

# Undeterred

## Toolkit: FAQ

### *Understanding the Problem*

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What is 'border militarization'?

When did border militarization start?

What is "Prevention Through Deterrence"?

Why did the Border Patrol adopt this new strategy in 1994?

Is this strategy still in use today?

Does border militarization work to stop undocumented migration?

Why do people die on the border?

How many people have died while crossing through the US-Mexico borderlands?

Who is crossing the border? Why?

What about terrorist threats to our national security coming across the border?

What is the 'border zone'?

What are interior immigration checkpoints?

How do checkpoints affect border residents?

Do checkpoints work?

How have the conditions on the border changed under the Trump Administration?

What about border militia groups?

Is family separation part of the strategy of Prevention Through Deterrence?

Are Border Patrol agents to blame for the crisis?

Who profits from border militarization?

What are the effects of border militarization nationally? Globally?

### *Making a Difference*

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Will electing Democrats stop the border crisis?

Will deportation work?

Will building a wall stop the border crisis?

Will surveillance technology stop the border crisis?

Can humanitarian relief resolve the border crisis?

Who can provide humanitarian relief?

How are rural border residents responding to these issues? Tribal members?

What is People Helping People in the Border Zone?

What is checkpoint monitoring?

What can you do to help?

# Undeterred

## Toolkit: FAQ

### *Understanding the Problem*

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#### **What is ‘border militarization’?**

The term *border militarization* describes the growing use of military-style tactics to police US borders. Walls, vehicle barriers, checkpoints, surveillance towers, ground sensors, drones, all-terrain vehicles, helicopters, and agents carrying military-grade weaponry are in daily use by US Customs and Border Protection to control the national boundary.

#### **When did border militarization start?**

In the 1980s, President Reagan’s War on Drugs first delivered military-grade weapons to the US Border Patrol for the purposes of cross-border drug enforcement.<sup>1</sup> In 1994, the Border Patrol officially revolutionized the approach to border control.<sup>2</sup> With the help of security tacticians from the Department of Defense, the Border Patrol created a southern border strategy called “Prevention Through Deterrence,” which is still in operation today.

#### **What is “Prevention Through Deterrence”?**

“Prevention Through Deterrence” aims to control the flow of undocumented peoples across the national border not by completely sealing off the 2,000-mile border, but by making the crossing increasingly costly and even deadly. Throughout the 1990s Border Patrol constructed walls, placed surveillance technology, and concentrated Border Patrol agents in and around binational cities. The intention was to shift migration traffic away from urban areas that were usually easier and safer to cross. Funneling people away from cities into “hostile terrain” was a strategy that sought to place travelers “in mortal danger” in the backcountry, far from aid or rescue. Border Patrol officials acknowledged that deaths would likely occur, but insisted that making the journey not only risky but potentially deadly would deter people from trying to enter the US without documentation.<sup>3</sup> They were wrong. By the late 1990s undocumented migration was happening in mass across the desert wilderness<sup>4</sup>, a journey which many people continue to undergo to this day. Using the desert as a weapon has not deterred people from crossing, although thousands have lost their lives in the attempt.

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<sup>1</sup> “1986”, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, last modified October 26, 2015, <https://www.cbp.gov/about/history/timeline/timeline-date/1986>

<sup>2</sup> “Summary”, Homeland Security Digital Library, July, 1994, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=721845>.

<sup>3</sup> “Summary”

<sup>4</sup> Mark Hugo Lopez, Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, “Key facts about the changing U.S. unauthorized immigrant population”, Pew Research Center, April 13, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/04/13/key-facts-about-the-changing-u-s-unauthorized-immigrant-population/>



### **Why did the Border Patrol adopt this new strategy in 1994?**

In 1994, the US signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which radically liberalized trade in the hemisphere, loosening regulations on imports and exports between the US, Canada, and Mexico. Soon after, US-government subsidized corn flooded the Mexican market, decimating many of the small-scale agricultural economies which had existed for generations.<sup>5</sup> As millions of Mexicans suddenly could no longer make ends meet, many fled northward in search of work. Though waves of Mexican labor-driven migration have flowed into the US for more than a century, it was in the context of this surge of labor-driven migration into the US that the Border Patrol adopted a new approach to police the southern boundary.

### **Is this strategy still in use today?**

Yes. The post-9/11 creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) led to the reinforcement of this Prevention Through Deterrence approach by ballooning the size of the US Border Patrol to almost 20,000 agents<sup>6</sup>, and by changing the priority mission of the border enforcement agency to one of counter-terrorism.<sup>7</sup> As part of the Global War on Terror, border militarization became heavily funded by government spending on the bolstering of military-grade weapons technology and infrastructure. Prevention Through Deterrence continues to be the dominant doctrine underlying border enforcement policies to this day<sup>8</sup>, including the deployment of the National Guard and US military troops, which further pushes people into more and more remote areas of desert wilderness.

### **Does border militarization work to stop undocumented migration?**

No. There is no evidence that Prevention Through Deterrence works to stop people from entering the United States without permission. In fact, a 2006 study by the Pew Research Center<sup>9</sup> shows that, during the first decade of border militarization, there were at least 7 million successful unauthorized crossings between ports of entry. Since the adoption of Prevention Through Deterrence in 1994, the undocumented population inside of the US grew to nearly 13 million people in 2007.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Pollan, "A Flood of U.S. Corn Rips at Mexico", April 23, 2004,

<https://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/a-flood-of-u-s-corn-rips-at-mexico/>

<sup>6</sup> "What is the Real Cost of an Additional 20,000 Border Patrol Agents?", WOLA, June 21, 2013,

<https://www.wola.org/analysis/what-is-the-real-cost-of-an-additional-20000-border-patrol-agents/>

<sup>7</sup> "Mission", Department of Homeland Security, last updated April 10, 2022, <https://www.dhs.gov/mission>

<sup>8</sup> "2022-2026 U.S. Border Patrol Strategy", U.S. Customs and Border Protection, February, 2022, <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2022-Jun/USBPStrategy%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> "America's Immigration Quandary", Pew Research Center, March 30, 2006,

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2006/03/30/americas-immigration-quandary/>

<sup>10</sup> Abby Budiman, "Key findings about U.S. immigrants", Pew Research Center, August 20, 2020,

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>



In fact, border militarization increases permanent undocumented residency in the United States: laborers who, in the past, would cross seasonally to work in the US and then return home, now face the threat of death in the remote borderlands. As a result of these heightened risks, many undocumented laborers have opted to move their whole families to the United States rather than risk multiple crossings.

