



# SITREP



# CENTRAL AMERICAN CARAVANS



## Overview

This Situation Report covers the recent crisis driven by mass migration from Central America through Mexico to the United States southwest border. The report details the route taken by the Central American caravans, focusing on the transit from Honduras to Mexico through Guatemala, and describes how Irregular Migrants (I/M) and Special Interest Aliens (SIA) are moving within and around the various caravans. The report highlights the irregularities of the caravans, particularly the route selected, and provides a threat assessment as to how this form of forced migration could function as a logistical train to potentially destabilize the region and delegitimize the United States.

SFS scholars traveled to Guatemala in late October and observed the movement of the migrant caravans from Central America in close coordination with the Guatemalan government and local authorities. They visited two border crossings and spoke with immigration and intelligence officials from Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico.

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On 02-NOV, Exec. Director Joseph Humire appears on [NTN24](#) to discuss the origin of the migrant caravan. Click the photo or follow the link to watch the interview (Spanish content).



On 05-NOV, Exec. Director Joseph Humire joined [Fox News](#) to discuss the high level of logistical organization of the caravans. Click the photo above or follow the link to read the interview.

## Additional Media

- On 24-OCT, Joseph Humire comments on the migrant caravan on [Libertopolis](#) during a trip to Guatemala. Follow the link to watch (Spanish content).
- On [29-OCT](#) and [10-NOV](#), SFS International Fellow Hugo Acha joined [NTN24](#) to discuss the caravan phenomenon and Trump's response to the migrant caravan (Spanish content).

The US tendency to overlook Latin America in formulating foreign policy has resulted in a void of accurate information. SFS stays committed to providing up-to-date analysis and has consistently emphasized the importance of Latin America to US foreign policy and national security. Our field research and detailed analysis is carefully constructed so that US policymakers can count on a proper threat assessment.

This Situation Report (SITREP) provides research, writings, and testimony from scholars, senior fellows, and international fellows of the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS), as well as information from other scholars and international news outlets analyzing the crisis stemming from the Central American caravans.

## Snapshot

In mid-October, an initial group of 4,000 migrants from Honduras began a mass movement from San Pedro Sula to the US Southwest border. The migrant's motivations were reported as escaping gang violence and poor economic conditions in their home countries. The timing of the caravan, however, drove speculation that there could be political motivations as well. The initial group of 160 migrants started to form on 12-OCT in San Pedro Sula and quickly grew into the thousands as it crossed the border into Guatemala. Many of the migrants stated that the large numbers will help their safety on the journey. There are currently at least four (4) caravans with approximately [8,000 migrants](#) congregated in Tijuana, Mexico at the US southwest border.

The caravans are large-scale mass movement of migrants crossing through a series of transit points, checkpoints, and border crossings in an organized fashion. In less than two weeks, C1 passed through three countries and two border crossings, clearing Guatemala in just four (4) days. In slightly more than one week, C2 caught up to C1 in southern Mexico to march together towards Mexico City. C3, C4, and C5 seemed to congregate in Guatemala City before jointly moving to the Guatemalan-Mexican border and upwards to the final destination. Moving large distances, 468 kilometers through Guatemala, as one large body is extremely difficult.

SFS researchers observed the caravans closely in late-October as they transited Guatemala into Mexico and

saw that each caravan moves in a highly-organized fashion similar to a military convoy, segmented in three groups:

1. The first group, the "advance party," acts as a scouting body for the other groups and moves around 48 hours ahead of the main group. The members of the advance party surveil, take pictures, and report back to the other groups on terrain, security forces, and local conditions. WhatsApp is the main form of communication from the advance party to the two other groups.
2. The second group, the "main body," is the largest. This is the group that requires the most logistical support and can disperse at times as the caravan moves from one border crossing or check point to another. This group is what the media is mostly focused on.
3. The third group, or "rear party," trails the main body by around 24 hours and uses vehicles to reach the transit points and check points. It is the rear party that is harboring the SIAs.

**Members from the four caravans are currently in Tijuana.** Their prior movements are detailed below:

### 1. Caravan 1 (C1) – 4,000 migrants that left Honduras on 12-OCT

The first caravan was the largest one. At its peak, it numbered around 7,000 migrants, but was down to somewhere between 4,000 – 6,000 migrants as it reached the US border. The caravan split into smaller groups just before Mexico City on their trek north. "The government of Queretaro said [via Twitter](#) that 6,531 migrants had moved through the state between Friday, 09-NOV and Saturday, 10-NOV. This caravan group is made up of mostly migrants from Central America, largely from Honduras, and includes more women and children than other caravans.



