



**Migrant Caravan: The Need to Address Root Causes
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- The migrant caravan underscores the dire need to address the root causes of migration from Central America to the United States, including the pervasive violence that forces children without parents and families with young children to embark on a life-threatening journey of thousands of miles to seek safety in the United States.
- El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala are among the most dangerous countries in the world. Gang and narco-trafficker violence, including widespread sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment and extortion of children and youth by gangs, human trafficking, and complete lack of protection, are pushing migrants out of their homes, communities, and countries.
- KIND has documented a pattern of severe and widespread sexual and gender-based violence against many women, children, and LGBTI people in Central America. Sexual violence perpetrated by gangs is one of the most common forms of violence against girls and young women. In the urban and increasingly rural areas where gangs dominate, women and girls are in constant danger of sexual violence. Gangs use rape as a tactic to control the territories and populations where they operate and to punish those who do not comply with the rules imposed by the gang. Young teen girls are forced into relationships with gang members; those who resist face violent retribution or even death.
- Human trafficking of children is also common in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Children are trafficked from rural to urban areas, and across borders or to border areas, where they are sexually exploited or subject to forced labor, in many cases in agricultural or domestic work.
- Perpetrators of violence have near total impunity in all three countries. These governments are unable and unwilling to protect their most vulnerable citizens.
- The U.S. government should provide increased assistance to Central American countries to address gang and drug cartel control and violence, crack down on human traffickers, help Central American countries restore the rule of law and combat corruption, and ensure the protection of the most vulnerable, while ensuring respect for human rights.
- The Central American Reform and Enforcement Act (CARE Act), S. 3540) and the Department of State funding bill do exactly this.
- Migrants who reach the U.S. border and request asylum should have a full and fair adjudication of their cases to determine who is eligible to receive protection and should be allowed to remain in the United States and who does not qualify and can be safely returned to their country of origin.
- The United States and others can help Mexico strengthen and grow its asylum system to ensure that asylum applicants in Mexico have a meaningful chance to access protection.

- By ending the Central American Minors Refugee Processing and Parole Program, the Trump Administration cut off a vital path for children in danger in Central America to apply for U.S. protection without having to make the dangerous journey to the United States.
- The Administration should expand the Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA) in which the U.S. government pre-screens those in Central America seeking refugee status and transfers those most in danger to Costa Rica while their case is being processed. The PTA is an important avenue for protection that provides access to asylum without risking the journey to the United States. The United States, as well as countries in the region, should resettle more refugees from the PTA.
- The United States should also provide protection to asylum seekers from Nicaragua, where government authorities and paramilitary groups have killed, tortured, raped and forcibly disappeared anti-government protesters, driving thousands to flee the country. Hundreds of civilians have died—including at least 24 children—and more than 2,000 have been injured. Forms of repression include including extrajudicial killings, widespread arbitrary detentions, intimidation of critics, and rape and other sexual violence against women involved in protests and mothers of protesters.
- Regardless of whether an individual qualifies for asylum, they should be treated with respect for their human dignity.