

U.S. vice president visits overcrowded migrant detention centers on border with Mexico



McAllen, July 14 (RHC)-- U.S. Vice President Mike Pence has visited two foul-smelling and over-crowded detention centers in the state of Texas near the US-Mexico border where migrants were being kept in dire conditions.

Pence toured the McAllen Border Patrol station on Friday and a detention center for women and children in Donna, Texas near the border with Mexico. Nearly 400 men are detained in the McAllen center for crossing the US border illegally.

There were no cots in the cages which were so crowded that it was impossible for all the men to lie down at the same time, according to a pool reporter on the scene. A reporter with the Washington Post said the fenced cages were so crowded that it was impossible for all the men to lie on the concrete.

When the caged migrants saw reporters arrive, many began shouting, saying they had been there for 40 days or more and they were hungry and wanted to brush their teeth. "The stench was horrendous," a reporter said, and some of the border officers guarding the cages were seen wearing face masks.

Thousands of people took part in protests across the US, as demonstrators call for closure of migrant detention centres.

Pence's visit lasted 90 seconds, reports said. "Look, this is tough stuff," Pence said at a news conference after the tour of just over one minute. "I knew we'd see a system that is overcrowded," he said, adding: "It's overwhelmed."

Pence's office said the tour was part of an effort to show the administration of US President Donald Trump was providing adequate care for migrants. Trump claimed earlier on Friday that he had dispatched Pence to the detention centers to counter scathing reports about the dire conditions at the centers.

"They're crowded because we have a lot of people, but they're in good shape," Trump said. He complained about "phony" reporting on conditions by The New York Times.

The scenes that reporters had witnessed resembled what was found in a damning report delivered last week based on trips to Border Patrol facilities near the Rio Grande, including the station Pence visited. The inspector general who wrote the report described the situation at the detention center as a "ticking time bomb."

Thousands of protesters staged rallies across the United States on Friday to protest Trump's immigration policies. The nationwide rallies, dubbed "Lights for Liberty: A Vigil to End Human Concentration Camps," took place in 700 US cities to protest the inhumane conditions of migrant detention centers and the Trump administration's crackdown on asylum seekers and refugees.

Trump has made his hard-line stance on immigration an integral part of his presidency and has promised to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border to curb the flow of migrants from Mexico and Central America.

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