### 2. Caravan 2 (C2) – 1,500 migrants that left Honduras on 21-OCT

This second caravan left from [Comayagua](#), Honduras. It started as a group of 350 migrants. The caravan grew as it reached the Guatemalan/Mexican border on 29-OCT. The size of this caravan was estimated at 3,000 migrants. Reports state that on 02-NOV in Mapastepec in Chiapas state, 153 migrants were detained. This caravan was reported to be 200 miles behind the first. It is likely C1's 4-day break in Mexico City gave this caravan time to catch up and create a larger caravan from the remnants of each.

This caravan has more Military Aged Males (MAM) than the previous one and has [been reported](#) as more violent by Mexican and Guatemalan police.

- Guatemala's Interior Ministry said Guatemalan police officers were injured when the migrant group broke through border barriers on Guatemala's side of the bridge. Mexico authorities said *migrants attacked its agents* with rocks, glass bottles, and fireworks when they broke through a gate on the Mexican end but were pushed back, and some *allegedly carried guns and firebombs*. Some of the migrants had *gasoline bombs made of soft-drink bottles*, and improvised PVC tubes to launch fireworks or other projectiles.
- Mexico's Interior Department (MX) said in a [statement](#) that two Hondurans ages 17 and 22 were arrested Monday, 29-OCT when one of them tried to shoot at police in the town of Ignacio Zaragoza, near the Ciudad Hidalgo border crossing. It said the Glock failed to fire, and no agents were injured.



### 3. **Caravan 3 (C3)** – 2,000 migrants that left Honduras on 28-OCT

This caravan formed in [Olancho](#), a department on the eastern side of Honduras. The caravan made it to [Ciudad Hidalgo](#), right across the Guatemala/Mexico border on Wednesday 31-OCT. Their estimated size was [2,000 migrants](#) at its peak.

### 4. **Caravan 4 & 5 (C4, C5)** – 2,500 migrants from El Salvador that left 28-OCT & 31-OCT

The caravans leaving El Salvador were the last to join the trend. Between 300-500 migrants left San Salvador on Sunday 28-OCT. The group [crossed](#) into Guatemala later that night through the [La Hachadura](#) Point of Entry. A group of 1,000 migrants from this caravan crossed the Suchiate River on Friday, 02-NOV into Mexico. This movement was planned on several [WhatsApp](#) and Facebook messaging platforms, with another group that planned to leave El Salvador on Wednesday, 31-OCT. This caravan numbered 2,000 migrants when it left the capital city, San Salvador.



There are several [irregularities](#) with these caravans that suggest it is organized and planned with a strategic purpose that is unrelated to regular migration flows. The two very important takeaways about the caravans are:

1. There are **subversive elements** mixed within the caravans **compromising its integrity**
2. There appears to be a high level of **logistical organization** based around **the route** chosen

These irregularities will be described in further detail below.

# Compromised Integrity



There has been major misreporting by the media regarding the presence of Irregular Migrants (I/M) and Special Interest Aliens (SIA) in the Honduran Caravans. SIA originate from countries that "have shown a tendency to promote, produce, or protect terrorist organizations." [1] In the last decade, the total number of apprehensions of undocumented migrants from Mexico crossing the US southwest border has decreased to the lowest levels since 1971. Meanwhile the number of Other Than Mexican (OTM) apprehensions has increased, with the number of SIAs growing at a commensurate rate.

This unprecedented growth prompted Former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson to send an [urgent memo](#) to several US border security authorities in June 2016. The subject of the memo was "Cross-Border Movement of Special Interest Aliens" and it proposed the immediate creation of a "multi-DHS Component SIA Joint Action Group" with a concrete plan to confront this threat. Todd Bensman, of Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), [reports that](#) "the cross-border migration of people from Muslim-majority nations, as a trending terror threat, has gone missing during contentious national debates over President Trump's border security policies and wall."

The SIA phenomenon is not new but has increased in recent years, while visibility and "SIA-countering" plans have stalled. The Department of Homeland Security just announced publicly that Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) has apprehended 3,028 SIA in FY2018 compared to 1,105 SIA in FY2017. Honduran and Guatemalan immigration authorities have started to classify irregular migrants since May 2017. According to Honduras National Institute of Migration, they detected 3,861 irregular migrants who passed through their country in 2018. This is relevant in that SIA have established new routes that other migrants can use to transit through Central America.

In the case of the caravans, Guatemalan officials detected no fewer than **157 irregular migrants** from **13 countries** in Africa and South Asia transiting through Guatemala from October 20-24, 2018, a timeline that coincides between the first (C1) and second (C2) caravans from Honduras. This includes at least **17 SIA** from three (3) designated countries: Eritrea, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The data is displayed below, with an asterisk denoting SIA countries.

