

Life on the Line

## Press clips August 17 – August 21, 2007

Short versions of translated articles. Originally in Spanish

### La Jornada, Friday August 17, 2007

#### **PFP and the army step up the security in Tenosique**

Arrested migrants riot in Tabasco – demand not to be deported  
ANGELES MARISCAL, RENE A. LOPEZ

To avoid deportation Central Americans migrants under arrest at the migration station in Tenosique, Tabasco, rioted on Wednesday night. This caused units from the National Institute of Migration (INM), the state Public Security, the Preventive Federal Police (PFP) and the Army to step up security in the area.

Since the train operating Chiapas-Mayab discontinued its services, the migrants now attempt to walk from the border of Suchiate, Chiapas, to Veracruz, which exposes them to criminal groups.

As soon as the INM begun the repatriation of the around three thousand Central American migrants found in the border region between Chiapas and Tabasco, more than a hundred people under arrest rioted the day before yesterday, according to the authorities in Tabasco.

The Central Americans removed the fence surrounding the wagon that serves as migration quarters. They demanded to be freed and tried to jump to the other side.

After the incident, the INM announced that they will send agents to assist in arrests and deportations.

Buses chartered by the INM have been sent to these regions to offer voluntary repatriation to the migrants, but the response so far has been lukewarm.

The government of Tabasco, with the help of the PFP and the INM, also offered food, medical attention and transportation so that the migrants can return "safe and sound" to their respective home countries.

### La Jornada, Friday August 17, 2007

The INM should receive migrants who volunteer for repatriation

#### **The CNDH demands "worthy accomodation" for detained Central Americans**

VICTOR BALLINAS

In order to stem the massive tide of undocumented migrants and prevent their extended presence in communities in Chiapas, Tabasco and Oaxaca – caused by the suspended operations of the freight trains that they usually use for transportation - the National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH) declared yesterday that the National Institute of Migration (INM) "should receive whoever presents themselves voluntarily to be repatriated; they should be put up in worthy accomodations and, if these are not readily available, to arrange for accomodation to host the migrants until their departure".

A communiqué issued by the CNDH yesterday requests that the INM, "if they do not have enough suitable spaces at the migration stations, that such spaces be arranged to host the migrants that have voluntarily presented themselves to the authorities for their repatriation; they should be accepted and, if there are no spaces, adequate spaces should be arranged for the migrants until they return to their places of origin. Their return should be facilitated and expedited with full respect to their human rights".

The CNDH issued a formal complaint based on the testimonies of two migrant women, who stated that, upon their detention in Tenosique, Tabasco, "federal migration officers burned their backpacks as well as the camp where a group of approximately 30 fellow migrants were currently reciding".

The fifth CNDH inspector, Mauricio Farah Gebara, added that the CNDH maintains a presence of eight inspectors in the south of the country, supervising the developments in the area in order to prevent and, where possible, document human rights violations.

## **El Universal, Friday August 17, 2007**

### **Aggressions reported against stranded migrants**

ROBERTO BARBOZA

FAISÁN VÍA, Tabasco

Under the cover of rifle fire and scattered bullets early yesterday morning, Mexican army troops and federal agents entered one of the camps in the border municipality of Tenosique, where Central American migrants have been stranded, since the train taking them north suspended its services, reported human rights groups.

According to the president of the Civil Commission of Human Rights in Tenosique (CCDHT), Fredy Flores Macías, one person was injured in the foot and two almost drowned. Furthermore, fifty people without identity papers were arrested and another fifty managed to escape over a barbed wire fence, through the thick vegetation or swimming across the Polevía lagoon.

This was the second operation in Tenosique in the last four days, carried out by the Army and the Preventive Federal Police (PFP), with assistance from the National Institute of Migration (INM). The motive for the operation were the undocumented migrants that have been gathering in the area close to the Chiapas-Mayab railroad ever since American Genessee&Wyoming suspended services on July 27.

Flores Macías and Father Juan Pablo Chávez reported that the federal forces not only destroyed the migrants' improvised tents, but also their belongings, apart from entering homes in the close-by community of Faisán Vía, where most of the inhabitants give food and help to the migrants.

## **El Universal, Sunday August 19, 2007**

### **The train has left the station for migrants in Chiapas**

DAVID AGUILAR

The damages caused by hurricane 'Stan' to bridges and highways forced the railroad company Ferrocarriles Chiapas Mayab to shut down, and left Central American migrants stranded.

