8-21-2013

U.S. Deportations of Undocumented Mexicans Continue at Steady Pace in 2012

Carlos Navarro

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex

Recommended Citation

https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/6003

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in SourceMex by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.
U.S. Deportations of Undocumented Mexicans Continue at Steady Pace in 2012

by Carlos Navarro
Category/Department: Mexico
Published: 2013-08-21

The US continued deporting undocumented immigrants from Mexico at a steady pace during 2012, surpassing the record set in 2011. Statistics from Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM) indicate that the US deported about 400,000 Mexican citizens during calendar year 2012, which would surpass the record of slightly more than 397,000 set in 2011. In the midst of the widespread deportations, strong criticisms have emerged about the practices employed by the US government, including deporting immigrants at night, when they have no support services.

Despite the slight increases in deportations, recent trends show a decline in the influx of undocumented immigrants to the US and an increase in voluntary returns back to Mexico because of a lack of employment opportunities in the US (SourceMex, May 2, 2012).

The INM, which tracks deportation numbers, said the majority of the undocumented Mexican citizens are simply brought back to border communities in Baja California and Tamaulipas, creating problems for both the migrants and those communities. INM commissioner Ardelio Vargas said the deportations expand the pool of people seeking services in the communities near the US border, and, lacking support from state and local authorities, these deportees often become victims of criminal organizations.

"This is a worrisome situation," said Vargas. "We need to create a program to support state governments so that they commit to assist citizens who have been repatriated."

Report criticizes US deportation practices

A recent report published by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) said the US government has reduced repatriations via Baja California and Chihuahua, favoring Tamaulipas and Coahuila—two states that have insufficient services to support the deportees. The report said deportations through Tamaulipas increased fivefold between 2009 and 2012. Furthermore, the US government deported 50,000 undocumented Mexicans in the first half of 2013, half of whom were sent back to Mexico via Matamoros.

The WOLA report said the US government was placing many deportees in danger by sending them through Coahuila and Tamaulipas. Those two states have been the centers of activity for the ruthless Zetas cartel (SourceMex, Feb. 1, 2012).

"Between 2009 and 2012, research by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) noted a disturbing trend: the United States increased repatriations to Mexican border cities in Coahuila and Tamaulipas states, where homicides at the time were rising—a key indicator of increasing danger," said the report. "Where homicides were dropping, as in Sonora and Baja California states, US authorities chose to repatriate fewer migrants."
Rodolfo Córdova, an expert on immigration issues for the Mexico City-based research organization Fundar, said the returned migrants frequently become the victims of human trafficking and theft. "They are also victims of extortion on the part of corrupt officials," said Córdova.

Beyond the changes in the locale where the migrants are released, the WOLA report also raises questions regarding the manner in which the US Border Patrol and the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) handle the deportations. Citing a survey by researchers at the University of Arizona among 1,100 deportees at shelters in Mexico, WOLA said nearly one in five respondents said they were deported between 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.

"Projecting this number to all deportations to Mexico suggests that tens of thousands of migrants are being deported at night," said the WOLA report. "Returning any migrant at night hours leaves deportees lacking shelter, bus services, and wire transfer services. At times, they may even be in danger: all of Mexico’s six border states are included in the State Department’s November 2012 travel warning for Mexico. Migrants in these states are often victims of kidnapping, abuse, and extortion by criminal organizations and, at times, by Mexican officials."

**Mexican Congress requests information**

The WOLA report attracted the attention of the Mexican Congress, which requested information from the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) on what steps consulates were taking to address the problem.

In addition to requesting information on the clandestine deportations, a joint committee of senators and deputies (Comisión Permanente) asked the SRE to verify reports that many migrants were deported from hospitals even though they still had not recovered from illness. The committee said more than 600 migrants were sent back to Mexico in the past five years, even though they had not recovered from an illness. "This figure is based on information obtained from hospitals, humanitarian organizations, the press, and activists," said Sen. Ana Gabriela Guevara, a member of the Partido del Trabajo (PT). "But we believe that the numbers are much larger because many cases fly under the radar."

The SRE, in an official response to the committee, explained that the Mexican consulates in the US were attempting to find a way to coordinate the deportations with US authorities so that support services could be offered to the deportees. "The Mexican government will continue working to support the Mexicans who are repatriated," said the SRE. "We will promote coordination with the US so that each case is treated in a humane and dignified manner."

The WOLA report also condemned the practice of "lateral repatriation," officially known as the Alien Transfer Exit Program (ATEP), which moves undocumented male migrants from the sector where they were detained to another distant location. The rationale is to disrupt the connection between migrants and the smugglers with whom they originally crossed, thus making it harder to attempt another border crossing. "Concerns about the program include the effects of repatriating Mexican migrants to cities with which they are unfamiliar, and which may lack safety and social services, and the separation of families," said the WOLA report.

--- End ---