### **Why do people die and disappear on the border?**

The US Border Patrol is heavily armed and has an appalling track record when it comes to the use of excessive and deadly force: since 2010, at least 203 people have died as the result of an encounter with U.S. border agents.<sup>11</sup> While this number is egregious, the vast majority of those dying when attempting to cross the border succumb from dehydration, heat-related illness, and other exposure related issues. In order to cross the border without permission, many travel on foot for days, even weeks, through arid deserts, humid brushlands, and dangerous waterways. To evade border enforcement officials, people crossing the border often travel on difficult terrain in areas far from civilization and militarization, and in doing so, people can become injured or fall ill during the journey. Wounds as minor as blisters or twisted ankles may quickly become deadly if the pain of those injuries prevent an individual from keeping up with their travel companions. In the intense heat of the Sonoran Desert, dehydration and heat-related illnesses are also life-threatening. Without access to clean drinking water in wilderness areas, many resort to tapping dirty water from cattle troughs and in doing so, can contract gastrointestinal illnesses. Others, unable to find or carry enough water for the multiple-day journey, quickly perish. Pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and pregnancy, may also be dangerously exacerbated and become life-threatening to those undertaking the trek. In the case of a medical emergency there is often no way to contact rescue: there is little cell phone reception in remote areas and cell phones lose battery quickly. All of these factors combined make for deadly conditions on the migration trail.

For the majority of the fatalities on the border, the cause of death is exposure or undetermined—the latter due to the fact that many remains are not discovered until they have already become skeletal.<sup>12</sup> Due to the reality that many remains are never discovered at all and many deaths never reported, the true number of those who have died will never be known. The crisis on the border is therefore also one of disappearance.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “CBP Fatal Encounters Tracker”, ACLU Texas, last updated November 15, 2022, <https://www.aclutx.org/en/cbp-fatal-encounters-tracker>

<sup>12</sup> Anita Snow, “More migrant deaths recorded in heat along Arizona border”, A.P. News, July 12, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/arizona-1300cd229c566188f912232edadc1dea>.

<sup>13</sup> No More Deaths, La Coalición de Derechos Humanos, “Left To Die: Border Patrol, Search and Rescue, & The Crisis of Disappearance”, [http://www.thedisappearedreport.org/uploads/8/3/5/1/83515082/left\\_to\\_die\\_-\\_english.pdf](http://www.thedisappearedreport.org/uploads/8/3/5/1/83515082/left_to_die_-_english.pdf).



### **How many people have died while crossing through the US-Mexico borderlands?**

There have been more than 8,000 confirmed human remains recovered from the deserts of the US southwest over the last twenty years but advocacy groups believe the true number of deaths could be as high as 80,000. The number of disappearances reported in the border region far outnumber any official death count and although Border Patrol's official count is 7,805 deaths for the period between 1998 and 2019, the agency is also known for under-reporting these numbers.<sup>14</sup> People are perishing in remote backcountry areas, many bodies are never found. Although the Federal Government's approach to immigration enforcement ordains the death-penalty for this population, there is minimal Federal Government effort to record or recover the dead. The crisis on the border is not only one of death, but one of mass disappearance.<sup>15</sup> The full human cost of "Prevention Through Deterrence" remains unacknowledged.

### **Who is crossing the border? Why?**

The Border Patrol strategy of Prevention Through Deterrence was originally aimed primarily at controlling the flow of Mexican nationals crossing the border in search of labor. However, since 1994, many new populations have been caught up in this deadly migration system, including but not limited to:

- Families of Mexican laborers (adults, children, the elderly) who are crossing to rejoin their loved ones and to permanently resettle inside of the US.
- Parents who have been deported and are returning to mixed-status or largely citizen-families in the US.
- Central Americans, particularly from the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador). Multiple push-pull factors propel Central American migration. These include the economic deterioration caused by the Central American Free Trade Agreement, the rise of the US-backed drug war, which routinely catches civilian populations in the crossfire, the subsequent growth of organized crime and political and economic instability (such as the 2009 coup of the Zelaya government in Honduras)<sup>16</sup>. These factors and more have created hundreds of thousands of new refugees who are now fleeing for their lives. Many are asylum seekers and many of those children.

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<sup>14</sup> "Left To Die: Border Patrol, Search and Rescue, & The Crisis of Disappearance"

<sup>15</sup> "Migrant deaths and disappearances", Migration Data Portal, last updated June 14, 2022, <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/migrant-deaths-and-disappearances>

<sup>16</sup> Patricia Foxen, "Understanding Central American Migrations", Unidos US, July 14, 2021, <https://unidosus.org/blog/2021/07/14/understanding-central-american-migrations/>



- Haitians, fleeing natural disasters, violence, high levels of crime, hunger and ongoing political and economic and public health crises caused by the country's long history of repression under foreign powers and massive external debt.<sup>17 18</sup>
- “Climate refugees.” Though not an officially recognized population by domestic or international law, many climate refugees are being created by carbon emissions, global warming, the melting of polar-ice caps, the rise of sea levels, and the increasing number of superstorm systems. These crises disproportionately affect island-nations, people living on the delicate isthmus of Central America, those residing in drought-stricken areas, and the poor. The United Nations predicts that ecological factors will displace up to 216 million people by 2050<sup>19</sup>.

### **What about terrorist threats to our national security coming across the border?**

There have been zero known terrorists, terrorist groups or terror plots to do harm to people within the United States ever connected with the U.S.-Mexico border. The majority of people who have been apprehended attempting to enter the US with connections to ‘known terror groups’ have sought to enter the country by plane, boat or across the US-Canadian border.<sup>20</sup>

### **What is the ‘Border Zone’?**

Many living and working in the southwest region no longer describe the region as “the border” but rather as the “border zone.” This is due to the fact that militarization tactics employed by the US Border Patrol have claimed a massive swath of land for their patrol activities. Federal regulations give Customs and Border Protection authority to operate within 100 miles of any US “external boundary.”<sup>21</sup> Roving patrols, helicopter fly-overs, drone surveillance, motion-detecting sensors, and an army of Border Patrol agents freely circulate throughout this zone within the United States, effectively extending the border from a line to a 100-mile wide enforcement zone.

