

Trump says asylum seekers will wait in Mexico, won't be allowed in U.S. until courts approve

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WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump announced over Twitter Saturday evening that asylum seekers at the Southern border will wait in Mexico while their claims are processed in U.S. courts.

"Migrants at the Southern Border will not be allowed into the United States until their claims are individually approved in court. We only will allow those who come into our Country legally," the president wrote on Twitter Saturday evening. "All will stay in Mexico."

In his tweets, the president also threatened to close the Southern border "for any reason it becomes necessary."

"There is no way that the United States will, after decades of abuse, put up with this costly and dangerous situation anymore!" Trump wrote.

The president's tweets followed a Washington Post report Saturday that described a new agreement between the U.S. and Mexico that would allow asylum seekers to stay in Mexico.

The Post, which quoted Mexican officials and senior members of President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador's transition team, reported the agreement would break with long-standing asylum rules and place a "formidable new barrier" for migrants from Central America attempting to reach the United States.

The Post said the plan was dubbed "Remain in Mexico."

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Thousands of migrants, fleeing violence and poverty, have gathered at the Mexican border city of Tijuana. They are among several hundred other asylum-seekers heading north in groups toward the United States.

The Post reported that no formal agreement on the issue has been signed, and many details remain unresolved. López Obrador takes office Dec. 1.

Before the U.S. midterm elections, Trump called the northward movement of migrants in caravans an "invasion" and ordered several thousand U.S. troops to the border to bolster border security.

The Post, quoting U.S. and Mexican officials, said the deal took shape last week in Houston during a meeting between Marcelo Ebrard, Mexico's incoming foreign minister, and top U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen.

In a statement, James McCament, acting undersecretary for policy for the Department of Homeland Security, said the administration has been working since July with the current Mexican government and incoming administration on "shared issues of concern."

He said these include legitimate trade and travel, an interest in ensuring that those traveling to the U.S. borders do so safely and orderly, as well as "concern for the safety and security of vulnerable migrant populations, and respect for each nation's sovereignty."

The White House had no immediate comment on the Post report.

The agreement leaving asylum seekers in Mexico until their claims are heard in court could end the system derided by Trump as "catch and release," which has generally allowed those seeking refuge to wait on safer U.S. soil.

"For now, we have agreed to this policy of Remain in Mexico," Olga Sánchez Cordero, the top domestic policy official under López Obrador, told The Post. She called it a "short-term solution."

"The medium- and long-term solution is that people don't migrate," said Sánchez Cordero, the incoming interior minister. "Mexico has open arms and everything, but imagine, one caravan after another after another, that would also be a problem for us."

A federal judge issued a temporary restraining order this week blocking a Trump order that would deny protection to people who enter the country illegally seeking asylum.

"Whatever the scope of the president's authority, he may not rewrite the immigration laws to impose a condition that Congress has expressly forbidden," Judge Jon Tigar wrote in his order.

Trump responded by blasting "Obama judges" who challenge his orders, saying such judges make the border unsafe.

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