

# Migrants left high and dry at Guatemala border after deportations from Mexico, U.S.



A migrant woman from Honduras reacts while speaking on a mobile phone after she and other Central American migrants were expelled by U.S. and Mexican officials, in El Ceibo, Guatemala August 15, 2021. REUTERS/Luis Echeverria

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Central American migrants who were expelled by U.S. and Mexican officials, eat at a shelter, in El Ceibo, Guatemala August 15, 2021. REUTERS/Luis Echeverria

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Central American migrants stand in line to register at a shelter after they were expelled by U.S. and Mexican officials, in El Ceibo, Guatemala August 16, 2021. REUTERS/Luis Echeverria

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Central American migrants cross the border between Mexico and Guatemala, after being expelled by U.S. and Mexican officials, in El Ceibo, Guatemala August 16, 2021. REUTERS/Luis Echeverria

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Central American migrants stand at the Mexico - Guatemala border after they were expelled by U.S. and Mexican officials, in El Ceibo, Guatemala August 15, 2021. The sign reads "Limit of the Republic of Guatemala." REUTERS/Luis Echeverria

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EL CEIBO, Guatemala, Aug 20 (Reuters) - When 25-year-old Salvadoran migrant Donovan Pedro stepped off a deportation bus at the El Ceibo border crossing that connects Mexico's southern border with Guatemala, the situation was familiar but the place was not.

Pedro had already made the trek to the U.S. border twice and was stopped by Mexican authorities, who both times sent him to other locations in Mexico.

This time he was detained in the state of Veracruz near the Gulf of Mexico, and sent to a remote border crossing with Guatemala as part of U.S. and Mexican efforts to make it more difficult for migrants to cross the U.S. border repeatedly.

Wearing a jacket and a baseball cap, Pedro carried no suitcase or change of

clothes and did not have a working cell phone. But with the pandemic exacerbating unemployment in El Salvador, he was already planning to head back to the United States via the Mexican city of Monterrey near the Texas border.

“I can’t get to my country. I’m going to try to go up and back to Monterrey,” he said.

From there, he planned to get across the U.S. border.

Pedro is one of hundreds of migrants, including children and babies, from Central America that U.S. and Mexican officials have expelled further south by plane and then onward in buses towards El Ceibo, Guatemala, a tiny village of about one hundred wooden and concrete dwellings some 630 kilometers (390 miles) north of the capital, a Reuters witness observed over two days there.

Many are not told where they are going.

U.S. President Joe Biden is under pressure to stem an increase in southern border crossings, with U.S. agents apprehending or expelling more than 1,276,000 migrants since last October.

The Biden administration began flying migrants to Guatemala this month from the United States under a U.S. policy allowing fast-track expulsions for some families arriving from Mexico.

It has also urged Mexico to curb migration, prompting authorities there to quietly fly thousands of undocumented migrants from the north of the country to the south for expulsion. [read more](#)

## NO ONE TO CALL

For most of the migrants - hailing from Honduras, El Salvador or Nicaragua - they have no connection to Guatemala. When they get off the bus, they have no local currency, no place to stay and no-one to call for help.

Some migrants stranded in El Ceibo told Reuters they are determined to make the journey to the U.S. border again, having learned valuable lessons about navigating the routes.

Others remain in limbo in El Ceibo, unsure of what to do next. Those who can



afford it, stay in a local inn for about \$20 a night. Others climb a steep hill to a nearby migrant shelter that can house 30 people at a time.

Some sleep in the streets of El Ceibo, a dangerous drug-trafficking area where gunshots can be heard day or night. The rest just start walking.

“This is my first time in Guatemala. I don’t know what to do because I’m alone,” said Aura Diaz, a Honduran woman traveling with her two young daughters, aged 4 and 1.

Fleeing violence in Honduras and hoping to find work in the United States, she had been traveling for more than a month with the two girls when officials stopped them two days before in the Mexican city of Reynosa across from McAllen, Texas, she said.

“We were resting and they grabbed us,” she said.

Guatemala’s government on Tuesday said it was concerned about not receiving any notifications about migrants of different nationalities crossing into its territory by land at its El Ceibo and El Carmen border points.

It said it has facilities for returnees from Mexico at other border points, like Tecun Uman, that have the capacity to provide migrant care in a “dignified and safe” manner.

“Guatemala’s foreign ministry has sent diplomatic communications requesting official information from the governments of Mexico and the United States on these migratory movements,” the government said in a statement.

Guatemala, however, is not providing transport for migrants after they arrive at El Ceibo.

When they get off the bus at the border in Mexico, the migrants cross into the Guatemalan village, where power from a local generator for the houses and three inns goes off at 10 p.m.

Officials there take their temperature, take photos of their IDs and send them on their way. Many migrants could be seen asking where they should go now, or where they should sleep.

“They throw you into a place you don’t know, with no money, nothing, and with small children,” said Eduardo, a Honduran migrant who was staying at a local shelter with his wife and three young children. He, too, plans to return to Mexico in the hope of eventually reaching the United States.

He explained how he and his family fled Honduras after Eduardo’s wife was kidnapped by gang members. Eduardo did not give his last name due to fears for their safety.

“No matter how long we have to stay we’re going to ask for asylum because we do not want to return to our country,” he said.

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