

Mexican government responds to Trump's decrees with soporifics and calls for "national unity"

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22 January 2025

The Mexican government announced Tuesday that it received the first deportees of the new Trump administration at a hastily erected "attention center" in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, on the border with Brownsville, Texas.

During her daily press conference, President Claudia Sheinbaum said that such centers are being set up at border crossings to process migrants waiting or being sent back following Trump's first executive orders, which immediately shut down the last program available to request US asylum at the border—the CBP One mobile app. The US Border Patrol has reportedly been directed to return all migrants crossing illegally, denying them the right to request asylum, which is enshrined in US and international law.

As part of the so-called "Mexico Embraces You" program, Sheinbaum said that foreign nationals deported into Mexico will be detained and "repatriated" to their home countries, where many refugees face threats to their lives from gangs and governments.

Her administration will offer Mexican nationals deported from the US a debit card with 2,000 pesos (\$97) for transportation, which only covers about half of the bus ticket from Ciudad Juárez, on the border, to the capital.

Officials have also said that deportees will get priority access to work programs, social security and welfare. But beyond these verbal promises and some legal advice, the Sheinbaum administration has entirely discarded any real resistance to the uprooting of hundreds of thousands and potentially millions of Mexicans and other immigrants from their lives, and higher wages in the United States.

Border Report described the initial setting up of tent cities at the attention centers, including one in Ciudad Juarez that will hold up to 2,500 migrants temporarily. The tiny, haphazard and last-minute character of these facilities, amid near-freezing temperatures, foreshadows a public health and humanitarian disaster, as the Trump administration proceeds with full force and expects Mexico to build concentration camps.

Sheinbaum said she is negotiating with the White House for the reopening of the CBP One App for migrants to request appointments with US border officials while waiting in southern Mexico or Central America.

Official contacts began on Tuesday with a phone call between Foreign Secretary Juan Ramón de la Fuente and US Secretary of

State Marco Rubio, who had already been confirmed unanimously by the Senate. Sheinbaum said the call was "very cordial" and touched on security and migration issues.

Far from securing any concessions from Trump, however, the Mexican authorities merely agreed to resume the Remain in Mexico Program, giving the green light that day for the US Border Patrol to activate it formally and begin sending migrants back.

In these crucial days, as Trump openly bases his project on Hitler's Reich in preparation for expansionist neocolonial wars and the establishment of a fascist dictatorship, beginning with the deployment of thousands of US troops to the border amid threats to bomb Mexico, the most significant service Sheinbaum could provide to Trump and his immigration Gestapo would be to call for calm and insist that everything will be alright.

And on Wednesday, she began her press conference by declaring: "To our fellow countrymen and countrywomen, firstly, that they are not alone; and secondly, that we must also remain calm, and that we must also see how the process develops during these weeks."

After stressing that "it is important to keep a cool head" and "avoid confrontation," she said that only what is written on the decrees matters and not Trump's rhetoric. However, she then proceeded to outline Trump's first decrees in a way that ignored their most important parts and implications.

Trump's declaration of a national emergency at the southern border and the Remain in Mexico Program "are not new," she said, noting that her predecessor and mentor Andrés Manuel López Obrador maintained a relationship of respect and cooperation when Trump declared a border emergency in February 2019.

She insisted that Mexico will maintain "its own migration policy and will seek the repatriation" of migrants from the standpoint of a "humanist government."

But during the same press conference, she boasted that the Mexican military and other agencies have made sure that, out of thousands who have joined migrant caravans from southern Mexico, "no caravans have arrived [to the US border] since we arrived in October." Caravan participants have been compelled to desist or get on government buses to be cruelly sent back to southern Mexico. The total number of migrants reaching the US-Mexico border has dropped by 78 percent, she noted.

Sheinbaum added that most of the world will continue to call the

Gulf of Mexico by its name even if Trump calls it the “Gulf of America,” as if it were an etymological question and not one of securing its resources and area through force.

