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afgazad@gmail.com

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Kevin Reed

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Visiting US-Mexico border, Biden seeks bipartisan unity in attack on migrants

President Joe Biden arrived in El Paso, Texas, on Sunday afternoon and spent three hours there to demonstrate his commitment to attacking the fundamental rights of migrant workers seeking entry into the US.



President Joe Biden shakes hands with Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott as he arrives at El Paso International Airport in El Paso Texas, Sunday, January 8, 2023. Democratic Texas Representative Veronica Escobar, stands at right. [AP Photo/Andrew Harnik]

The trip was little more than a photo-op in advance of Biden's arrival in Mexico City for a summit on Monday with the leaders of Mexico and Canada, where immigration will be a major item on the agenda.

On his first-ever trip to the US-Mexican border as president, Biden was greeted by the Republican governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, who handed him a letter that said, “America is suffering the worst illegal immigration in the history of our country.”

Abbott wrote that Biden was sidestepping “the thousands of angry Texas property owners whose lives have been destroyed by your border policies.” He blamed the administration for the “chaos at the border” and called the unprecedented number of migrants seeking to enter the US an “invasion.”

Earlier on Sunday, Abbott appeared on the Fox News *Sunday Morning Futures* show, hosted by the fascistic Trump acolyte Maria Bartiromo, where he said Biden was going to El Paso not for border crossing enforcement but for “border crossing enticement.”

Abbott added that his own plan was to “prosecute those crossing the border illegally,” “reinstate the ‘Remain in Mexico’ policy” and “build the wall.” He boasted that he has mobilized thousands of National Guard troops to the border and put up shipping containers to stop migrants from crossing.

The governor also said Biden was going to El Paso to “help and aid the illegal immigrants,” and complained that the authorities, in advance of Biden’s arrival, were removing the homeless from the city streets and clearing migrant camps to present a false image.

Abbott has distinguished himself by taking anti-immigrant policies to a new and barbaric level, including sending migrants from Central and South America on buses to northern cities on Christmas Eve and dropping them off outside in the freezing cold. None of these acts prevented the Democratic president from shaking Abbott’s hand and engaging in a cordial exchange upon his arrival in Texas.

The President then met with border patrol agents at the Bridge of the Americas port of entry. The agents demonstrated methods used to detect smuggled goods at the border crossing. Next, Biden went to a street in El Paso with abandoned buildings near a metal border fence separating the US city from Ciudad Juarez. Biden and his entourage also visited the El Paso County Migrant Services Center and met with community leaders.

The President did not make a statement or address the media. He did not meet with or talk to any of the migrants who are coming to the southern border seeking to escape murderous repression and economic devastation in their home countries, conditions that are the direct result of US imperialist plunder and coups carried out over more than a century.

Biden was joined on the trip by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, Texas Democratic Reps. Veronica Escobar, Henry Cuellar and Vicente Gonzalez, and

community and business leaders, including El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser and County Judge Ricardo Samaniego.

The White House announced Biden's trip on Thursday and said its purpose was to "assess border enforcement operations and meet with local elected officials and community leaders who have been important partners in managing the historical number of migrants fleeing political oppression and gang violence."

The trip to El Paso is part of the administration's unleashing of Trump-style attacks on the growing number of refugees at the border. Biden announced on Thursday that migrants from Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua would face the same restrictions imposed on Venezuelans, forcing them back into Mexico without a hearing or any judicial review of their asylum claims.

The administration expanded the blatant violation of the basic rights of asylum seekers carried out since early 2020 under the aegis of Title 42, a public health emergency provision under which refugees seeking asylum can be summarily expelled on the grounds that they may be carrying an infectious disease. Then-President Donald Trump and his chief immigration adviser, the fascist Stephen Miller, came up with the idea of having the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) invoke Title 42 in the name of combating COVID-19, even as his administration demanded the reopening of the schools and lifting of all temporary lockdowns and other mitigation measures and played down the deadly consequences of the disease.

Biden continued the Title 42 fraud and used it to expel more migrants than Trump until last spring, when it became an obstacle to declaring the pandemic over and lifting all COVID-19 public health restrictions, as well as the administration's desire to open the door to Ukrainian refugees, deemed critical to promoting the US-NATO proxy war against Russia. The CDC said it would end Title 42 in May, but Republican-led states went to court to block the order. The issue is currently in the hands of the US Supreme Court.

While Biden cynically claims to be opposed to Title 42, his administration has used the rule to expel 2.4 million migrants, most of whom were from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico. With the four new countries targeted under Title 8, a separate provision of immigration law, the White House expects to deport an additional 30,000 migrants to Mexico each month.

Biden told news media that those attempting to leave Cuba, Nicaragua or Haiti should not show up at the border seeking asylum, but instead should "Stay where you are and apply legally from there," a clear violation of their rights. According to US immigration law,

families escaping violence and persecution have the right to arrive at the border and request asylum without being criminalized, turned back or used for political purposes by government officials.

The intensification of the attacks on asylum seekers, which demonstrates the essential agreement between the Democrats and Republicans on immigration policy, has been denounced by human rights organizations.

Guerline Jozef, executive director of the Haitian Bridge Alliance support group, said Biden's urging migrants to remain in their native countries to apply for asylum is effectively telling them to "stay where they are to die."

Jozef told reporters during a press call that the Biden administration's rhetoric is unacceptable and disconnected from "the reality of people fleeing to seek asylum." Returning Haitians to Mexico, she added, "where they are unsafe and unable to survive, is unacceptable."

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