The railroad company Ferrocarriles Chiapas Mayab, who used the railroad tracks in Chiapas, suspended operations on the Tonalá-Ciudad Hidalgo route in October 2005, when hurricane Stan damaged 70 bridges as well as 283 kilometres of tracks. They kept the Mérida-Coatzacoalcos route open, but the financial situation finally got the better of them. They lost many clients, and in June they announced that they are closing down.

John C. Hellmann, president and general director of GWI, argues that "the uncertainties regarding the reconstruction in Chiapas, combined with the deterioration in our commercial traffic, does not justify continued financial losses or even considering investments".

Jeanette Rosado, director of public relations at Chiapas Mayab, said that it would have taken 20 million dollars to repair 283 kilometres of railways in 2005, of which five kilometers needed to be completely rebuilt, as well as rebuilding 64 of the 70 damaged bridges and rescuing 537 cars trapped in different locations. GWI expects to liquidate its Mexican operations towards the ends of the year.

"Ridiculous," was Jeanette Rosado's comment regarding the fact that they now blame the Central American migrants for what happened. "It's funny and ridiculous, because for many months we reported the situation to the authorities, we fought to resolve it for the safety of the train engineers and other workers".

## **El Universal, Tuesday August 21, 2007**

### **Nightmare on the southern rail**

ALEJANDRO SUVERZA

Thousands of Central Americans are waiting for the Chiapas-Mayab railway to resume its services, which were suspended in July.

They acknowledge that for most of the migrants the train is 'a necessary evil'. Some of them walk along the tracks to make the journey towards the north more bearable.

Of the railway routes in the southeast of Mexico, the coastal line is the shortest. In a ledger for Central American citizens that have passed through Mexico to reach the United States over the last three years, thousands of immigrants have described how on their way through Mexico they have been assaulted or extorted by soldiers, police officers, migration officials, railroad staff, drivers and members of organized crime, armed with semi-automatics such as AK-47 and AR-15.

Between January and July this year, 4,243 migrants signed the ledgers of the Casa del Migrante (Migrant's House) in Arriaga, Chiapas, and 48.8% stated that they had been assaulted on the so-called Ruta de la Costa (Coastal Route).

Belongings along with 1,593,567 pesos were stolen from the migrants.

They show their feet covered in sores, staying a few days to recover. Because, due to the lack of trucks or freight trains to get on, they have to walk another 180 kilometres along the Ruta de la Costa. Some hide among the brush or risk using local transportation that charges up to ten times more than the cost of the journey.

Others are hunted down in operations initiated by the Mexican authorities last week. In Medias Aguas, Veracruz – the spot where they catch up with the trains coming from Oaxaca and Tabasco – the migrants were brought down from the trains and intimidated by the authorities until the train going to state of Mexico had passed.

For many, the train is a necessary evil as, no matter how, the Central Americans will not give up their goal of arriving in the United States.

It rains almost every day in the region. On El Universal's travels through the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Veracruz it could be confirm that the train and the migrants are the bread and butter for both assailants and Mexican authorities.

The destination is the Pastoral de la Movilidad Humana, run by Father Alejandro Salalinde. The parson estimates that at least 5,000 people arrive at his shelter every month. Those who are mutilated when they fall off or go to sleep on the train tracks have been transferred to a social services facility in Tapachula. "We have had meetings with Human Rights defenders, consuls and civil as well as religious organizations and we have our eyes on Arriaga, Chiapas; Tenosique, Tabasco and Ciudad Ixtepec, Oaxaca, since the train services stopped".

Ferromex, the other company operating the route towards the American dream, is still in service and more than 200 Central American have managed to get to the community of Medias Aguas, in Veracruz.

In Chiapas, the Beta Sur group is offering ointment to heal the sores or a can of tuna, shared between eight people. An official from the migrants' aid group, María de la Carmen Obregón, explained that there are no resources; that they do not even have enough to pay for gas. But in Oaxaca and Veracruz, there are no Betas – there it is the community that does the social work. In exchange for food and a little money, the migrants are hired to do community work.

### **The reality of illegal immigrants in Mexico**

The conditions that the migrants are living under have been reported to human rights and religious organizations

1,200 migrants were stranded in Tabasco, Chiapas and Oaxaca last week

900 migrant were sent back to their respective home countries

4,243 migrants have signed the shelter's ledger

48 % reported that they were victims of assault

16 to 35 are the registered ages of the migrants