

Honduran migrant caravan repressed on Guatemala border crossing



Tegucigalpa, January 16 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Honduran migrants that joined the caravan heading to the United States were repressed Wednesday by security forces in the town of Corinto while trying to cross the border with Guatemala.

According to teleSUR's correspondent Gilda Silvestrucci, thousands of Hondurans make up this first caravan since April 2019, which includes young people, women, and many children. People say that they seek to leave the country to escape violence and threats to their lives in their respective communities, as well as the need for a better life for their families, Silvestrucci reported.

On Wednesday, Mexican Foreign Affairs Minister Marcelo Ebrard warned the Guatemalan government that the caravan would not be allowed to enter Mexico, new Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei said. The first caravan of 2020 left from San Pedro Sula to Guatemala on Tuesday night. Convened through social networks, migrants are joining by the hundreds, around 1,500 gathered at the rally point before departing.

More than 20,000 Hondurans have joined caravans in the last 15 months. According to the authorities of this Central American nation, most of those people have already been deported or returned voluntarily to the country. However, 4,587 Hondurans are still in Mexico waiting for the U.S. to respond to their asylum request.

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which is a binding document for all the United Nations members, a country like the U.S. can refuse to grant refuge to asylum seekers and send them to a country that is considered "safe" to their lives. Canada struck a pact of those characteristics back in 2002.

Human rights organizations and pro-migrant groups argue that sending people seeking asylum back to the region where they fled, even if not to their home country, violates international commitments meant to prevent vulnerable migrants from being returned to danger.

Honduras had a homicide rate of 40 per 100,000 people in 2017, while Guatemala's was 22.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, among the highest in the Western Hemisphere, according to InSight Crime.

Even the U.S. government admits the dangers present in those countries. The State Department's own travel advisory for Guatemala reads the country "remains among the most dangerous countries in the world," with an "alarmingly high murder rate."

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