

# *Deaths of migrants to U.S. rose 58% in first half of 2019*

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Washington, June 21 (RHC)-- A total of 380 Latin American migrants lost their lives as they were trying to reach their destination in the first half of 2019, a figure which means a 57.6 percent increase over the same period last year, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

This is the highest figure since IOM compiles this kind of data through the Missing Migrants Project, an initiative which began four years ago. "This month has been marked by several tragedies on the U.S.-Mexico border, where at least 23 people have died since May 30. That is more than one per day," IOM spokesman Joel Millman said during a briefing held in Geneva, as the New York Post reported.

One of those victims was a six-year-old Indigenous girl who died of dehydration in the state of Arizona, after crossing the border with Mexico. Another tragic case was that of a Salvadorian child under 12 year-old, who was shot dead in the Mexican state of Veracruz.

In addition, U.S. border patrols found several bodies in the Rio Grande basin, which forms part of the border with Mexico, a situation which repeats every year because climate conditions in this region are usually hostile to those who travel on foot.

"So we are seeing a level of fatality that we haven't seen before. We caution that with the summer months just beginning and the intense heat that brings, we can expect it to get worse," Millman said.

"People coming from Central America know the risk they are taking. Although they see the same news as us, they think that they will have a chance of a safe life," Hannah Hafter, a No More Deaths volunteer, said. " The crossing is becoming more dangerous every time and it is almost impossible to do it without a coyote," she said.

According to media reports based on the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) data, the number of immigrants in federal custody hit a sky-high record during the first half of 2019: more than 52,500 migrants remained at more than 200 detention centers which are spread out across the United States.

The situation in these migrant centers is not safe either. From September 2018 to May 2019, five Guatemalan children and one Salvadorian minor died in federal custody.

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