

Asylum seekers worry new policy will mean more waiting

By ELLIOT SPAGAT AND MARIA VERZA
Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico — Eusebio Gomez thought his arduous journey to the U.S. and months-long wait in the border town of Tijuana, Mexico, would end when he made it to American soil. But a shift in the Trump administration's immigration policy could mean more waiting.

The Mexican government said Friday that the United States plans to return 20 migrants per day at the San Ysidro border crossing as they await an answer to their asylum requests. The practice could be one of the more significant changes to the immigration system in years.

Gomez, who was one of 25 names called for processing Friday at San Ysidro, said he would feel far less safe waiting in Tijuana, with its sky-high homicide rate. The 18-year-old Honduran said he wanted to come to the U.S. to escape violence.

"It's not about the dollar, it's about safety," Gomez said.

"The Mexican government doesn't agree with this unilateral move," but will accept the migrants under certain conditions, said Roberto Velasco, spokesman for Mexico's Foreign Relations Department. He said the U.S. government wants to extend the practice, known as "remain in Mexico," to the rest of the border crossings.

Juan Portillo, 38, who arrived in Tijuana two months ago from Venezuela with his wife and 7-year-old daughter, said he was fleeing political oppression after protesting President Nicolas Maduro's government.

"We do not feel safe" in Tijuana, Portillo said, shortly before Mexican authorities whisked him, his family and seven others away in a van to be turned



In this Dec. 11, 2018, file photo, an asylum-seeking boy from Central America runs down a hallway after arriving from an immigration detention center to a shelter in San Diego.

AP Photo/Gregory Bull, File

over to U.S. authorities.

Advocacy groups condemned the idea. The Southern Poverty Law Center warned it would create more chaos at the border. Astrid Dominguez, director of the ACLU's Border Rights Center, said in a statement that it endangers lives. A legal challenge is expected.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California and Rep. Jerrold Nadler of New York, both Democrats, released a statement warning that the changes would harm asylum seekers.

"Asylum seekers are easy prey for criminals and gangs in Mexico, but the Trump plan forces people to remain in harm's way, even if there is a significant possibility they will be persecuted or tortured in Mexico," they said in a statement.

Velasco said around midday Friday that the first 20 migrants would be returned



In this Nov. 21, 2018, file photo, a homeless man walks next to the fence that divides Mexico and the U.S. in Tijuana, Mexico.

AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd, File

at the San Ysidro crossing, across from Tijuana, "in the next few hours."

He said all are Central

Americans and all apparently had temporary visas in Mexico. That suggests they may have been part of

last year's migrant caravans, many of whom had such visas. U.S. officials have said Mexican asylum seekers and

children traveling alone are exempt from the new policy.

Mexico will not accept migrants who have appealed a denial of asylum, unaccompanied children or people with health problems, Velasco said.

He did not say how or where Mexico would house the migrants, who might have to wait months or years for their asylum claims to be resolved.

Akbar Heybari of Iran, who has been paying for a Tijuana hotel with his wife and children, ages 15 and 12, said he would much prefer to stay with a niece who is studying medicine at the University of California, Irvine.

"It's good (in Tijuana), but we don't want to stay here more," said Heybari, a grape farmer who plans to seek asylum on grounds of government persecution for his political activities.

There are about 2,400 names on the asylum processing list at San Ysidro. U.S. officials have been calling up to 100 names a day.

U.S. authorities plan to bus asylum seekers back and forth to the border for court hearings in downtown San Diego, including an initial appearance within 45 days, according to a U.S. official familiar with the plan who spoke on condition of anonymity because it was not yet publicly announced.

The Trump administration will make no arrangements for them to consult with attorneys, who may visit clients in Tijuana or speak with them by phone, the official said.

The U.S. has witnessed a surge in asylum claims, especially from Central American families. Due largely to a court-imposed 20-day limit on detaining children, families are typically released with a notice to appear in immigration court. With a backlog of more than 800,000 cases, it can take years to settle cases.



2018 COMMERCIAL RECYCLER OF THE YEAR



KEYSTONE RV

Each year the employees of Pendleton Sanitary Service, Inc. (PSSI) nominate several commercial businesses or institutions for the Commercial Recycler of the Year award. The winning recipient is determined by a vote of PSSI employees, as they are the individuals who deal directly with the recycled materials, and are impacted by the quality of those materials. This award is given to a commercial recycler that does an outstanding job recycling, or has made significant improvements to their waste or recycling efforts over the past year.

The employees of Pendleton Sanitary Service voted unanimously to choose Keystone RV as Pendleton's Commercial Recycler of the Year for 2018. The determining factor was Keystone's concerted effort to recycle as much as

possible, but also make a significant effort at reducing waste during 2018. Keystone recycled 2,151 tons of cardboard, office paper, aluminum, steel, copper, and plastic during 2018. They also disposed of 4,005 tons of solid waste during 2018. This equates to a recycling rate of 34.95%! Moreover, Keystone reduced total solid waste disposed by 15% in 2018 versus 2017. Given production data, Keystone has achieved significant waste reduction on a per unit basis. FANTASTIC job of Reduce first, then Reuse, then Recycle!

Keystone RV began recycling with PSSI in 2000, and is by far the largest commercial recycler in Pendleton. Keystone has always strived to recycle as much as possible, but the efforts made to retain high quality recyclables with almost no contamination is a testament to how hard they work to educate their employees on the importance of recycling correctly.

Pendleton Sanitary Service would like to congratulate and thank Keystone RV for being a community leader in reducing waste and for their outstanding efforts in recycling!



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