, or for that matter, of anyone.

The assault on migrants is a global question. Since the 2015 surge of refugees into Europe, the European imperialist powers have sealed their borders with concertina wire under a "Fortress Europe" policy, while pushing migrants to their deaths by the thousands every

year in the Mediterranean Sea and interning many thousands more in camps where they are assaulted and threatened with fascist attacks.

Everywhere, the capitalist ruling class attempts to scapegoat immigrants for the insoluble crisis of the capitalist system, characterized by ever greater levels of social inequality and the normalization of mass death during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The courageous migrants from Haiti, Central America and elsewhere who have overcome daunting odds to make their way to the US southern border are part of a growing movement of the international working class which refuses to accept the unlivable conditions imposed by the profit system.

These immigrants deserve not only the sympathy, but the active support of every class conscious worker. The brutal methods being employed against them will be increasingly utilized against the working class as a whole as it enters into mass struggles.

The Socialist Equality Party demands an immediate end to deportations and the release of detained migrants. The agencies carrying out this repression, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), must be abolished, and the right of workers the world over to live and work in the country of their choice made inviolable.

This defense of immigrants must be joined with a multi-trillion-dollar program to rebuild Haiti, Central America and other countries ravaged by US imperialism, paid for through expropriating the wealth of US billionaires.

These demands can be realized only through an implacable struggle against every attempt to divide native-born and immigrant workers and by uniting across national borders with the working class internationally in a common fight to put an end to capitalism and the outmoded nation-state system.

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