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<sup>17</sup> S. Priya Morley et al., “A Journey of Hope: Haitian Women’s Migration to Tapachula, Mexico, (2021)”, 2021, Instituto para las Mujeres en la Migración A. C.,

<https://imumi.org/attachments/2020/A-Journey-of-Hope-Haitian-Womens-Migration-to%20-Tapachula.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> “Haiti External Debt 1970-2023”, Macrotrends,

<https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/HTI/haiti/external-debt-stock>

<sup>19</sup> “World ‘at a crossroads’ as droughts increase nearly a third in a generation”, United Nation News, May 12, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118142>

<sup>20</sup> David J. Bier, Alex Nowrasteh, “45,000 ‘Special Interest Aliens’ Caught Since 2007, But No U.S.

Terrorist Attacks from Illegal Border Crossers”, Cato at Liberty, December 17th, 2018,

<https://www.cato.org/blog/45000-special-interest-aliens-caught-2007-no-us-terrorist-attacks-illegal-border-crossers>

<sup>21</sup> “The Constitution in the 100-Mile Border Zone”, ACLU,

<https://www.aclu.org/other/constitution-100-mile-border-zone>



### **What are interior immigration checkpoints?**

The Border Patrol has established vehicular checkpoints on all major roads in the southwest border region and many in the northern border region.<sup>22</sup> Checkpoints are positioned between 25-100 miles from the national boundary.<sup>23</sup> <sup>24</sup> Armed agents use cameras, vehicle scanning technology, K-9 units, and other technology and infrastructure to stop and examine all northbound vehicle traffic in the region. The stated purpose of checkpoints is to interdict people without papers. However, the use of checkpoints carries much deeper consequences for the lives of undocumented travelers and border residents.

Interior checkpoints act as a ‘second border’ for those crossing through the region. Because checkpoints are positioned on all major roadways, those crossing the US-Mexico border must attempt to circumvent them by way of the backcountry. In this way, checkpoints greatly extend the distance that people crossing must cover on foot in the wilderness. As a consequence, many people who perish in the desert die dozens of miles inside of the United States, but within the system of interior checkpoints. As a tactic of the Prevention Through Deterrence Strategy, checkpoints effectively heighten the risk of death for those crossing the border.

### **How do checkpoints affect border residents?**

For local borderlands residents, immigration checkpoints lock down border communities. The appearance of checkpoints on roadways mark the region as dangerous and policed to the public, which has diminished tourism, driven down property values, and depressed local economies.<sup>25</sup> In small towns and rural areas where there are few local services, residents must pass through checkpoints daily to go to the bank, to work, or to visit a doctor. Children must pass through checkpoints on their morning bus ride to primary school. For a generation of young people in the border region, interacting daily with armed federal agents has become a way of life.

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<sup>22</sup> “Border Patrol Lacks Important Information about Immigration Checkpoints Within the United States”, U.S Government Accountability Office, June 29, 2022, <https://www.gao.gov/blog/border-patrol-lacks-important-information-about-immigration-checkpoints-within-united-states>

<sup>23</sup> “Lawsuit Challenges Use of Checkpoints Miles From the Border”, U.S News & World Report, August 11, 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/new-hampshire/articles/2020-08-11/lawsuit-challenges-use-of-checkpoints-miles-from-the-border>.

<sup>24</sup> “The Border’s Long Shadow FAQ”, ACLU Michigan, [https://www.aclumich.org/sites/default/files/100\\_mile\\_zone\\_report\\_faqs\\_updated.pdf](https://www.aclumich.org/sites/default/files/100_mile_zone_report_faqs_updated.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey Jenkins, Jeffrey G. Proudfoot, Jim Marquardson, Judith Gans, Elyse Golob, and Jay Nunamaker, “Checking on Checkpoints: An Assessment of U.S. Border Patrol Checkpoint Operations, Performance, and Impacts”, National Center for Border Security and Immigration, September, 2014, [https://eller.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/checking-on-checkpoints\\_2014-09-09\\_0.pdf](https://eller.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/checking-on-checkpoints_2014-09-09_0.pdf)



The 1976 *United States v. Martinez-Fuerte*<sup>26</sup> Supreme Court decision ruled that Border Patrol agents at interior checkpoints have legal authority to stop vehicles for brief questioning regarding its occupants' immigration status, even if there is no reason to believe that the vehicle contains unauthorized travelers. The court further held that Border Patrol agents "have wide discretion" to refer motorists selectively to a secondary inspection area for additional questioning and searches.

Border Patrol agents regularly violate residents' and citizens' rights at interior checkpoints. Warrantless vehicle searches, excessive questioning, unlawful detentions, seizures, and the verbal and physical assault of locals have all been documented at Border Patrol checkpoints.<sup>27</sup> Racial profiling is rampant; an independent monitoring effort conducted by Arivaca residents of more than 2,400 vehicle stops found that Latinx motorists are 26 times more likely to show identification at an immigration checkpoint and 20 times more likely to be required to submit to secondary inspection.<sup>28</sup>

### **Do checkpoints work?**

No. There is no evidence to show that checkpoints play any significant role in apprehending people without papers traveling through the border region. According to the Government Accounting Office, interior checkpoints account for less than 2% of all immigration-related apprehensions border-wide, but demand 9% or more of Border Patrol personnel<sup>29</sup>. It is an open secret that the vast majority of unauthorized migration traffic is routed around interior checkpoints. While checkpoints do not work to apprehend people, they do support the overall aim of the Prevention Through Deterrence doctrine, forcing people over dangerous wilderness terrain in order to expose them to mortal danger.

### **How did conditions on the border change under the Trump Administration?**

Under the Trump Administration, there was a dramatic escalation of an already deadly border policy. Along with the construction of more expansive and expensive walls along the border, the Trump Administration deployed the National Guard, and the US military, further augmenting border enforcement activities in and around rural border communities. The Trump era saw increased

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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Supreme Court, "*United States v. Martinez-Fuerte*, 428 U.S. 543", 1976, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/428/543/>

<sup>27</sup> "Guilty Until Proven Innocent", ACLU, May, 2015, [https://www.aclu-nm.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/aclu-nm\\_guiltyuntilproveninnocentfinal5\\_15\\_2015\\_2.pdf](https://www.aclu-nm.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/aclu-nm_guiltyuntilproveninnocentfinal5_15_2015_2.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> "Checkpoint Monitoring Report", People Helping People, October 26, 2014, [http://phparivaca.org/?page\\_id=1174](http://phparivaca.org/?page_id=1174).

