

Human rights group says Trump policy to deter asylum seekers is human rights violation



New York, February 5 (RHC)-- The human rights group Amnesty International says U.S. President Donald Trump's "remain in Mexico" policy -- aimed at deterring asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border -- is illegal and a human rights violation.

By law, the U.S. is required to allow asylum seekers to file a request for asylum on US soil, but the Trump administration has implemented policies designed to prevent that from happening.

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said in December that U.S. border patrol agents will send migrants that cross the southern borders back to Mexico while their cases are pending so they cannot "disappear" on the US soil.

"First and foremost the policy is a violation of U.S. and international law and clearly a human rights violation. If the US recognized that an individual has a credible fear of persecution you can't send them somewhere else -- it is on the obligation of the state to offer protection and not delegate it to some third party," Margaret Huang, the executive director for Amnesty International US, told the Guardian newspaper this week.

Huang cited a memo from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that was leaked last month showing the intent of the Trump administration to traumatize migrant children and parents to deter migrants from going to the United States.

“It really is throwing the entire system into chaos. It feels like the U.S. government is saying: ‘Lets make things as complicated as confusing as possible so we deter people from coming and if they try, we’ll make it so hard for them and make them feel miserable,’” Huang said.

Huang was part of an Amnesty delegation that traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border from January 27 to 31 to monitor the impact of Washington's policy on asylum seekers and migrants traveling to the United States.

As part of their visit to the border, Amnesty International saw first-hand the former camp where many asylum seekers recently stayed in Tijuana after some from a caravan of migrants, mainly from Honduras and Guatemala, were stuck there after approaching the U.S. for entry.

“The implications of the policy mean that we have to rely on the government of Mexico to provide safety, shelter, support services, to give those migrants access to legal counsel and transport them to the border for their court hearings,” Huang said.

Trump has made toughening immigration policies a central tenet of his presidency and has vowed to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border to combat illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

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