



BANISHED TO THE SOUTH

The Human Cost of Deportation

"Scared, Traumatized, Destitute, and Physically Vulnerable": Report illuminates the invisible crisis of thousands stranded in southern Mexico by U.S. "mass deportations" and Mexico's response

Tapachula, Nogales, and Washington, August 30 2026

The Trump administration's "mass deportations" are generating a full-blown humanitarian crisis at Mexico's northern and southern border regions, according to a new brief from three U.S. and Mexican organizations. **Banished to the South: The Human Cost of Deportation** combines work by the Fray Matías de Córdova Center for Human Rights in Tapachula, Mexico, near the Guatemalan border; the Kino Border Initiative at the U.S.-Mexico border in Nogales, Arizona and Sonora; and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), in Washington, DC. Among the groups' alarming findings:

- Unlike in past years, when most people whom the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was deporting into Mexico were recent border crossers, the deported population is now made up mostly of people arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the U.S. interior, usually **after spending years or decades living in the United States**.
- Over 1,100 deported people per month in Mexico are **citizens of other Latin American nations**, with a large number from Cuba and Venezuela.
- Many of the Mexican or third-country nationals being deported had been living in the United States with a status—humanitarian parole, Temporary Protected Status, or pending asylum applications—that the Trump administration has since **terminated or revoked**.
- Since mid-April, ICE has rarely deported Mexican citizens across the 1,954-mile land border. Instead, and at significant expense, the agency is **flying them to cities in Mexico's interior**, usually the southern border-zone cities of Villahermosa, Tabasco and Tapachula, Chiapas.
- When Mexico receives third-country deportees at the U.S. border, its authorities swiftly **board them onto buses and transport** them to the same southern-border cities.
- Once they arrive in Tapachula, deported people—Mexican and third-country alike—form a **scared, traumatized, destitute, vulnerable, and invisible population**. Mexico's government gives third-country citizens just ten days to remain in the country, with its overstretched asylum system the only option for most.
- ICE routinely **fails to return people's identity documents**, making it hard to prove their citizenship, apply for protection, or even receive electronic money transfers. Those who wish to risk return to countries of origin cannot do so without their confiscated documents.
- Many people encountered in Nogales and Tapachula say that **ICE separated them from their U.S. citizen children** and did not give them an opportunity to choose to be deported with them.
- Trapped in Tapachula, third-country migrants are subject to a "revolving door" of detention and release, unable to work legally or to leave Mexico's southernmost state. Along with recently deported Mexican citizens, they are **vulnerable to organized crime groups** that prey on them: ransom kidnappings are a constant risk.

This ever-worsening situation is not inevitable: it is the result of policy choices, the three organizations contend. Washington's severe anti-immigrant policies bear most of the blame. But Mexico City is also failing to do much within its power to ease the trauma.

The mass deportations must stop, and the United States needs to restore due process to protection-seeking migrants immediately. Until that happens, **Banished to the South** offers a series of common-sense recommendations for steps that Mexico's state can take to support the deported people it is receiving: both its own citizens and those from other countries.



Podcast



Espanish report



English report



Kino Border Initiative
Iniciativa Kino para la Frontera



CDH Fray Matías