***I/M and SIA transiting through Guatemala***

<b>Country</b>	<b>May 8 – June 23</b>	<b>October 20 – 24</b>
Afghanistan*	1	0
Angola	9	3
Bangladesh*	3	3
Cameroon	63	45
Congo	7	40
Cuba	7	11
Eritrea*	25	12
Ethiopia	1	1
Ghana	8	3
Guinea	0	4
Haiti	14	24
India	14	0
Nepal	21	1
Pakistan*	9	2
Sierra Leone	0	3
Somalia*	1	0
Sri Lanka	0	2
Togo	1	0
Venezuela	0	3
Yemen*	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>157</b>

*\* foreign nationals designated as Special Interest Aliens (SIA) by DHS*

Source: Data was derived from documents and interviews of Guatemalan authorities. This is not a complete data set for the months indicated, but a sample set reviewed by SFS researchers.

According to SFS field research in Guatemala, many of the Central American migrants within the caravans complained that I/M and SIA received preferential treatment, moving ahead of the lines at the migration centers and traveling quicker through check points and border crossings. Some of the Central American migrants in the caravans also suggested that the SIA have additional financial support when they reach migration centers.

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[1] SIAs are classified as a subcategory under Other than Mexican (OTM) undocumented migrants by the Department of Homeland Security, and are citizens of 35 countries that could represent a terrorist threat: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

While none of the registered SIA detected within the caravans come from the Middle East, it is important to emphasize the extreme difficulty in verifying the true identities of these irregular migrants. There is a precedent where SIA migrants have concealed their identities from Guatemalan authorities.

On 22-APR a group of five (5) self-identified "Pakistanis" entered Guatemala at the same Point of Entry as the caravans, *Agua Caliente*, from Honduras. They were taken to Guatemala's main migration center, known as an "Albergue" located in Zone 5 of Guatemala City, and processed on 23-APR. All five "Pakistanis" were Military Aged Males with vocational professions, stating intentions of going to the US as their destination. None had travel or identification documents. During their screening at the migration center, DHS/ICE assisted Guatemala's National Police by conducting a Third Agency Check (TAC) with biometric screenings, which proved this group lied about their identities and were Palestinian, rather than Pakistani. The group of Palestinians was suspected of being involved in a suspicious terror alert against the US Embassy in Guatemala City on 05-MAY. They left through the *Tecun Uman* Point of Entry into Mexico (same as the caravans) on 12-MAY.



On 31-OCT, Guatemalan Secretary of Strategic Intelligence Mario Duarte joined Laura Ingraham on [Fox News](#) to discuss the caravan. Click the picture or follow the link to watch the interview.



Read special article by SFS International Fellow Leonardo Coutinho providing evidence of the SIA and other I/M within the caravans in [Estadão](#) (Portuguese content).

