

Brinkwire

Mexican crime data may undercut migrant caravan asylum claims: ‘You don’t pick and choose’

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Thousands of Hondurans have made the treacherous trip through Mexico to the southern U.S. border, saying they are fleeing gang violence, but some immigration experts say Mexican crime data may undermine their case for asylum — with the caravan passing through several states with lower murder rates than some U.S. cities.

Mexico as a whole has a murder rate of 19.3 per 100,000 people, according to U.N. figures, and some parts of the country are extremely dangerous. The central Mexican state of Colima has a stunning murder rate of 98.4 per 100,000.

But Migrants never passed through that state. The states the main caravan did pass through — Chiapas, Oaxaca, Puebla, Mexico City, Querétaro, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Nayarit, Sinaloa, and Sonora — have an average murder rate of about 19.5 per 100,000 people.

Comparatively, Washington D.C. has a murder rate of 16.7 per 100,000 people; Miami has a murder rate of 11.2; Houston 11.5; Minneapolis 10.2, according to the latest FBI data. The U.S. as a whole has a murder rate of 5.4 per 100,000. The rate of some border cities, such as San Diego, is very low — just 2.5 per 100,000.

The first Mexican state the migrants entered, Chiapas, has 9.1 murders per 100,000 residents, according to data from the Mexican government, a rate which is lower than many U.S. cities. Phoenix has a rate similar to Chiapas.

The most dangerous major American city, St. Louis, has a murder rate of 66.1 per 100,000 — coming out worse than Honduras itself, which has a rate of 56.5 per 100,000, according to the U.N.

“If you are drowning, you grab for the nearest life preserver — you don’t pick and chose,” Mark Krikorian, Executive Director of the Center for Immigration Studies, told Fox News.

“If they are looking for stability and security, they would have stayed in the first place they got to in Mexico. And in fact, 2,000 to 3,000 did stay there.”

Mexico offered caravan participants temporary work permits and asylum applications in Mexico. While many took the government up on its offer, others in the caravan continued up to the U.S. border, where on Sunday many charged a border fence. Some hurled rocks at U.S. border agents,

who used tear gas to push them back. Four U.S. Border Patrol agents were hit with projectiles, and they made 60 arrests, the White House reported, also noting that the vast majority of people involved were young adult men.

While the Obama administration allowed asylum for those fleeing gang violence, the Trump administration reversed that. However, Krikorian said it is unclear if immigration judges are consistently enforcing that new policy.

International law does allow countries to automatically reject asylum applicants if they have already passed through a safe country. The European Court of Justice ruled that its member states should require migrants to apply for asylum in the first country they reach — rather than traveling to countries that are considered most welcoming, or which have the most generous benefits. The U.S. continues to evaluate asylum claims of Central Americans who have passed through Mexico, but is processing them slowly, with a backlog of thousands, while applicants wait in Mexico.

Supporters of more immigration say it's possible that some migrants have unique cases.

“The overall crime rate in Mexico is legally irrelevant because asylum is based on an individual's fear of being targeted... Caravaners might have legitimate concerns that they will still be specifically targeted in Mexico, even if the general population is very safe,” David Bier, an immigration policy analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute, said.

Bier added: “It's no doubt true that many caravaners didn't stop in Mexico, even though they might be safe. But that's precisely why current law makes individualized determinations.”

Krikorian believes the real motivation of those coming to the U.S. is to partake in the United States' strong economy as well as education, health, and other government benefits.

“If we let the caravan in, then what do we have immigration limits for?” Krikorian asked. “Why don't we just let in everyone from the Eastern Congo, where things are much worse than in Central America?”

Most immigration experts say that more low-skilled immigration is good for the economy. But Krikorian notes that the cost of illegal immigration falls hardest on poor Americans who have to compete with cheaper labor.

He points to a National Academy of Sciences report that found some evidence for that, concluding: “Groups comparable to the immigrants in terms of their skill may experience a wage reduction as a result of immigration-induced increases in labor supply, although there are still a number of studies that suggest small to zero effects.”

The NAS study also found that that immigration contributes to the economy on net.

“But there's a reverse- Robin Hood effect,” Krikorian said. “Low-skilled Americans are hurt most from this kind of immigration.”

Jeremy Robbins, of the group New American Economy, told Fox News that low-skilled immigration is worth it.

“It's true that the benefits and costs of immigration are not spread evenly, but virtually all Americans benefit from immigration because it brings diverse skills that make our companies

more competitive, brings young workers who help support our growing retiree population... it's a really good thing for American to have young, hardworking people come here."