<sup>29</sup> "Border Patrol: Issues Related to Agent Deployment Strategy and Immigration Checkpoints", United States Government Accountability Office, November, 2017 <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-50.pdf>





prosecutions against humanitarian aid workers<sup>30</sup> and border residents such as Scott Warren<sup>31</sup>, Amber Ortega<sup>32</sup> and Teresa L. Todd.<sup>33</sup> The Trump administration also enacted multiple anti-immigrant measures through 472 changes in immigration-related policy that largely impacted the US immigration system<sup>34</sup>, such as travel bans, limiting and pausing refugee admissions, and travel and immigration restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>35</sup> The administration's Zero Tolerance policies called for all undocumented migrants who crossed the U.S./ Mexico border without authorization to be prosecuted, caused asylum seekers to be detained indefinitely and allowed for family separation. By limiting, restricting and in some cases halting legal paths to entry into the US, the Trump administration left many thousands of additional people with no other choice than to risk dangerous unauthorized crossings to enter the country. These policies have mostly continued under subsequent presidential administrations, that have also carried on funneling huge amounts of money into border tech, surveillance, and policing.

### **What about border militia groups?**

So-called border militias are vigilante groups that conduct heavily armed civilian patrols of remote border regions and have existed in various forms on the US/Mexico border since the United States first annexed the territory.<sup>36</sup> The implementation of Prevention Through Deterrence led to an increased presence of these groups on the border.<sup>37</sup> Members of these groups have known ties to

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<sup>30</sup> Ryan Devereaux, "Trial Starts for Border Activists With No More Deaths Group", The Intercept, January 17, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/01/17/no-more-deaths-border-documents-trial/>

<sup>31</sup> Ryan Devereaux, "Scott Warren Not Guilty in Trial for Border Humanitarian Work", The Intercept, November 23, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/11/23/scott-warren-verdict-immigration-border/>

<sup>32</sup> Ryan Devereaux, "Indigenous Activist Goes to Trial for Protesting Trump's Wall", The Intercept, November 3, 2021, <https://theintercept.com/2021/11/03/trump-border-wall-protest-amber-ortega/>

<sup>33</sup> Manny Fernandez, "She Stopped to Help Migrants on a Texas Highway. Moments Later, She Was Arrested.", The New York Times, May 10, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/10/us/texas-border-good-samaritan.html>

<sup>34</sup> Jessica Bolter, Emma Israel and Sarah Pierce, "Four Years of Profound Change: Immigration Policy During the Trump Presidency", Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2022, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/four-years-change-immigration-trump>

<sup>35</sup> "How Trump is Shaping Immigration Policy", February 8, 2018, IRW (Investigative Reporting Workshop), <https://archive.investigativereportingworkshop.org/news/how-trump-is-shaping-immigration-policy/>

<sup>36</sup> Jack Herrera, "Armed Militias on the Border Have a Long -and often- Racist History", Pacific Standard, April 22, 2019, <https://psmag.com/news/armed-militias-on-the-border-have-a-long-and-often-racist-history>

<sup>37</sup> Patrick Strickland, "Welcome to Arivaca: Where residents want anti-migrant militia out", Aljazeera, November 18, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/19/welcome-to-arivaca-where-residents-want-anti-migrant-militia-out>



white supremacist and neo-Nazi organizations.<sup>38</sup> Although not a mass movement, border militias continue to receive notoriety and wider acceptance as the far right gains traction in the United States. Although Border Patrol as an agency does not work officially with any of these groups, individual agents and the agency as a whole on occasion have been known to collaborate with them.<sup>39</sup>

### **Is family separation part of the strategy of Prevention Through Deterrence?**

Yes. Taking refugee children from their asylum-seeking parents is part and parcel of immigration enforcement meant to establish “a tough deterrent.” Family internment and the detention system have worked in numerous and often under-reported ways to keep families apart under both Democratic and Republican administrations. CBP seeks to use these extraordinary punishments as a means of deterring other refugees from seeking protected status inside the United States (despite legal protections guaranteed by domestic and international asylum law).<sup>40</sup>

Many commentators have pointed out that policies of child separation and family internment rely on a false premise: that those seeking aid have other ways of pursuing safe haven. In reality, however, those who knowingly enter into US custody and who have endured indefinite detention and even the loss of their children have done so because they face certain violence or other untenable realities if returned to their countries of origin. If successfully deterred from seeking asylum through legal means, many people will opt instead to cross through remote areas of the southern border. With its policies of child separation, the US immigration system seeks to control refugee populations by inflicting pain and suffering on them at every turn.

### **Are Border Patrol agents to blame for the crisis?**

Border Patrol agents are tasked with carrying out a deadly policing mission. The daily practices and tactics used by agents on the ground exacerbate the threat to life in the borderlands. Agents routinely chase and scatter groups of travelers in remote areas where they are vulnerable to losing life-saving supplies, being injured, and being separated from their guides and companions in an un-navigable desert.<sup>41</sup> Agents have also been documented destroying more than 2,000 gallons of

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<sup>38</sup> Patrick Strickland, “The U.S.-Mexico Border Has Long Been a Magnet for Far-Right Vigilantes”, Time, February 2017, 2022, <https://time.com/6141322/border-vigilantes-militias-us-mexico-immigrants/>

<sup>39</sup> Ryan Devereaux, “The Bloody History of Border Militias Runs Deep- and Law Enforcement is Part of It”, The Intercept, April 23, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/04/23/border-militia-migrants/>

<sup>40</sup> Caitlin Dickerson, “The Secret History of the U.S. Government’s Family-Separation Policy”, The Atlantic, August 7, 2022,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/09/trump-administration-family-separation-policy-immigration/670604/>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.thedisappearedreport.org/uploads/8/3/5/1/83515082/fianlpart1.pdf>



water placed by humanitarian aid workers in the most deadly migration corridors along the border.<sup>42</sup> The rapid militarization of the agency has led to systemic issues around the excessive use of force. Border Patrol agents have caused the deaths of over 250 people since 2010.<sup>43 44</sup> In 2018, a Border Patrol agent shot and killed Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzalez, a 20-year old Guatemalan woman, in the back as she fled.<sup>45</sup> However, that agent has not been charged with a crime. In fact, not one Border Patrol has ever been disciplined for the excessive use of force while on duty.<sup>46</sup> Agent Lonny Swartz, who shot 16-year old Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez ten times in the back in 2012, was the first on-duty Border Patrol agent to be charged with homicide. However, in 2018 he was acquitted of all charges.<sup>47</sup>

The agency as a whole suffers from a stark lack of transparency and accountability around these issues, producing a culture of cruelty and impunity.<sup>48</sup> To this day, it is unknown whether the Border Patrol conducts internal investigations when its agents use deadly force in the field. A Staff attorney for the ACLU thus stated, “We don’t know very much about the Border Patrol, except that they are the most lawless, abusive, and unaccountable law enforcement agency in the country.”<sup>49</sup>