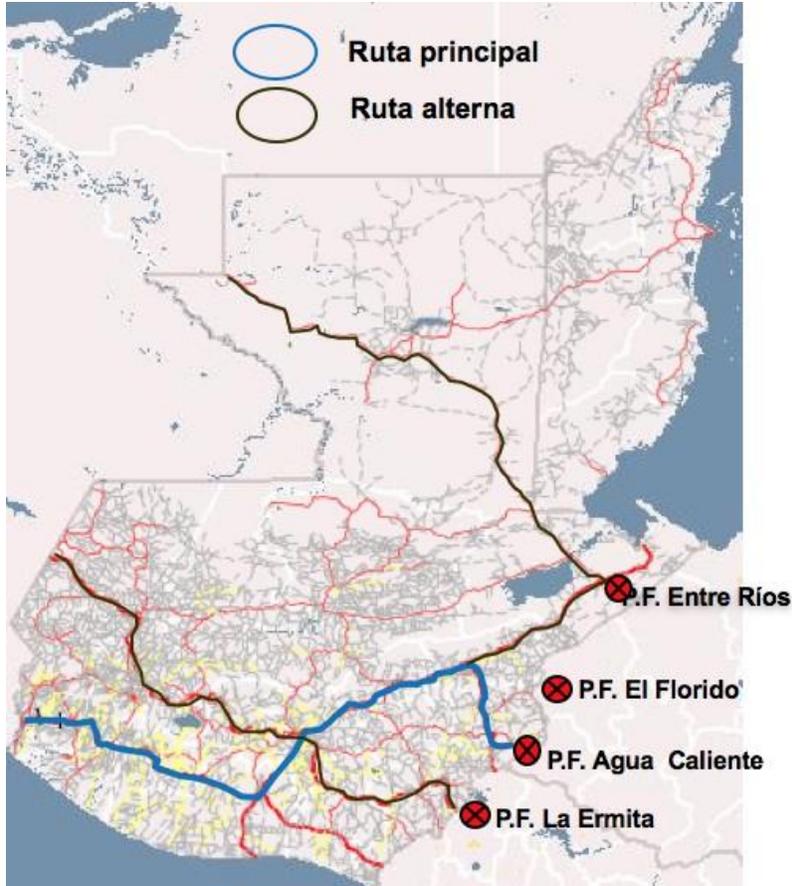
## Additional Media

- ◆ On 23-OCT, SFS Exec. Director Joseph Humire was quoted in Daniel Horowitz's article in the [Conservative Review](#) about President Trump's tweet and the real threat behind the migrant caravan.
- ◆ On 24-OCT, Joseph Humire [joined República](#) in Guatemala to discuss elements traveling with the caravan (Spanish content).
- ◆ Read SFS International Fellow Leonardo Coutinho's Op-Ed in [La Patilla](#) about the threat the caravan poses and the SIAs traveling within it (Spanish content).
- ◆ For more, read Todd Bensman's [Center for Immigration Studies](#) report on how the migrant caravan produces a real national security threat due to the human smuggling route used both by the caravan and SIA.

# Why this Route?

The primary route that the caravans took in Guatemala passes through two formal border crossings: *Aguas Caliente* | *Esquipulas* between the Honduras and Guatemala border; and *Tecun Uman* | *Ciudad Hidalgo* between the Guatemala and Mexico border. There are several other routes from Honduras to Guatemala that the caravan could have taken that are shorter and faster to Mexico. The most popular route from San Pedro Sula (Honduras) to Mexico goes through the *Entre Rios* Point of Entry into Guatemala and then goes through the *El Ceibo* Point of Entry into Mexico. This is also a popular human smuggling route with many alternate border crossings through *Parque Nacional Sierra Del Lacandón*. This is technically the shortest route from Honduras to Mexico measuring at slightly more than 410 kilometers.

For a detailed Route Survey, read the [special report](#) by independent Threat/Risk Analyst, Ross Armstrong



Source: Map is from a presentation by Guatemalan security agencies briefing on the movement of SIA traveling through Guatemala from Oct. 20-24, 2018.

Drug trafficking is also a major problem in Central America establishing several clandestine routes through Guatemala moving parallel to the Pan-American Highway. Whether by air, land, or sea most of the cocaine trafficking routes in Guatemala pass through alternate border crossings known as "*puntos ciegos*" that are scarcely monitored by Guatemalan and Mexican authorities. These routes generally rely on speed to bypass local authorities, thus, enter Guatemala from *La Ermita* Point of Entry passing through *El Amatal San Cristobal La Frontera* and traveling along the Pan-American Highway.

The largest Honduran Caravan traveled through Guatemala in just four days from 16-OCT to 20- OCT through **neither** the shortest, most frequently traveled migration route (from *Entre Rios* to *El Ceibo* as seen in the Map) or the fastest route along the Pan-American Highway (from *La Ermita* to *La Mesilla* as seen in the Map). The Honduran Caravan took an alternate route that had previously been established in Guatemala for moving Special Interest Aliens (SIA) and other I/M from *Aguas Calientes* to the *Tecun Uman* border crossings.

