

Texas investigates abuse allegations at migrant youth facility



Unaccompanied minor migrants wait to be transported by the US Border Patrol after crossing the Rio Grande River into the United States from Mexico in April

San Antonio, April 9 (RHC)-- In the U.S. state of Texas, child welfare officials are investigating three reports that allege abuse and neglect at a San Antonio coliseum that is holding more than 1,600 migrant teenagers who crossed the southern border.

It is the first time state officials announced they are investigating such allegations at one of the emergency facilities the U.S. government has quickly set up in Texas amid an increase in crossings of unaccompanied youths.

A county official, who also volunteers at the San Antonio site the Freeman Coliseum, told the Associated Press news agency the nature of the allegations does not align with what she has seen in multiple visits to the facility. Child welfare officials would not reveal details about who made the allegations, but Republican Governor Greg Abbott said his understanding was that they came from someone who had been inside the facility.

Other allegations include insufficient staffing, children not eating and those who tested positive for COVID-19 not being separated, Abbott said at a news conference that he quickly arranged outside the facility on Wednesday evening. For weeks, Abbott has joined Republicans in criticising the Biden administration for the handling of the migration challenges at the U.S. southern border.

Bexar County Commissioner Rebeca Clay-Flores, who has been inside the facility as an elected official as well as a volunteer, said the teenagers are offered three meals and two snacks a day and anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 is put in a separate area far from other children.

She toured the facility with Abbott after his news conference and said he asked staff questions that included COVID-19 testing protocols. "I wish the governor had done his tour before the press conference when he politicised children," said Clay-Flores, an elected Democrat.

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