

Migrant Caravan - Central American Migration

Why in news?

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A trail of migrants has been moving northwards from Honduras and Guatemala, towards Mexico and the U.S., in the recent days.

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Is this the first time?

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- Migration of Central Americans to Mexico and the US has taken place for decades.

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- They are mostly economic migrants seeking escape from poverty in places like Honduras.

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- Otherwise, they are people fleeing persecution, trafficking or gang violence in the region.

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- Earlier this year, a caravan from Honduras had reached the Mexico-US border travelling 3,500 km.

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- It was organised by a rights group called Pueblo Sin Fronteras (people without borders).

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Why is the current one unique?

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- In previous such caravans (a group travelling together), members numbered in the hundreds and dissipated along the way or upon reaching the border.

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- However, a migrant caravan of such a scale and organised nature, as the current one, is relatively new.
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- It originally numbered fewer than 200 people, grew to 1,000 by the time it had crossed into Guatemala.
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- It is now estimated to have reached more than 7,000 migrants.
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- The caravan was formed in San Pedro Sula in Honduras, known for high levels of violence.
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- It has also gathered momentum from media attention and support from advocacy groups.
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- But so far, no group has claimed responsibility for organising it.
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What is the response?

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- Americans are and will probably always be a nation of immigrants.
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- As President, Barack Obama took a hard line on undocumented worker deportations.
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- But he took a moderate stance when it came to delaying the deportation of childhood arrivals, and policed borders with a relatively light touch.
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- Contrarily, Trump has made every effort to deliver on his radical campaign promise to ban Muslims from entering the U.S.
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- The recent “migrant caravan” had led to warnings from Trump.
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- He had alerted border authorities about a “national emergency”.
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- He has also warned of criminals crossing over, economic dislocation and job loss.
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- It was also said that the US would begin curtailing aid to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.
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- Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales had dismissed Trump's threats, and rejected constraints placed on foreign aid.
- The Mexican government deployed about 700 National Police officers to the border and issued warnings to the caravan's participants.

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What next?

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- The Trump administration is looking into an array of new policies that it hopes will deter Central Americans from such trips.
- These range from a new form of the practice of family separation to stricter requirements on asylum.

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Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

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