

Summer 2022 U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network

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\$40 Billion for Ukraine, no money for the U.S. Medical Needs, The Ukrainian Refugee Crisis' Double Standard

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4/7: The Ukrainian Refugee Crisis' Double Standard

The warm welcome Ukrainian refugees have received from neighboring European countries contrasts sharply with the punitive treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers from the Middle East and Africa.

ISABELLA ALEXANDER-NATHANI – SAPIENS

Watching the war unfold in Ukraine due to the recent Russian invasion, I, like many others, have been gripped by heartbreaking images of refugees arriving to the borders of other countries by the hundreds of thousands: Their clothes soaked by the cold rain, their shoes worn through the soles by the miles walked, and their children hungry, exhausted, and scared as they cling to the one cherished toy they carried with them all those miles.

As an anthropologist and filmmaker who focuses on human rights and global migration, these images of humans in desperate need of asylum are intimately familiar to me.

What wasn't familiar to me were the heartwarming responses from Polish citizens lining up at the border to donate clothes and shoes. I couldn't believe the images of cars queuing to offer free rides or of train station platforms where rows of strollers sat awaiting Ukrainian mothers who might arrive with tired arms. I even saw border guards handing out warm meals to refugees waiting to hear which reception center would be available to house them.

Over a month into the conflict with Russia, the number of Ukrainian refugees now tops 4.3 million, making it the fastest growing exodus of people Europe has seen since World War II. The numbers have surpassed the worst-case scenario estimated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

But long before Ukraine took center stage, refugee crises have been ongoing in many parts of the world. As of 2021, UNHCR reported 6.6 million Syrians had fled the ongoing Syrian Civil War. Around 3.4 million Afghans are currently displaced—including hundreds of thousands following the U.S. military's sudden withdrawal from the country last summer. And according

to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, an estimated 32 million people across the African continent are displaced. The nongovernmental organization Caminando Fronteras reported 4,404 African and Middle Eastern refugees died in 2021 alone while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Spain—a harrowing average of 12 people per day.

As part of my work, I've had the privilege of documenting countless refugee journeys—mothers from Syria to the Democratic Republic of Congo to Venezuela who share a common courage as they gather what little they can carry on their backs and brave increasingly difficult journeys in order to bring their children to safer ground.

I've also documented the reception these women and children receive when their journeys finally reach the end. Instead of a welcome, they're often greeted by armed border patrols ready to detain and deport them, and by citizens who protest new refugee arrivals—waving signs with slogans like “Go Home” and “Secure Our Borders.”

How can we make sense of this double standard: the sympathy authorities and ordinary citizens have extended to Ukrainian refugees compared to the harsh treatment given to those fleeing conflict in other parts of the world?

5/20: Entering the Season of Death at the Border

A deadly Border Patrol shooting, a binational group rejuvenating the desert, and the wall as a "modern-day cross," plus other observations and photos from a trip to the Douglas borderlands

Todd Miller-The Border Chronicle

At first it was a bit startling to see a man stumble onto the road in front of me. I was just south of Tombstone on Highway 80 in southern Arizona, cruising at about 60 miles an hour toward the border at Douglas. When the man appeared, I was listening to a podcast and staring out into the landscape, a beautiful stretch of rural road parallel to the San Pedro River valley, with views on all sides of the Dragoon, Huachuca, and Mule mountain ranges. The man looked injured and so disoriented that I thought he was going to limp right into the road. Then he stopped and looked at me, driving toward him. He held up an empty plastic bottle. He wore a ripped white T-shirt, and his face had that raw look of a person who's been walking in the sun for days. It was mid-morning but already hot, forecast to be the hottest day of the year thus far, triple digits in nearby Tucson. He stared right at me and raised the bottle again. He had no water left. But I didn't stop because there was a white van on my tail and the shoulder seemed narrow. “What am I doing?” I thought, and pulled over, van be damned. I turned around, stopped, beeped to get his attention, and gave him my water bottle and all the food I had in my front seat.