### **Who profits from border militarization?**

Defense contractors, cartels, and private prison and airline companies all profit from border militarization:

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<sup>42</sup> [http://www.thedisappearedreport.org/uploads/8/3/5/1/83515082/disappeared\\_report\\_part\\_2.pdf](http://www.thedisappearedreport.org/uploads/8/3/5/1/83515082/disappeared_report_part_2.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> “CBP Fatal Encounters Tracker”, ACLU Texas, last updated November 15, 2022,

<https://www.aclutx.org/en/cbp-fatal-encounters-tracker>

<sup>44</sup> “Track Death and Abuse By Border Patrol”, Southern Border Communities Coalition, October 18, 2023,

[https://www.southernborder.org/deaths\\_by\\_border\\_patrol](https://www.southernborder.org/deaths_by_border_patrol)

<sup>45</sup> “Gomez Vincente v. United States of America & Barrera”, Hold CBP Accountable, June 27, 2019,

<https://holdcbpaccountable.org/2019/06/27/ftca-administrative-complaint-filed-with-cbp-over-killing-of-unar-med-woman/>

<sup>46</sup> Davida Gallegos, “Brutality in the Borderlands”, ACLU New Mexico, December 30, 2021,

<https://www.aclu-nm.org/en/news/brutality-borderlands>

<sup>47</sup> Michel Marizco, “Border Agent Found Not Guilty Again in Border Killing, Fronteras, December 6, 2018,

<https://fronterasdesk.org/content/728582/border-agent-found-not-guilty-again-border-killing>

<sup>48</sup> “An Oversight Agenda for Customs and Border Protection: America’s Largest, Least Accountable Law Enforcement Agency”, POGO (Project On Government OverSight), October 12, 2021,

<https://docs.pogo.org/report/2021/CBP-Oversight-Report-2021-10-12.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> John Washington, “Why We Need a Whistle-Blower in US Customs and Border Protection”, April 25, 2017,

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/why-we-need-a-whistleblower-in-us-customs-and-border-protection/>



- **Defense contractors:** Prevention Through Deterrence has ushered in a new era of defense industry contracting in the US southwest. As on-the-ground military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have come to a close, war industry outfits have found new opportunities in providing the weaponry and manpower to militarize the border region. Walls, towers, helicopters, drones, scopes, sensors, SUVs, dogs, rifles, and more: outfitting the border with infrastructure, weaponry, and technology has become a multibillion-dollar global industry.<sup>50</sup> As funding ramps up, new doors are opening for contractors to enter the fold to debut the military equipment of the day, constantly expanding what many now term the “border-industrial-complex”, which is now in an unprecedented growth period.<sup>51</sup>
- **Organized crime:** routing migration through dangerous terrain has meant big business for black-market actors. The looming threat of death in a vast, rugged, and unfamiliar landscape makes crossing the border territory next to impossible without hiring a guide. As a consequence, militarization of the border has birthed a large-scale human smuggling industry, which has quickly become monopolized by organized crime. Cartel organizations on the border control the illicit movement of people across the border.<sup>52</sup> Regional monopolies empower mafia organizations to charge averages of \$6,000-\$12,000 per person for clandestine escort through the wilderness. Many of those migrating pay part or all of this fee in advance; in effect, cartels regularly profit whether or not they successfully deliver their people to their desired destination within the US. The growth of cartel revenue is assured by current federal deportation efforts to remove millions of undocumented people from within the US.
- **Private Prison Companies:** being arrested and deported is now also a source of profit for US corporations: over the last twenty years, the immigration detention system has rapidly expanded to grow the private prison industry.<sup>53</sup> Legislative efforts which promote criminal sentences for the civil infraction of unauthorized-entry in combination with the

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<sup>50</sup> “Cashing In On Crisis”, Transnational Institute, March 3, 2022,  
<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/cashing-in-on-crisis>

<sup>51</sup> Todd Miller, “The Border Industrial Complex Goes Big Time”, The Border Chronicle, January 19, 2023,  
<https://www.theborderchronicle.com/p/the-border-industrial-complex-goes>

<sup>52</sup> Parker Asmann and Steven Dudley, “Desperation in the Desert: The Industrialization of Migrant Smuggling on the US-Mexico Border”, Insight Crime, October 5, 2022,  
<https://insightcrime.org/news/desperation-desert-migrant-smuggling-us-mexico-border/>

<sup>53</sup> Eunice Cho, “More of the Same: Private Prison Corporations and Immigration Detention Under the Biden Administration”, ACLU, October 5, 2021,  
<https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/more-of-the-same-private-prison-corporations-and-immigration-detention-under-the-biden-administration>



rapid uptick in refugees surrendering at ports of entry in hopes of receiving political asylum has amounted to an explosion in the undocumented US inmate population. Incarceration giants GeoGroup and CoreCivic (formerly Corrections Corporation of America) have received multi-million dollar government contracts<sup>54</sup> to house immigration detainees and asylum-seekers. The revenue of for-profit detention centers is amplified when they put the incarcerated to work for wages of between \$1 and \$3 a day.<sup>55</sup> Ironically, many of those being punished for working illegally in the US now labor inside private detention centers.

- **Private Airline Carriers and Other Private Entities:** There isn't enough local infrastructure to carry out the deportations of people detained crossing the border therefore the government contracts private airline companies to fly many deportation flights. Other private companies such as Amazon also profit by investing in these private airlines contracted by the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>56 57 58</sup>

### **What are the effects of border militarization nationally? Globally?**

The militarization of the US border with Mexico is not only a local matter. The military-style federal policing practiced for years in the borderlands, has begun to creep into the interior of the country. Border Patrol checkpoints, now normalized in the southwest, have also begun to pop-up throughout the northern United States.<sup>59</sup> Predator drones, purchased for use in the border region, are now

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<sup>54</sup> Eunice Cho, "Unchecked Growth Private Prison Corporations and Immigration Detention, Three Years Into the Biden Administration", ACLU, August 7, 2023, <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/unchecked-growth-private-prison-corporations-and-immigration-detention-three-years-into-the-biden-administration>

<sup>55</sup> Brian Osgood, "'Slavery Wages' Prompt Hunger Strike at ICE Detention Facilities", Aljazeera, March 3, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/3/hunger-strike-at-ice-detention-facilities-protest-slavery>