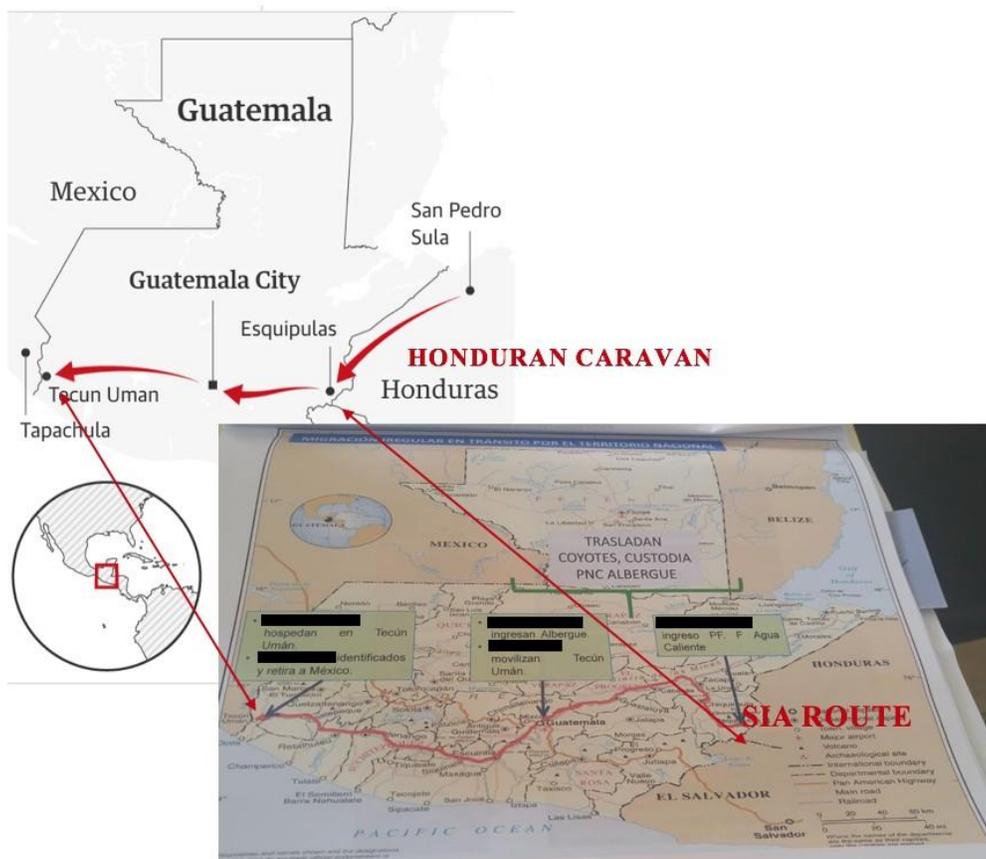
It is important to consider why this route was chosen. For example, in some cases, clandestine activity would require a route devoid of people, governmental infrastructure, and main transportation hubs to pass through undetected. The SIA route was chosen for its wealth of infrastructure, NGO bases, and populous towns. These will be explained in more detail below.

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## SIA Route

The route taken by the Honduran Caravan is a known SIA route used as recently as this past May/June 2018 when at least **189 irregular migrants** from South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, moved through this same route from Honduras to Mexico. Within this group were at least **45 Special Interest Aliens (SIA)** of which, at least five (5) lied about their identity to Guatemalan migration authorities.

### *Honduran Caravan Route vs. SIA Route*



The top map is of the caravan route illustrated in [The Guardian](#) and the bottom map is from a presentation by Guatemalan security agencies briefing on the movement of SIA traveling through Guatemala from May 7-12, 2018.

This route, while not the fastest or shortest, offers the most by way of **NGO presence, infrastructure, and populous city centers**. Most infrastructure is localized in the southern part of Guatemala. The SIA route passes through many developed towns including: Esquipulas, Chiquimula, Zacapa, Guatemala City, Villa Nueva, Amatitlán, Escuintla, Retalhuleu, Coatepeque, and Tecun Uman. Developed towns offer protection in the form of food, water, and shelter, but also a way to blend in. Traveling through populous areas also gives organizing bodies a chance to coordinate with NGOs and groups present in these towns.

# Key Political Actors

The migrant caravans from Central America not only have a high-level of logistical organization but also appear to have coordinated their messaging through key political actors in various regional forums earlier this year. The political messaging about the caravans is equally as important as its logistics, driving a specific narrative to reach a larger international audience. The migrant caravans have been linked to the organization Pueblo Sin Fronteras, whose members "stand in permanent solidarity with displaced peoples" and advocate for open borders. The caravan has also been a common theme at various socialist forums in Latin America, with populist leaders expressing solidarity with the theme of mass migration and open borders.

## Pueblo Sin Fronteras

Pueblo Sin Fronteras is an organization created "in solidarity with displaced peoples." Its origins are murky- [some reports](#) state it was created in 2008 by Roberto Corona at Southern Methodist University, [its Facebook page](#) states the organization began in 2010, and [its website](#) says Pueblo Sin Fronteras has been "reaching out" to migrants for more than 15 years. The organization accompanies migrants on their journey providing shelter, humanitarian aid, and legal advice. Pueblo Sin Fronteras has published several statements during various marches advocating for policy change in the US and Mexico toward open borders, posted flyers for workshops to inform migrants on the asylum process, while also tracking their media appearances:

