

Honduran authorities try to disperse U.S.-bound migrant caravan

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Hundreds of Hondurans trying to start a new caravan to reach the US border. (Photo: Reuters)

San Pedro Sula, December 11 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Hondurans trying to start a new caravan to reach the United States border were stopped by Honduran security personnel before they could even reach the border with neighboring Guatemala.

The Honduran police and immigration agents asked their countrymen to show travel documents and proof of negative coronavirus tests, which none appeared to have.

Many of the migrants said the two recent hurricanes had devastated their homes or livelihoods, and they set out late on Wednesday on a trek towards Guatemala, Mexico and the U.S. border. Last week, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez himself visited Washington, DC and warned of possible food shortages as a result of the hurricanes.

The roughly 600 men, women and children had gathered on Wednesday night in the northern city of San Pedro Sula and began walking along a dark highway towards the border with Guatemala.

But as they approached the border crossing at Agua Caliente, the Honduran agents said they could not continue without documents. "What do we have to return to?" migrant Angela Castellano asked one of the Honduran agents. Castellano set out with her baby and her husband for the U.S. after her husband lost his job at a banana plantation.

"I lost everything, my child's passport, his clothes, everything. It's not fair they're doing this to us," Castellano said as she wept. "I tell my boy, 'I have no home, I have no food to give you.' He just cries for milk."

About 150 migrants sat on the roadside leading to the border crossing, wondering how they could continue their journey. Hurricanes Eta and Iota hit within weeks of each other, causing widespread flooding in Honduras. "There is nothing, my brother, we lost everything," said Jose Samuel Reyes, a resident of San Pedro Sula, the country's industrial hub and the area hardest hit.

According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, more than 4.3 million Central Americans, including three million Hondurans, were affected by Hurricane Eta alone. Those numbers only rose when Iota, another Category 4 storm, hit the region.

"We were living underneath a bridge, with houses made of plastic sheets," caravan member Yey Rivera said by telephone. Rivera, 24, said after the hurricane destroyed his home and government aid never arrived, he joined the caravan hoping to find work in the US to send money back to his family. "What hurt me most was leaving my mother alone under the bridge," he said. "[But] I have to be strong to help her."

By midday on Thursday, a small group of migrants reached the Guatemalan border town of Corinto.

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