<sup>56</sup> Tom Schuba, Frank Main, Lauren FitzPatrick and Michael Loria, 'Charter plane company used to transport deportees for U.S. was hired by Texas governor to bring asylum-seekers to Chicago', Chicago Suntimes, December 22, 2023, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2023/12/21/24011417/greg-abbott-migrants-texas-asylum-seekers-chicago>

<sup>57</sup> Dominick Reuter, "Amazon owns a significant stake in a private air company that the US uses to deport people and has been accused of human rights abuses", Business Insider, February 18, 2022, <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-owns-stake-in-private-air-company-used-in-deportations-2022-2?op=1>

<sup>58</sup> Sam Biddle, "Amazon co-owns deportation airline implicated in alleged torture of immigrants", Te Intercept, February 17, 2022, <https://theintercept.com/2022/02/17/amazon-ice-deportation-flights-omni/>

<sup>59</sup> "U.S. Border Patrol Interior Checkpoints: Frequently Asked Questions", ACLU Border Litigation Project, <https://www.aclu-sdic.org/sites/default/files/border-patrol-checkpoint-faqs.pdf>



routinely loaned out to enforcement agencies throughout the interior.<sup>60</sup> Border Patrol personnel are also participating more regularly in domestic policing operations.<sup>61</sup> <sup>62</sup> <sup>63</sup> Border Patrol agents were sent to support the violent suppression of the demonstrations for water rights and indigenous sovereignty at Standing Rock and to detain protesters in Portland in unmarked vehicles during the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020.<sup>64</sup> The southwest border acts as a gateway for the creep of these and other militarized law enforcement strategies across the nation's interior.

The humanitarian crisis in the southwest borderlands is also not limited to the region. The loss of loved ones carries ripple effects for families and communities all across the US, Mexico, and Central America. The mass disappearance of undocumented peoples in US deserts leaves entire family systems and social networks in a state of traumatic unknowing. Untold thousands live day to day without ever learning of the fate of their loved one who vanished while attempting the journey through the borderlands. In this way, the crisis of death and disappearance amounts to a campaign of social terror against peoples and populations throughout the hemisphere.<sup>65</sup> The United States is also investing monetarily, through training,<sup>66</sup> infrastructure and technology, in the build up of border enforcement agencies around the world.<sup>67</sup> The global export of the Prevention Through Deterrence strategy seeks to shore up the economic interests of the United States and its allies while growing the profits of companies creating the infrastructure of militarization.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Tom McKay and Dhruv Mehrotra, "We Mapped Where Customs and Border Protection Drones Are Flying in the U.S. and Beyond", Gizmodo, June 9, 2020,

<https://gizmodo.com/we-mapped-where-customs-and-border-protection-drones-ar-1843928454>

<sup>61</sup> Suzanne Ciechalski, Shamar Walters, Janhvi Bhojwani and Jareen Imam, "Portland protesters on being detained, chased by federal agents as situation intensifies", NBC News, July 24, 2020,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/portland-protesters-being-detained-chased-federal-agents-situation-intensifies-n1234616>

<sup>62</sup> *Kimberly Rolle*, "The Militarization of US Law Enforcement and Civilian Harm", Center for Civilians in Conflict, <https://civiliansinconflict.org/blog/the-militarization-of-us-law-enforcement-and-civilian-harm/>

<sup>63</sup> "CBP Secures Super Bowl", U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August 2, 2021

<https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/spotlights/cbp-secures-super-bowl>

<sup>64</sup> Todd Miller, "Border Agents are Allowed to Operate 100 Miles Inside the US. That Should Worry Us", The Guardian, August 8, 2020,

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/08/border-agents-us-force>

<sup>65</sup> No More Deaths and La Coalición de Derechos Humanos, "Separate & Deadly: Segregation of 911 Emergency Services in the Arizona Borderlands", February 3, 2021,

[http://www.thedisappearedreport.org/uploads/8/3/5/1/83515082/separate\\_and\\_deadly\\_english.pdf](http://www.thedisappearedreport.org/uploads/8/3/5/1/83515082/separate_and_deadly_english.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> "International Training and Assistance", U.S. Customs and Border Protection, July 20, 2018,

<https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/international-initiatives/international-training-assistance>

<sup>67</sup> "CBP Attaches", U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August 4, 2023,

<https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/international-initiatives/cbp-attaches>

<sup>68</sup> Todd Miller, "Trapped in an Empire of Borders", Counterpunch, September 26, 2019,

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/09/26/trapped-in-an-empire-of-borders/>



## *Making a Difference*

### **Will electing Democrats stop the border crisis?**

Not necessarily. While some Democratic legislators have favored less border militarization than have most Republican legislators, the lethal approach to border control has always been a bipartisan effort.<sup>69</sup> The policy of Prevention Through Deterrence was a Clinton Administration invention. The strategy was reinforced under George W. Bush with the signing of the Secure Fence Act in 2006.<sup>70</sup> Barack Obama continued to expand the size of the Border Patrol and erected the family detention system that houses refugee mothers and children today.<sup>71</sup> The injustices of border control entered the mainstream news cycle with the Trump Administration's measures to build more walls, deny asylum seekers, separate families, and deport masses of undocumented people. However, even Bernie Sanders during his presidential campaign stood before the border wall in Nogales, Arizona and stated that he supported enhanced border security measures.<sup>72</sup> While some Democrats have begun to call for the abolition of ICE, there has yet to be a significant Democratic voice calling for full-scale border demilitarization to end the crisis of death and suffering.

### **Will deportation work?**

No. During the years of increased border militarization, many undocumented workers who had traditionally labored in the United States on a seasonal basis have instead elected to move their entire families to the US interior, rather than risk multiple deadly border crossings. As a result, deportation frequently targets people with deep family and social ties inside of the United States,<sup>73</sup> whose partners and children may be US citizens themselves. Many in this population inevitably attempt to cross back into the US to reunite with their families. Additionally, there are growing numbers of refugees from the Northern Triangle of Central America who are crossing the border in pursuit of safe-haven. As the asylum system fails to protect their lives, deportation to their countries of origin

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<sup>69</sup> Hilary Beaumont, "The Ghoulis, Bipartisan Tradition of Death at the Southern Border", The New Republic, February 26, 2021,

<https://newrepublic.com/article/161490/ghoulis-bipartisan-tradition-death-southern-border>

<sup>70</sup> "Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006", The White House, October 26, 2006,

<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061026-1.html>

<sup>71</sup> Leigh Barrick, "Divided by Detention: Asylum-Seeking Families' Experiences of Separation", American Immigration Council, August 31, 2016,

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/divided-by-detention-asylum-seeking-families-experience-of-separation>

<sup>72</sup> Bernie Sanders, "U.S./Mexico Border, Nogales, Arizona", March 24, 2016,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeNH1MRIHps>

<sup>73</sup> Julia Preston, "The True Costs of Deportation", The Marshall Project, June 18, 2020,

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/06/22/the-true-costs-of-deportation>



often amounts to a death sentence.<sup>74</sup> For these reasons, deportation only fuels the cycle of death and disappearance in the region.