As I drove away, the voices on the podcast—a news show from New York—seemed a million miles away. I've been seeing people come out of the desert borderlands for two decades now, and it is startling every time. I couldn't get that man's desperate face and lunging limp out of my mind. The season of death in the borderlands had now arrived, as it does every year. The below image of southern Arizona shows where thousands of people's remains have been found over the last 20 years.

Image Credit: Humane Borders. Printable maps can be found here....

An hour later, I met up with the pastor Mark Adams at the Frontera de Cristo office in Douglas. He told me that death had been on his mind quite a bit. Frontera de Cristo is a Presbyterian border ministry that focuses on justice, and Adams is the U.S. coordinator. Originally from South Carolina, he has been in Douglas and Agua Prieta since 1998. He told me that over the past year or two several of his close family and friends had died. The deaths were “good” deaths, he said, meaning they were surrounded by loved ones, by friends. He contrasted this with border deaths, gruesome, violent deaths, deaths often without loved ones, without families, without friends, alone.

There were two incidents on his mind in particular. One involved Griselda Verduzco Armenta, a 32-year-old woman from Sinaloa. On April 11 (the Monday of Holy Week, Adams pointed out), Armenta scaled the 30-foot wall on the outskirts of Douglas. At the top of the wall she fell, became entangled in the climbing harness, and flipped upside down, where she choked as she hung from the border wall for a long but unknown length of time. The wall's 30-foot height was purposely chosen after the Border Patrol did psychological tests to figure out at what height people would become disoriented, as noted by Pedro Rios of the American Friends Service Committee in an article titled “Border Patrol's ‘Prevention through Deterrence’ Strategy Is Deadly by Design.” On another occasion, Douglas supervisory Patrol Officer Dion Ethel said, “Tell people not to climb the 30 foot wall. You fall off this one, you don't get up.”

Historically, the cross was a tool of empire, a tool of control, Adams told me, reflecting on Verduzco's death, which happened just a few days before Easter. The border wall, he said, is a “modern-day cross.”

The other incident on Adams's mind was Carmelo Cruz Marcos, from the state of Puebla in Mexico, who died after a Border Patrol agent shot and killed him in February. Like Verduzco, he was also 32 years old. We got in the Frontera de Cristo van to drive toward where it happened, a rugged area called Skeleton Canyon near the Peloncillo Mountains. "The area in which the shooting occurred is a remote, treacherous, landscape, even during the day," wrote Cochise County attorney Brian McIntyre in a letter on May 6 in which he wrote that the shooting was justified and exonerated the agent. A couple of weeks earlier, Adams had hiked out with Mennonite pastor Jack Knox. It took them hours to get to site of the killing, which was marked by the yellow tape in the below photograph.

We would be unable to make it to where it happened, but I wanted to get a look at the enforcement landscape that forced Cruz's group (and many others) to cross in such a remote area through the Peloncillos and Guadalupe Canyon, also close to the New Mexico border. This area just east of Douglas might be the most aggressive version of the so-called smart border that I have ever seen. The international boundary was fortified not only by the 30-foot wall but also by surveillance towers installed miles inland. Every time we would get out of view of one tower, another one would appear.

Most of these were the Integrated Fixed Towers (IFT), built over the last few years by the Israeli company Elbit Systems. Every tower was high on a hilltop, visible to all who crossed, part of the deterrence infrastructure that ultimately pushes people, like Carmelo Cruz Marcos, to cross further and further out. The first picture below combines the snaking wall with a tower peeking from behind a hill, which you can see if you look closely. The second photo shows another IFT, positioned high on the hill and visible for miles.

Adams told me that it was true that the place where the agent shot and killed Cruz was remote and treacherous. But it was also beautiful, mountainous, a place where people might hike, recreate, enjoy life, and should not be a place where Cruz and his group would be tracked by the Border Patrol's horse unit, after underground sensors detected the movement of the group on February 19.