Moreover, Trump merely asked to “study who will be called a terrorist organization,” she added, referring to the US government’s designation of Mexican drug cartels as terrorists and threats to carry out military operations in Mexico. Sheinbaum said that Mexico “will seek to collaborate on security matters... them in their territory and us in ours.”

On trade, dismissing Trump’s threats of devastating 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico as early as Feb 1, Sheinbaum said that “what they are saying is that they want the trade deal to continue” even if they request talks about its revision.

She concluded by applauding the vote of confidence in her administration expressed by the main Mexican employer group, the Consejo Coordinador Empresarial (CCE), as it “shows that there is unity among most Mexicans.”

Accordingly, the Permanent Commission of the Mexican Congress, where the ruling coalition led by Sheinbaum’s Morena party holds supermajorities in both houses, passed a resolution calling for “national unity” to face Trump’s decrees and defend “Mexican sovereignty.” All other parties voted for the resolution, except for the openly right-wing National Action Party (PAN).

The oligarchic Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) has used the opportunity to absurdly dust off its bygone nationalist fervor, with its legislator Nestor Castillo declaring that “the fatherland stands before the party” and that “the United States is not all of America.”

What is all the nationalist chest-thumping about, one could ask, if the government expects a friendly and respectful Trump? The answer is that the Morena administration and the ruling elite it represents are responding, above all, to the fear that Trump’s fascist agenda and their own complicity will provoke a mass radicalization among Mexican workers and youth.

This complicity, however, is not only due to fecklessness before the open threats from the imperialist neighboring power to the north. There are lucrative class interests at stake, which were summed up by Sheinbaum during her 100-day address on January 12. She called on Trump to maintain the US-Mexico-Canada free trade agreement as “the only option to successfully confront the competition posed by the economic and commercial progress made by Asian countries,” referring implicitly to China.

She continued: “Our bet has not only been North America, but also to seek in the future the economic and commercial integration of the entire American Continent, making it the most powerful region in the world, without exception... For this reason, I am convinced that the relationship between Mexico and the United States will be good...”

During his first term, Trump also threatened Mexico with tariffs to secure collaboration on questions of trade and migration, and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) yielded on every question, most significantly creating a militarized National Guard whose main task has been to harass, detain and terrorize migrants, including several deadly shootings. In April 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic was wreaking havoc, Washington threatened Mexico with major divestments unless López Obrador ordered the

reopening of workplaces supplying US industry, which he did immediately.

Under AMLO, Mexico secured its spot as America’s main trade partner and largest recipient of “nearshoring” investments, as companies were encouraged to move production from Asia in preparation for war against China. The wealth of Mexico’s five richest billionaires grew 227 percent, including a 944 percent jump for the fortune of German Larrea, owner of conglomerate Grupo Mexico and close AMLO ally.

The Mexican ruling class sees itself entirely as junior partner of US and Canadian imperialism in the building of Fortress North America. Ruling circles in Mexico coldly prefer Trump’s prioritizing the confrontation with China and aggressive colonial policy across the Americas over the Democratic Party’s focus on war against Russia, which explains why AMLO effectively supported Trump’s coup attempt in late 2020 by refusing to recognize Biden’s overwhelming victory until the last possible moment.

When Trump speaks of America’s “golden age,” Mexican billionaires open their pockets hoping to catch some of the coins.

Moreover, there is also a long history of Mexican government collaboration with mass deportation campaigns from the US, most infamously in the 1954 “Operation Wetback,” when truckloads of Mexican deportees were swiftly picked up at the border and sent to areas of Mexico that needed cheap labor. Similar calculations are undoubtedly at play today.

Exactly six years before Trump’s first deportations to Matamoros, on January 22, 2019, thousands of Mexican maquiladora workers marched to that port of entry to call on US workers to “wake up” and join the largest strike in North America in two decades against the same transnational corporations. The potential power of a unified political movement of workers across North America, whose hands sit on the levers of the most advanced industries in the world, overshadows any military force and fascistic regime. The fundamental task today is to develop the necessary revolutionary, socialist and internationalist leadership to achieve it.



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