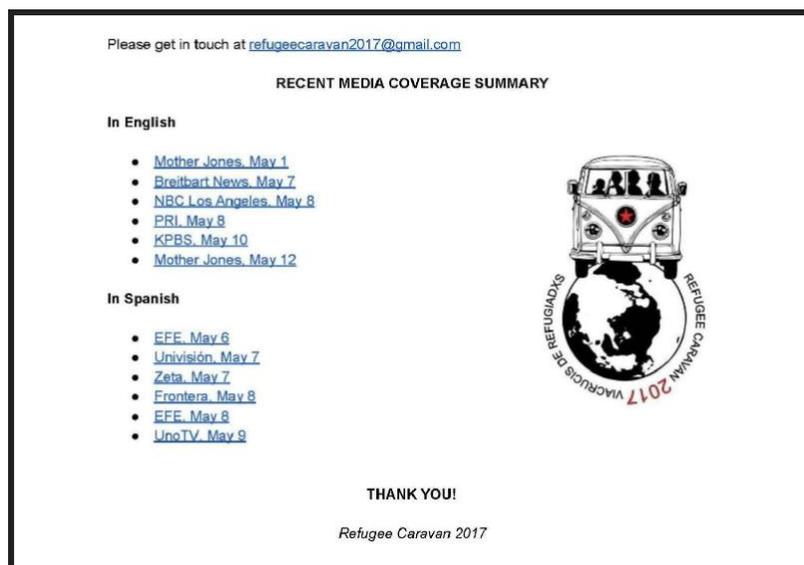


Photo above from a 2017 Pueblo Sin Fronteras "Refugee Caravan Update" report tracking the media coverage the caravan had garnered

The [organization's website](#) is vague. It explains they are "a volunteer collective of friends" and donations made to Pueblo Sin Fronteras reportedly do not pay salaries or administrative fees, so it seems there are no paid employees. Membership in the organization is also very vague; it is mostly based on volunteerism. According to [several independent](#) media sources the following people have been associated with the organization under differing roles:

- ♦ Bartolo Fuentes
- ♦ Alex Mensing
- ♦ Irineo Mujica
- ♦ Roberto Corona
- ♦ Denis Omar
- ♦ Contreras Rodrigo
- ♦ Abeja
- ♦ Gina Garibo
- ♦ Leo Olson

Pueblo Sin Fronteras is most well-known for their involvement in migrant caravans and have been accompanying migrants since its inception, but the group did not gain notoriety until President Trump began [tweeting](#) about the caravan in April 2018.

### **Caravan March/April 2018**

The first caravan, in March/April 2018, was [organized by Pueblo Sin Fronteras](#). The organization posted flyers and [held meetings](#) in Tapachula city parks to organize. At its peak, it [numbered around](#) 1,500 migrants from mainly El Salvador and Honduras, [reported Alex Mensing](#). By the time this caravan reached the US border in late-April 2018 at Tijuana, there were around 300 migrants. Irineo Mujica and Leo Olsen were some of the [specific organizers](#) of this caravan.

### **Caravan October 2018**

This caravan was significantly larger than the caravan in March/April 2018 (snapshots of the makeup and size of this caravan are detailed in this SITREP). Many Pueblo Sin Fronteras volunteers, such as [Abeja](#) and [Contreras](#), were embedded with the caravan, but did not admit to organizing or being its leader. Pueblo Sin Fronteras founder, [Roberto Corona, said](#) the group stopped organizing after the March/April 2018 caravan.

However, [Bartolo Fuentes](#), a volunteer with the caravan, was detained in Guatemala and deported 17-OCT back to Honduras for failing to fill out the customs form. He has been accused of inciting the caravan and promoting the mass movement and irregular migration under false pretenses. Irineo Mujica, associated with Pueblo Sin Fronteras, was arrested [18-OCT](#) outside of Ciudad Hidalgo for obstructing authorities.

The organization has recently faced harsh criticism. A prominent [Mexican migrant activist](#), Alejandro Solalinde, said the caravan is "helping Donald Trump say there is an invasion," justifying stricter immigration laws. Solalinde continues remarking that "Pueblo Sin Fronteras cheated the migrants; they told them lies that once they arrived at the border, everything would be very easy."

The press coverage on this caravan prompted the organization to release a statement on 26-NOV claiming:

*Pueblo Sin Fronteras has been the object of multiple critiques and declarations that discredit the work we have done for years, and especially our accompaniment of this Exodus. These declarations are irresponsible and by criminalizing and defaming us they increase the risks faced by all human rights defenders. Far from encouraging migrants to pursue life in the United States as their only option, we have made a sincere effort to provide accurate information about the opportunities that exist in Mexico for people who would probably suffer under the punitive asylum system of the United States, which systematically deprives asylum seekers of their liberty, separates families, and often deports people to their death ([Read the full statement, here](#)).*

While Pueblo Sin Fronteras claims to be protecting the migrants, [LA Times reported](#) that the organization "ferried immigrants illegally from Guatemala into Mexico, and have repeatedly led migrants into direct confrontations with law enforcement." [One migrant also](#) confirmed that on the journey, volunteers in vests guided the group, but since arriving in Tijuana they have been absent.

