

Mexican communities and churches come to migrants' aid



Mexico City, October 29 (RHC)-- Mexican residents have opened their doors to the migrant caravan, despite the tension and heightened military presence at United States border.

Thousands of migrants have trekked across thousands of miles from Honduras to Guatemala and into Mexico over the last two weeks. Since crossing the border into Mexico, the migrant caravan has traversed more than 100 miles through the southern Mexican state of Chiapas.

Between Honduras and Mexico, the caravan has grown from around 160 people, who initially banded together, to over 7,000 according to the caravan's organizers and international aid groups, including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Conditions of violence and poverty have been driving factors in the mass exodus.

The journey has been grueling for the migrants and nurses and medical volunteers set up an improvised medical center in Chiapas to treat members of the caravan. The volunteers worked with donated medicines to treat coughs and other illnesses. People were most commonly treated for dehydration and foot burns.

Dr. Jesus Miravete has treated hundreds of people, reporting that many had foot burns from wearing plastic sandals on the scorching asphalt. "Many tell me: 'I can not rest, I have to continue'," said Miravete.

"It really is very difficult. I feel overwhelmed, especially by the number of dehydrated children I've seen."

Honduran natives in communities such as New Orleans and other parts of the U.S. have also banded together in the hope of offering assistance.

"We are thinking about how to raise the consciousness of people in our own community," Wilmer Toro, a Honduran who lives in the U.S. told the Advocate. "We're trying to think of ways to support people once they do get there if they are able to get here."

Santos Canales, another Honduran native who has lived in the U.S. since 1999, said the fact that immigrants are undertaking the exhausting journey north is proof of how bad their situation has gotten in Honduras.

"Many of us have a neighbor on that caravan or a friend on that caravan," he said, according to a translation by Chloe Sigal of the New Orleans immigrant advocacy organization Congress of Day Laborers.

"The thousands of people who are on that caravan, they are not making a choice to come on vacation. They are fleeing for their lives, and they have no other choice," said Canales. "It's very hard to do that sort of thing, and that's why we want to support them."

The group still has nearly 1,000 miles before they reach the nearest border crossing in McAllen, Texas. At least 800 troops will reportedly be sent to the border in response to the caravan and under U.S. President Donald Trump's orders. U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is expected to sign documents for the troop movement soon, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

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