

Current Issue:

REMAIN IN MEXICO POLICY

What is asylum?

Protections for people fleeing violence and persecution have long been written into domestic law and included in treaties signed by the US government. For decades, people seeking protection from violence in their home countries have entered the asylum process in the US. Either from a detention center within the US or while living with friends and families in US communities, they have attended immigration court in the US and presented evidence of the threats they face in their home communities. In the end, an immigration judge has decided whether they qualify to stay in the US or whether they will be deported to the country where they were born.

What is the Remain in Mexico policy?

Starting in January 2019, the US government implemented Remain in Mexico, which is officially called the Migrant Protection Protocols. Under that policy, instead of living in the US with relatives, friends, and churches eager to support them as they go through the asylum process, asylum seekers who have fled violence from Central America are forcibly returned to northern Mexico. They must wait in



Mexican border cities for months or possibly years due to lengthy backlogs in immigration courts. While asylum seekers attend immigration court in US border cities and await judges' decisions, they are often homeless and unemployed (because they don't have legal status in Mexico). Even migrants who have already faced violence in Mexico are returned there and forced to wait, because the policy makes it almost impossible to meet the standard of proof of persecution in Mexico that is required to be exempted from the program.

What impact does Remain in Mexico have?

Since January 29, 2019, more than 35,000 Central and South Americans have been forcibly returned to Mexico through this policy. If they were in cities throughout the US, they could find immigration attorneys to support them with their court case, but since they can't readily access US immigration attorneys in Mexico, 99% of people subjected to Remain in Mexico do not have legal representation in court. The US communities that were willing and able to welcome people as they move through the asylum process are deprived of this opportunity, and instead shelters that are already strained in Mexico do their best to offer a place for migrants to stay. Many individuals end up homeless and three quarters say they are afraid of being in Mexico. In May, a mom and her five-year-old daughter were



ABOVE: McAllen, Tx/U.S. - April 16, 2019: Central American migrants seeking asylum from poverty and gang violence line up at the bus station to get tickets to stay with sponsors until their hearings. Under the Remain in Mexico policy, this practice is no longer allowed, and migrants are instead stranded in Northern Mexico.

kidnapped immediately after being returned to Ciudad Juarez under the policy. The asylum process is already quite challenging while living in the United States, but now Central Americans must devote so much attention to basic subsistence and safety that they are even less likely to secure legal protection and are highly likely to be deported back to danger and death.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Ask your Representative to cosponsor H.R. 2662, a bill to defund the Remain in Mexico program
- Ask your Senator to introduce a Senate version of H.R. 2662, a bill to defund the Remain in Mexico program