

Addressing the deportation of immigrants by the US to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador

General Overview of the topic:

The United States has long deported large numbers of migrants to the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador), but removals have intensified under the current Trump administration. There has been a shift in who is being deported: from recent border crossers in 2024, to people who have lived in the U.S. for years or decades in 2025.

This immigration enforcement is being undertaken dangerously, with migrants subject to needless harm and abuse. Migrants reported to authorities and organizations incidents of verbal abuse, intimidation, and discriminatory language by guards in U.S. detention facilities; some also described cases of physical mistreatment.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, the Trump administration is on track to deport roughly half a million people this year—far below its goal of one million annually and the 685,000 recorded in fiscal year 2024 under President Joe Biden.

Central America's so-called Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras received more than half of all deportations in May. Millions of people have fled the region in recent years, which has experienced worsening poverty, violence, and instability, leading to a cycle of migration and return that strains both U.S. and Central American systems.

Questions to ask yourselves:

- 1- What are the human rights obligations of the U.S. when deporting long-settled residents?
- 2- How might the increase of deportations affect stability, crime, and migration patterns in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador?
- 3- How can deportation processes be made more transparent and accountable to prevent abuse in detention centers?
- 4- Should deportation policies differentiate between recent arrivals and long-term residents with family ties in the U.S.?

Timeline:

2022–2023

Deportations average over 500,000 annually; focus remains on recent arrivals

2024

2024 records ~685,000 deportations—one of the highest in recent history.

Most deportees are recent border crossers.

January 2025 (Trump returns to office)

Administration pledges 1 million deportations per year.

Announces crackdown on long-settled immigrants in addition to new arrivals.

February 2025

U.S. and Guatemala agree to increase deportation flights by 40% and accept non-Guatemalan nationals for transit.

March–April 2025

Rights groups warn of lack of due process and detention abuses.

May 2025

Over 50% of all deportations in May go to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Reports of verbal abuse and physical mistreatment in detention facilities intensify.

June 2025

22 deportation flights in June—a 29% jump from May.

Key Terms:

- **Northern triangle:** a term referring to the central American countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, which share similar migration patterns, socio-economic challenges, and high rates of violence.
- **Deportation:** the formal removal of a foreign national from a country for violating immigration laws, often returning them to their country of origin.
- **Long-settled residents:** migrants who have lived in a country for many years, sometimes decades, often establishing deep family, community, and economic ties.
- **Immigration enforcement:** the set of policies, actions, and institutions responsible for identifying, detaining, and removing individuals who do not have legal authorization to remain in a country.
- **Detention facilities:** secure centers where migrants are held while awaiting immigration hearings or deportation; concerns often arise regarding overcrowding, conditions, and treatment of detainees.
- **Human rights obligations:** legal and moral responsibilities of a government to uphold the rights of individuals during deportation, as defined by international treaties and human rights norms.

- **Cycle of migration and return:** a recurring pattern in which individuals are deported to their home countries only to attempt migration again due to persistent poverty, violence, or instability.

Relevant parties involved:

The United States of America:

The United States plays one of the most crucial roles in this issue, as it enforces deportation policies that send thousands of migrants out of their country, and most importantly back to the Northern Triangle. Through the shifts in administrations, the US policy has ranged from strict border enforcement and mass deportations, to more humanitarian approaches, but deportations remain a key aspect of the immigration system. The US is responsible for shaping the conditions and scale of the cycle of migration and return in regards to its own country.

The Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador):

These countries are the primary recipients of deported migrants from the USA. The governments face pressure in reintegration of the returnees into already fragile economies, while also considering risks of violence, unemployment, and more migration. They play a crucial role in the lives of the deported immigrants, as their efficiency in handling returnees determines their stability, and lack thereof may perpetuate the cycle of migration.

Mexico:

Mexico is primarily a transit country for migrants moving between the USA and the Northern Triangle. It is however, increasingly, a partner of the US in terms of migration. It has signed multiple agreements with the US that include requiring migrants to await asylum decisions in Mexico, which potentially places a strain on its border countries and resources. Mexico is therefore a crucial stakeholder in the deportation of immigrants from the USA.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

UNHCR monitors the rights of asylum seekers and refugees who have been affected by deportation. Its aim is to ensure that all the deported immigrants are not returned to unsafe or unstable conditions. The UNHCR works in line with international law on non-refoulement. UNHCR also supports governments in the region to strengthen migration systems and protect any vulnerable parties, whether it be immigrants or countries.

International Organization for Migration (IOM):

The IOM focuses on the safe and humane handling of migration. This includes assistance with voluntary returns and reintegration of immigrants, in addition to forced deportation. In the Northern Triangle, it provides programmes that help deported migrants with housing, employment, and even counseling, in order to reduce the possibility of repeated migration. The

IOM acts as a bridge between governments and humanitarian needs in order to promote safety and security.

Useful resources:

1. [Statistics and socioeconomic profile on the deportation](#)
2. [Fleeing of the northern triangle to the US and responses of both ends](#)
3. [Border and immigration past actions of the USA](#)
4. [Trump administration mass deportation and immigration policies](#)
5. [Northern Triangle undocumented migration to the United States](#)
6. [Possible consequences of USA mass deportations](#)
7. [Current US deportation strategies, global impacts, and international responses](#)
8. [Reception and reintegration of deportees](#)

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