### **Connections in Chicago and California**

Pueblos Sin Fronteras is part of the [National Day Laborer Organizing Network](#). Pueblo Sin Fronteras' website says they work in close cooperation with, and take their donations through, the [Freedom for Immigrants](#), a 501(c3) based in California, but do not receive money from any government, corporation, or political group. According to [Influence Watch](#), a project of Capitol Research Center, Pueblo Sin Fronteras (or a separate, but related branch) works with [La Familia Latina Unida](#) in Chicago and [Centro Sin Fronteras](#), an organization created in 1987 by Emma Lozano to initially fight school overcrowding in Chicago and eventually became involved in fighting deportations. [Influence Watch](#) states Centro Sin Fronteras organized La Familia Latina Unida in 2001. Both organizations share an address with the Lincoln United Methodist

Church in Chicago. Pueblo Sin Fronteras has also worked on caravan organization with the coalition CARA Family Detention Pro Bono Project, which includes [Catholic Legal Immigration Network \(CLIN\)](#), the [American Immigration Council \(AIC\)](#), the [Refugee and Immigration Center for Education and Legal Services \(RICELES\)](#) and the [American Immigration Lawyers Association \(AILA\)](#) – thus the acronym CARA; [as reported by WND](#).



Filmmaker Ami Horowitz travels to Mexico to explore the truth behind the migrant caravan and Pueblo Sin Fronteras. Additional reporting was also done by [Vice](#), which details the caravan's journey. *In the Vice* report, Pueblo Sin Fronteras states they had nothing to do with this exodus and their members were surprised that the group managed to stay whole throughout the trip.

## Additional Media

- ◆ On 30-NOV, Exec. Director Joseph Humire was quoted in Benny Avni's [NYPost](#) article on the political actors surrounding the caravan.
- ◆ On 28-OCT, Joseph Humire's [Gatestone](#) piece was mentioned in an article by the [Jewish Press](#) regarding larger migration trends and what this means in regards to the caravan.
- ◆ For more, watch Sara Carter share her firsthand experience with the caravan on [Fox News](#).
- ◆ Read a [Judicial Watch](#) report on the caravan's planning and inherent organization.

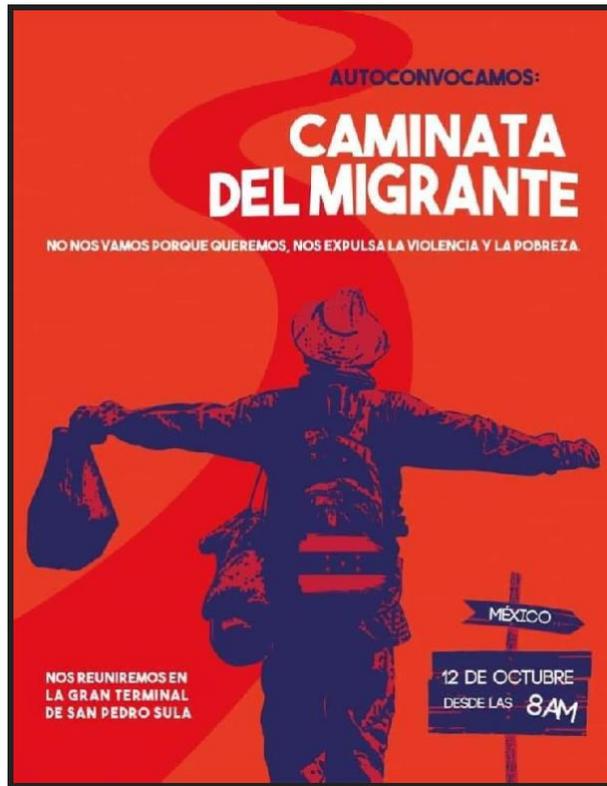
## Bartolo Fuentes



Bartolo Fuentes was arrested in mid-October during the migrant caravan. Guatemalan authorities detained Fuentes on 16-OCT for failing to comply with customs procedures upon entering the country. He was deported 17-OCT to Honduras where Former Honduran President [Manuel Zelaya](#) was waiting at the airport. Zelaya remarked he was there to assess the situation and discover why Guatemala "persecuted him, simply for helping Honduran migrants [because] there's no crime in that." Honduran minister of Foreign Affairs, [María Agüero](#), accused Fuentes of promoting irregular migration throughout the years under false promises. Bartolo Fuentes stated in an interview with [CNN](#) that the Honduran government was giving him a kind of superpower and looking for a scapegoat instead of realizing the terrible tragedy occurring in Honduras.

[Bartolo Fuentes](#) was elected to the Honduran Congress in 2013, representing the LIBRE party. He is also known for being a socialist activist and continues to advocate through journalism and political engagements. He is editor and director of the magazine Vida Laboral and of the website [Honduras Laboral](#), focused on labor and human rights issues; he also hosts a radio show called "Without Borders." Fuentes attended and spoke at the ALBA Movimientos Mesoamericanos Forum in October and attended several other marches and protests.