Cruz, instead of enjoying the natural beauty on a hike, ran when the Border Patrol horse unit arrived (by this time it was so rugged that even they were on foot). One of the agents saw Cruz with his night vision goggles and another named Kendrek Bybee Staheli ran after him. After they ran into the remote area, according to what Staheli told an investigator, there was a struggle between him and Cruz. Staheli also claimed that Cruz threatened his life with a "large rock." Cruz's wife, Yazmin Nape Quintero, said, "My husband was a gentle and peaceful man trying to provide for his family. He would never threaten the Border Patrol, and it is despicable for the Border Patrol to claim that he did." Two of the arrested migrants interviewed by investigators said they heard Staheli say, "You're in America, mother****er," before he shot. Staheli shot Cruz four times. Twice in the face. Twice in the chest.

Below is an altar for Cruz that Adams and Knox built after they arrived at the scene. A thorough report on this incident, by Ryan Deveraux of The Intercept, can be read [here](#). In this report the interviewed migrants also claim that the Border Patrol tampered with the evidence.

Our last stop was Silver Creek, and it took me by surprise. The Peloncillo Mountains were still miles ahead in the horizon. I had only ever arrived to Silver Creek (a dry wash that flows in the rainy season) on the Mexican side, via Highway 2. I could see vehicles moving on this road in the distance across the border. This was the first time I viewed it from the U.S. side. It was a special place. I had done reporting in 2016 for my book *Storming the Wall*, which looked at climate change and borders. When I arrived, the first thing José Manuel Pérez from Cuenca los Ojos—an organization that seeks to protect, restore, and rewild the biodiversity of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands--showed me was a piece of the border barrier in Silver Creek. Mother earth was eating it alive. The border barrier was submerged in the soil, covered with spider webs and purple flowers. The land was showing how easily the border wall could be destroyed, or transformed into something else.

At that time it was a vehicle barrier. Now, on the U.S. side of the line, it was that same dizzying 30-foot wall built under Trump. Looking through the bollards, I could see the gabions—steel cages filled with rocks that were made to slow the flow of water during the monsoon rains, so that the ground would absorb the water and begin to replenish the area with grasses, trees, birds, and other animals. Below our feet, the water table had risen 30 feet, Pérez told me in 2016. Thinking of the long drought in Arizona and Sonora, I said, "That's a miracle." Pérez responded, "It's not a miracle. We're just piling up rocks." Since the rocks were placed in the rectangular steel cages, the gabions looked like an intricately carved stone wall, contrasting the barrier. They were built not to exclude but to replenish. In the below picture, if you look closely, you can see the gabions between the border wall bars. As I contemplated the death on the borderlands in the heat of May, with a full summer to come, here was an example of another possibility to cultivate and rejuvenate life, forge cross-border relationships and solidarity, to spawn life, not premature death.

All this was on my mind when on my way home I got back to the place where I saw the man earlier that day, just south of Tombstone. I was looking along the side of the road for any sign of the man, perhaps the food I gave him or a discarded water bottle, but I saw nothing. It was at this moment that I found out from the radio about the mass shooting in Buffalo. I am

originally from the Buffalo region. I heard the newscaster mention Tops, the supermarket chain of my childhood, where the killing occurred. It was a different store, but it still hit home.

On the road outside Tombstone, I knew the man was long gone. I wondered if the Border Patrol got him. And I wondered how many other people were walking through the desert, as the 100-degree days began. At the time I didn't realize the killing in Buffalo was planned out and racially motivated. There is a premeditated mass death event that will happen here too and I had spent the whole day in it. There are hundreds of otherwise healthy people who will die crossing the border by summer's end, as happens every year.

