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Surge of Detainees in Mexico Suggests Violence Still Fueling Child Migration



Written by David Gagne Thursday, 25 June 2015

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Child migrants on top of a freight train

The number of Central American child migrants detained in Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/9-mexico>) increased by nearly 50 percent during the first part of 2015, suggesting high levels of gang violence in the Northern Triangle region continue to act as a primary driver of displacement.

On June 21, Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/9-mexico>)'s National Immigration Institute (INM) announced (http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Boletin_3815) authorities have detained 11,893 minors from Central America during the first five months of 2015, a 49 percent increase from the number of child detainees during the same period in 2014. The INM said the majority of the children stopped by Mexican authorities are from Central America's Northern Triangle countries ([El Salvador](http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/32-el-salvador) (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/32-el-salvador>), [Honduras](http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/66-honduras) (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/66-honduras>), [Guatemala](http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/52-guatemala) (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/52-guatemala>)).

More than half of the minors were traveling alone or were accompanied by a human smuggler, according to the INM. Seventy-two percent of the children were detained in the southern states of Tabasco, Veracruz, and Chiapas.

The increase in detentions of minors in Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/9-mexico>) comes amid a significant decline (<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-border-surge-immigration-numbers-20150310-story.html>) in the number of Central Americans attempting illegal crossings at the US-Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/9-mexico>) border. In early June, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) used data from the INM and the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to determine

(http://www.wola.org/news/mexico_now_detains_more_central_american_migrants_than_the_united_states) that Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/9-mexico>) is now detaining more Central American migrants than the United States.

InSight Crime Analysis

The upswing in child migrants getting caught in southern Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/9-mexico>) indicates minors are still fleeing the Northern Triangle in large numbers, even though detentions at the US border have fallen. If this is indeed the case, it suggests high rates of gang violence in the Northern Triangle -- a commonly cited cause (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/18/el-salvador-gang-violence-child-migration-crisis>) for last year's "surge" of child migrants (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/25/us-surge-detention-child-migrants>) -- is continuing to drive children (</news-analysis/children-central-america-youth-exodus-us-border>) from their homes. In 2014, a number of experts on the child migrant issue told InSight Crime (</news-analysis/unaccompanied-child-migrants-and-the-central-america-exodus>) many minors are fleeing in order to escape violence and other forms of insecurity they face in their home countries.

SEE ALSO: Coverage of Displacement (</component/tags/tag/146-displacement?start=20>)

However, there are other prominent push and pull factors impacting child migration from the Northern Triangle, such as high levels of poverty and well-established migration routes (</news-briefs/el-salvador-arrests-coyote-linked-to-tamaulipas-migrant-massacre>). And a 2014 study by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) was unable (</news-analysis/unaccompanied-child-migrants-and-the-central-america-exodus>) to definitively establish a correlation between insecurity in the region and child migration patterns.

Although the INM did not specify which Northern Triangle countries the child detainees came from, this information may be useful in gaining a better understanding of the direct link between insecurity and migrant flows. Violence in El Salvador (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/32-el-salvador>) -- fueled in part by increasing aggression (</news-briefs/el-salvador-gangs-grenade-car-police-attack>) between gangs and security forces -- has skyrocketed in 2015 (</news-briefs/el-salvador-most-violent-month-since-end-of-war>), while authorities (<http://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/845715-331/secretar%C3%ADa-de-seguridad-proyecta-cerrar-en-55-la-tasa-de-homicidios>) and independent violence observatories (<http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/825599-410/tasa-de-homicidios-baj%C3%B3-un-25-en-san-pedro-sula-seg%C3%BAAn-el>) in Honduras (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/66-honduras>) have reported a significant decrease in homicides.



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