Fuentes often uses his social media platforms for advocacy, most recently [his feed](#) was filled with caravan posts, ads, and messages of support. The [San Diego Union Tribune](#) reported that Fuentes posted about the October caravan, stating the location of departure from San Pedro Sula and the destination to Mexico. The Tribune stated "the flyer he posted went viral and was featured on Honduran news. It was this flyer that prompted many of the thousands in the caravan." This poster was shared over 200 times on his [Facebook page](#).



Flyer Bartolo Fuentes posted on his Facebook page to advertise the caravan

## Political Forums

The caravan’s ideological support network is linked to international gatherings in Latin America of socialist leaders and groups, like the Foro São Paulo meeting in July in Cuba, an international seminar in August in Bolivia, and the Foro Mesoamericano in October in Honduras. Many of these forums had declarations mentioning migration, open borders, and protecting migrants. Former Honduran President Manuel Zelaya and other populist leaders were present at all of the forums.

On October 25-27, the Foro Mesoamericano/ALBA Movimientos was held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The event was attended by 380 national delegates and more than 70 international participants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Brazil. The final [event statement](#) expressed solidarity with the migrant caravan and acknowledged the volunteers who helped along the route, remarking that “no wall can stop hunger and the thirst for social justice.”



On August 7-9, 2018, the Ministry of Government in Bolivia hosted the 3rd International Seminar in Latin America at the Casa Blanca Hotel in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The conference titled "América Latina en Disputa: Alternativas Frente a la Restauración Conservadora y Ofensiva Imperialista" ([Latin America in Dispute: Alternatives to the Conservative Restoration and Imperialist Offensive](#)), was well attended with more than 100 participants from approximately 12 countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Chile, Cuba, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Senegal, Syria, and Palestinian territories.



On July 15-17, the XXIV Foro São Paulo (FSP) summit was held in Havana, Cuba. This international seminar was attended by members of 20 Latin American countries. One of its [main goals](#) was to fight for a world without borders, where mass migrations are not seen as criminal.



# Threat Assessment

Most of the migrants in the caravans come from displaced and disgruntled populations in Central America who are marginalized in society. Naturally, however, these populations are vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation from subversive political actors as well as unknown elements embedded within the caravans. One of these elements are Special Interest Aliens (SIA) and other irregular migrants from South Asia, Africa, and possibly the Middle East, comprising the integrity of the caravans and elevating the risk to the other migrants. A small group within the caravans appears to be aimed at causing disruption and violence at border crossings to cause a chaotic atmosphere beyond control.

This has been demonstrated within the caravan: 26-year-old Honduran Henry Díaz Reyes died in a border clash on [29- OCT](#) when migrants of the second caravan broke down the barriers between Tecun Uman and Ciudad Hidalgo border crossings. He died shortly after being shot in the head with a rubber bullet. This occurred during the arrival of Caravan 2 to the Guatemala/Mexico border. The heightened violence during this movement was described in this SITREP. As the caravan traveled across the bridge between Guatemala and Mexico, migrants attacked police authorities with bottles and rocks, while many were reportedly carrying homemade bombs. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen [stated](#) "in some cases that the limited number of women and children in the caravan are being used by the organizers as "human shields" when they confront law enforcement," like the confrontation at the Guatemala/Mexico border. Violence continued in [Tijuana](#) on 25-NOV when peaceful protests turned into a charge for the border. Several hundred migrants rushed the border, cut holes and scaled the border fence, and hurled rocks at agents. US authorities responded using tear gas and closed the San Ysidro port of entry for 4 to 5.5 hours.

Many in the media have characterized the Central American caravans as regular migration aimed at crossing the southwest border into the US. This is a limited optic that does not explain the timing of the SIA, the route selected, or the level of organization needed to logistically move mass migrants across borders. The caravans reflect an irregular form of mass migration that is likely being weaponized by anti-US political actors who aim to destabilize the region and provoke border conflicts. An unidentified subgroup within the caravans seems geared to not cross the border but provoke the US military, police, and border patrol into hostilities, as evidenced in Tecun Uman and Tijuana. The goal is to delegitimize the Trump administration and our regional allies.

SFS suspects that the caravans from Central America, force-marching through Guatemala and Mexico to the US southwest border, are part of a larger effort by regional and extra-regional state and non-state actors destabilizing the region. It is likely that this tactic will be repeated in the near future as instability increases in Nicaragua, Venezuela, and the Northern Triangle of Central America.

SFS will continue to follow and report on the migrant caravan crisis with detailed research and analysis. You can follow our reporting on [Facebook](#) or via [Twitter](#), or by visiting our [website](#).

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