
Trump and His Personal Crusade against Immigrants

By: Arnaldo Musa

16/02/2025



Donald Trump's war against undocumented immigrants is nothing new, as it has continued in a similar format since the Obama era. However, the fiery U.S. president has taken a campaign promise to extremes, fulfilling it in various ways to maintain the support of his electorate.

Unconcerned about the tensions he has created with leaders of countries whose citizens migrate to the U.S., Trump has already sent the first group of the planned 30,000 immigrants to the overcrowded and torturous detention center at the illegally occupied Cuban territory of Guantánamo Bay. There, prisoners have been held for years without trial and could be physically disappeared at any moment, given the nature of their captors.

Trump is sending those he deems the "worst" to Guantánamo, although his U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, has already struck a deal with Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele to house those with criminal records in El Salvador's mega-prisons. Additionally, Panama has been

tapped to receive undocumented migrants from other nations.

The arrival of shackled and mistreated undocumented immigrants in Brazil sparked outrage from President Lula, as well as from Colombia's Gustavo Petro, who later relented—not only due to threats of heavy tariffs on trade with the U.S., but also because of promises that Colombians returning to their country would be treated well by American authorities.

Through threats of tariffs and other measures, Trump has managed to avoid obstacles to his deportation plans, sending thousands of soldiers to the southern border with Mexico and pressuring the Mexican government to do the same. However, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has prepared various plans to support undocumented Mexicans and provide them with as much humanitarian aid as possible, as we will see later.

According to official figures, Mexico received over 190,000 deportees in 2024. However, the government has emphasized that it will not take on the role of a "safe third country" for migrants of other nationalities, focusing exclusively on assisting its own citizens.

Recapitulation

During his presidential campaign, Donald Trump pledged to carry out the largest mass deportation operation in U.S. history. Upon his return to the White House, his administration, along with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has launched multiple initiatives to deport hundreds of immigrants daily.

Although Trump initially stated that the first deportation waves would target "criminal" immigrants, many raids have resulted in the detention of individuals with legal status or valid permits.

Moreover, the current administration has shifted its rhetoric regarding deportation priorities. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt recently stated in a press conference that immigrants are automatically criminals simply for entering the country without permission. This claim is incorrect, as being in the U.S. without legal documentation is a civil infraction, not a criminal offense.

A Double-Edged Sword

The role of immigrants in the U.S. economy is evident in the GDP and tax contributions. Without them, prices will rise drastically across the country.

As Sarah Silbiger reported for Reuters, *"Mass expulsions of undocumented immigrants or those with permits could have severe economic consequences for the U.S., as migrants contribute to the workforce, GDP, and tax revenues."*

According to a 2022 Pew Research Center analysis, undocumented immigrants make up 4.8% of the U.S. labor force (approximately 8.3 million workers). Their contributions are particularly significant in sectors such as agriculture, construction, hospitality, and cleaning services. Additionally, many immigrants are entrepreneurs who create jobs for others.

Contrary to popular belief, immigrants also support the economy by paying taxes and contributing to Social Security and Medicare.

A report from the Department of Homeland Security published in April 2024 estimated that as of early 2022, around eleven million undocumented immigrants were living in the United States.

The American Immigration Council warns that mass deportations could shrink GDP by 4.2% to 6.8%, equating to a loss of between \$1.1 trillion and \$1.7 trillion, based on a 2022 study.

In the agricultural sector, Chuck Conner, president of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives and former deputy secretary of the Department of Agriculture, told CNN that removing immigrant workers would halt production. *"Without labor, there will be less food, and prices will rise dramatically,"* he warned.

Sheinbaum's Plan

In response to mass deportations from the U.S., Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has devised a plan to protect Mexican nationals while mitigating potential economic and political tensions arising from

the crisis.

Her strategy includes legal, technological, and international cooperation initiatives designed to safeguard the rights of Mexican citizens. With over five million undocumented Mexicans in the U.S., her government is proactively addressing the challenges posed by this migration crisis.

The Sheinbaum administration has enhanced consular services and introduced technological tools to support deported Mexicans. One key initiative is the "Alert Button" app, which provides detained individuals with immediate access to the nearest consulate or specialists from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mexican consulates in the U.S. have also expanded their legal assistance services, adding 2,610 lawyers and 469 law firms to offer guidance to migrants.

Foreign Minister Juan Ramón de la Fuente has visited several border states, strengthening cooperation agreements with local authorities to ensure the human rights of deported migrants are upheld.

To assist those affected by mass deportations, the Mexican government has established shelters in border cities and developed plans to provide returning citizens with healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.

In a recent conversation with Trump, Sheinbaum raised concerns about high-caliber weapons being trafficked from the U.S. into Mexico, where they end up in the hands of criminal organizations.

"He is not very informed," Sheinbaum remarked regarding arms trafficking from the U.S. to Mexico, a matter she considers critical for both nations. Addressing this issue, she argued, would help curb violence in Mexico.

She explained to Trump that Mexican drug cartels possess rocket launchers and other heavy weaponry smuggled from the U.S. *"How is it that such powerful weapons are making their way from the U.S. into Mexico?"* she questioned.

As a result, both presidents agreed to begin working on border security

measures —not only to curb arms trafficking but also to tackle drug smuggling, particularly fentanyl.

"For humanitarian reasons, we must help the U.S. manage its fentanyl crisis, which is leading to a surge in overdose deaths," Sheinbaum stated. She added that, for the first time, the U.S. government has committed to *"working together to prevent high-powered weapons from entering Mexico."*

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