6/3: While U.S. is spending billions for Ukraine, Hundreds of Thousands U.S. Children are Dying and Orphaned from COVID, and Now Some are Begin Dying from Hepatitis of Unknown Origin (2)

Lee Siu Hin - National Immigrant Solidarity Network

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) May 27th report, they assess the risk of the current hepatitis of unknown aetiology in children, at the global level had infected 650 children and 9 death at a short period of time, as a "moderate" risk, considering that:

1. The aetiology of this severe acute hepatitis remains unknown and under investigation; the cases are more clinically severe and a higher proportion develops acute liver failure compared with previous reports of acute hepatitis of unknown aetiology in children;
2. Limited epidemiological, laboratory, histopathological and clinical information is currently available to WHO;
3. The actual number of cases may be underestimated in some settings, in part due to the limited surveillance capacity in place;
4. The source and mode of transmission of the potential aetiological agent(s) has not yet been determined, and so the likelihood of further spread cannot be fully assessed;
5. Although there are no available reports of healthcare-associated infections, human-to-human transmission cannot be ruled out as there have been a few reports of epidemiologically linked cases.

Most of the current cases are located at U.K. U.S. and Europe, almost no cases were found in developing countries, such as: Africa. It might be because these countries are lack of resources to detect this new and unknown disease; therefore, many experts believe the actual number should be far bigger than the WHO report.

Still, why U.S. and U.K. has the largest number? Some scientists believe that it might be linked to the COVID-19 infection. According to the Global Times report, the researchers noted that continuous monitoring of the feces of children with acute hepatitis is recommended in light of the current situation. If evidence of Coronavirus superantigen-mediated immune activation is found, immunomodulatory therapy should be considered in children with severe acute hepatitis.

Furthermore, Israel recently reported unidentified cases of acute hepatitis in 12 children, 11 of whom had been infected with the Coronavirus within a year, according to the report from the Jerusalem Post. Israeli medical experts told the media that, after ruling out all possibilities, the common denominator of all the detected cases is the Coronavirus infection around three and a half months before the onset of hepatitis.

Severe Coronavirus infections are known to damage the liver, which means this unidentified hepatitis may be one of the long-term symptoms of COVID-19, medical experts noted, according to the Global Times.

However; at the latest U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report on May 30th stated that: "At this time, the cause of the reported illnesses in these children is still unknown. While adenovirus has been detected in some children, we do not know if it is the cause of the illness."

Why U.S. want to make this potential public health issue lighter than WHO concern? Maybe U.S. government doesn't want to care about this.

U.S. has failed the fight against COVID, with 84.5 million cases and over million dead as of June 3rd 2022, President Biden is no different than former President Trump, call for “endemic” lifting almost all health restrictions. With the pandemic slowly gaining momentum again since April, many predict coming Winter U.S. and western countries again will face another deadly COVID wave. In this moment U.S. simply don’t want to suggest a highly deadly and mysterious children Hepatitis could be link with COVID, causing massive anxiety to the American family demanding money for the COVID treatment.

Money for the COVID treatment is exactly Biden and the Congress don’t want to spend, Congress just killed the \$18.5 Billion Federal budget for the COVID testing and treatment; instead they transferred the money for the war; light-speed passed the \$4 Billion military “aids” for the Ukraine. In reality; most of these “aid” money will never go to Ukraine, they’ll be paying U.S. military contractors.

When capitalists need to choose between selfish greed and saving life, they’ll choose the wrong side.

4/9: At least 13 dead, another 10 missing as two migrant boats sink off Tunisia

Reuters

At least 13 African migrants died when their boats sank off Tunisia, judicial official Mourad Turki told Reuters on Saturday.

Another 10 migrants were missing off the coast of Sfax and 19 were rescued, the official added. Among the bodies recovered were four women and four children, Turki said.

In recent months, dozens of people have drowned off the Tunisian coast, with an increase in the frequency of attempted crossings to Europe from Tunisia and Libya towards Italy.

Hundreds of thousands of people have made the perilous Mediterranean crossing in recent years, many of them fleeing conflict and poverty in Africa and the Middle East.

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NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website: <http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

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