### **Will building a wall stop the border crisis?**

No. Walls do not drive down the numbers of people crossing, nor do anything to address the root causes of migration. Along the 2,000 miles of US-Mexico border, as of 2016 there were already more than 650 miles of walling, fencing, and vehicle barriers.<sup>75</sup> These barriers did not stop people from crossing the border: they redirected migration traffic away from urban areas and into remote wilderness areas.

The push by the Trump Administration to build more border walls led to the construction of an additional 80 miles of new barriers as well as the reconstruction of 372 miles of previously existing structures.<sup>76</sup> In order to initiate the construction of these new and additional barriers the government had to waive 48 federal laws, including the Clean Air and Water acts, Endangered Species Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and American Indian Religious Freedom Act, among others.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to creating widespread ecological destruction, violating sacred indigenous sites and draining the water table for many desert communities,<sup>78</sup> the walls were largely constructed away from areas where the terrain acts as a natural barrier. The new wall-building thus served only to reinforce Prevention Through Deterrence,<sup>79</sup> and to open markets for private contractors to design and construct more intricate border barriers in and around ports of entry.

### **Will surveillance technology stop the border crisis?**

No. The US-Mexico border is 2,000 miles long and the zone of militarized border enforcement reaches up to 100 miles inland. The militarized approach to border security has spread unauthorized

<sup>74</sup> Sarah Stillman, “When Deportation is a Death Sentence”, The New Yorker, January 8, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/15/when-deportation-is-a-death-sentence>

<sup>75</sup> S.V. Dáte, “If You Like Trump’s ‘Wall’, Thank Obama And Bush. It’s Basically Just Their Fence”, Huffpost, December 7, 2018, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-fence-wall\\_n\\_5c099defe4b04046345a7446](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-fence-wall_n_5c099defe4b04046345a7446)

<sup>76</sup> Christopher Giles, “Trump’s Wall: How Much Has Been Built During His Term?”, BBC, January 12, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46748492>

<sup>77</sup> “Real ID Waiver Authority Compromises Our Borderlands”, Sierra Club, last updated April 24, 2019, <https://www.sierraclub.org/borderlands/real-id-waiver-authority-compromises-our-borderlands>

<sup>78</sup> “Southwest Border: Additional Actions Needed to Address Cultural and Natural Resource Impacts from Barrier Construction”, U.S. Government Accountability Office, September 7, 2023, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105443>

<sup>79</sup> “Statement of Human Rights Watch: The Human Cost of Harsh US Immigration Deterrence Policies”, Human Rights Watch, July 26, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/07/26/statement-human-rights-watch-human-cost-harsh-us-immigration-deterrence-policies>





migration traffic over a vast, remote, and virtually unpoliceable landscape. In these harsh wilderness areas, communication capacity is severely compromised, road access is rugged or nonexistent, and visibility is extremely limited. Numerous war industry giants have won lucrative contracts to provide technological solutions to these policing obstacles, including 80-foot surveillance towers, motion detecting sensors, infrared camera technology, and even a fleet of Predator drones.<sup>80</sup> However, Government Accountability Office audits of these tech systems have revealed that their contributions to enforcement efforts are negligible: for example, drone surveillance has “contributed to” less than 2% of apprehensions of border crossers in southern Arizona.<sup>81</sup>

The ruggedness of the environment and the enormity of the area constantly undermines the efforts of these systems. Each system failure is an opportunity for another tech outfit to propose an enhanced system. So-called “smart” border technology has been an expensive bi-partisan failure, serving only to push people into harm's way.<sup>82</sup> Towers near water sources or houses deter those crossing the border from seeking aid at those locations. Drones or other surveillance tech serve to chase and scatter people crossing the border further into remote localities. Presenting these policies as a so-called humane alternative to Republican wall building and zero tolerance, ignores that this same technology is part and parcel of the bipartisan strategy of deterrence, the same strategy that drove the building of the wall and other such widely condemned immigration policies to begin with.<sup>83</sup>

### **Can humanitarian relief resolve the border crisis?**

No, not completely. Humanitarian relief provides critical protection for the lives of many in the borderlands. Humanitarian relief is the provision of basic needs for all people, regardless of identity or immigration status. Humanitarian relief includes life-saving interventions, measures aimed at reducing suffering and preserving human dignity. Food, water, shelter from dangerous exposure to the elements, access to emergency and ongoing medical services, rescue, legal representation, assistance with family unification, and the prevention of further exposure to harm are all forms of humanitarian relief. Humanitarian relief is a vital stop-gap measure to protect the lives of some of

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<sup>80</sup> Mark Akkerman, “Financing Border Wars: The Border Industry, its Financiers and Human Rights”, Transnational Institute, April 9, 2021, <https://www.tni.org/en/financingborderwars>

<sup>81</sup> Craig Whitlock, ‘U.S. surveillance drones largely ineffective along border, report says’, The Washington Post, January 6, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-surveillance-drones-largely-ineffective-along-border-report-says/2015/01/06/5243abea-95bc-11e4-aabd-d0b93ff613d5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-surveillance-drones-largely-ineffective-along-border-report-says/2015/01/06/5243abea-95bc-11e4-aabd-d0b93ff613d5_story.html)

<sup>82</sup> Todd Miller, ‘Walls Are Dumb but President Biden’s ‘Smart Border’ Is Even Worse’, October 8, 2021, TNI, <https://www.tni.org/en/article/walls-are-dumb-but-president-bidens-smart-border-is-even-worse>

<sup>83</sup> Arron Mitchel, ‘Where The Border Ends: How Reactive Policies to Terrorism Became Conduits for Drone Technology and the Enclosure of Wealthy Nations’, March 14, 2023, University of Washington Tacoma, UW Tacoma Digital Commons, [https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=ppe\\_prize](https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=ppe_prize)



those in need in the border region.<sup>84</sup> However, humanitarian relief efforts are extremely limited; aid workers will never be able to access everyone in distress in the border region. Until the root causes of migration are addressed and the borderlands demilitarized, the humanitarian border crisis will never be resolved.

### **Who can provide humanitarian relief?**

Anyone can provide humanitarian aid—you do not have to be affiliated with an institution or government to offer humanitarian relief. In fact, humanitarian efforts must be non-governmental and civilian in nature so that the provision of life-saving relief is not governed by the political interests of a certain administration or regime. For this reason, humanitarian assistance strives to be neutral and universal, ensuring the right to wellbeing that all people deserve.

In the US-Mexico borderlands, the need for humanitarian aid is dire. In a region where thousands have died from exposures, a bottle of water may be the difference between life and death. For this reason, the provision of humanitarian relief by local borderlands residents is commonplace. A number of groups have established organized efforts to provide humanitarian relief in the region, including Aguilas Del Desierto, No More Deaths, the Samaritans, People Helping People, and others.

### **How are rural border residents responding to these issues? Tribal members?**

Rural border residents and tribal members routinely encounter the lost, sick, and injured in the borderlands. Often rural townships and private ranches are the first signs of civilization that those migrating encounter when they are traveling through wilderness areas between ports of entry. For this reason, borderlands residents frequently provide care to those they encounter.

Border residents and tribal members also increasingly live under a military-type Border Patrol occupation, replete with checkpoints, Predator drones, Black Hawk helicopters and a veritable army of agents armed with the weapons of war. In this heightened climate, residents of the border zone routinely assert their constitutional rights to prevent illegal searches and seizures, to resist racial profiling, report Border Patrol harassment, publicize the abusive actions of agents in the field, and build coalitions among rural communities living under militarization.

Many communities have also taken direct action to protest enforcement infrastructure. In 2020, Hia C'ed O'odham activists put their bodies on the line to stop border wall construction and protect their sacred sites from being desecrated.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> "Foundations of Borderlands Humanitarian Relief", People Helping People in the Border Zone (PHP), [http://phparivaca.org/?page\\_id=1303](http://phparivaca.org/?page_id=1303)

<sup>85</sup> "Indigenous Hia Ced O'odham and Tohono O'odham Sacred Land & Water Protector, Amber Ortega, 'Not Guilty' For Resistance to US/Mexico Border Wall Construction at Sacred Site", Indigenous Action, January 22, 2022,



### **What is People Helping People in the Border Zone?**

People Helping People (PHP)<sup>86</sup> is a community organization in Arivaca, Arizona that brings together rural border residents to oppose the humanitarian crisis in the borderlands and to resist Border Patrol abuse. PHP calls for a demilitarized border, working in coalition with other rural border communities to build peace and justice in the border region. People Helping People also supports Arivaca residents giving direct humanitarian aid to those crossing the desert.

### **What is checkpoint monitoring?**

One effort to push back against Border Patrol harassment has been the Arivaca-area effort to independently monitor area immigration checkpoints.<sup>87</sup> Beginning in 2014, Arivaca residents involved with the organization People Helping People in the Border Zone (PHP), began watching enforcement activities at the Arivaca Road checkpoint near the town of Amado. The goals of checkpoint monitoring are threefold:

- 1) **To deter abuse:** by being a third-party witnessing presence, checkpoint monitors seek to deter the abusive behavior of Border Patrol agents. Monitors are equipped with video cameras, binoculars, and recording equipment. By watching Border Patrol agents on this otherwise remote rural highway checkstation, monitors hold agents accountable for their behavior.
- 2) **To document enforcement activities:** if the Border Patrol does keep records about their enforcement activities at specific interior checkpoints, they do not make those records public. For this reason, the number of apprehensions that have been conducted at interior checkpoints is unknown to the public, or even to the US Congress. The agency has offered no data which justify operating 24-hour checkpoints, 365 days a year, indefinitely in border communities.<sup>88</sup> For this reason, independent monitors collect data on enforcement activities in order to make such information available to the public and elected officials.
- 3) **Visiblizing Resistance:** checkpoint monitoring is a visible protest against interior enforcement activities that target communities at large. By setting up monitoring efforts around area checkpoints with “know your rights” signage and information, checkpoint monitoring demonstrates to the public that such extra-legal enforcement activities will not go uncontested.

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<https://www.indigenouaction.org/indigenous-hia-ced-oodham-and-tohono-oodham-sacred-land-water-protector-amber-ortega-not-guilty-for-resistance-to-us-mexico-border-wall-construction-at-sacred-s/>

<sup>86</sup> “Who We Are”, People Helping People in the Border Zone (PHP), <http://phparivaca.org/>

<sup>87</sup> “Checkpoint Monitoring Report Arivaca Road Border Patrol Checkpoint, Amado, Arizona”, People Helping People in the Border Zone (PHP), October 26, 2014, [http://phparivaca.org/?page\\_id=1174](http://phparivaca.org/?page_id=1174)

<sup>88</sup> Sarah Turberville, Chris Rickerd, ‘An Oversight Agenda for Customs and Border Protection: America’s Largest, Least Accountable Law Enforcement Agency’, POGO, October 12, 2021, <https://www.pogo.org/reports/an-oversight-agenda-for-customs-and-border-protection-americas-largest-least-accountable-law-enforcement-agency>

# Undeterred Toolkit: FAQ

## What can you do to help?

- Donate [to People Helping People \(PHP\) or to one of our sister organizations](#). Every bit helps!
- Engage your family and friends in conversations around border militarization, how do the issues touched on here affect your community?
- Organize a screening of Undeterred and jump start the conversation about these issues in your community!
- Organize a speaking event — the Undeterred team and Arivaca community members are available for virtual events or with travel support to come visit and speak more about border issues.
- Get involved in the cause in your community: sanctuary efforts, closing ICE detention centers, stopping raids and other threats to undocumented and mixed status families, establishing protection networks, fighting for labor justice, opposing war industry contractors, resisting the creep of border militarization into daily life across the US, deportation defense, and more!
- Join a local detention support group and consider visiting those in detention, sponsoring an asylum seeker or otherwise supporting individuals fighting their immigration cases. [You can also consider starting an immigration detention visitation program if none exists in your area.](#)
- If you live in a border state, start monitoring nearby Border Patrol checkpoints.
- Connect with border community groups on social media and through email and answer their calls to action.
- Create art about borders and border militarization and display it in the public sphere to draw attention to what's happening.
- Come visit the border! Bring a delegation and/or volunteer your time: there are a number of organizations that host groups and take outside volunteers. Some of them are listed on the [Friends of the Film page](#).

Community Resistance on the US/Mexico Border  
Resistencia Comunitaria en la Frontera EEUU/México

# Undeterred Toolkit: FAQ

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