
Kids Face Choice between Fear in Central America or Being Deported in U.S.

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One of those cases is that of a young man from Honduras who calls himself “Milton” – not his real name – for fear of possible reprisals.

“They (the members of the Mara Salvatrucha gang) beat me and all that; but I say, it’s enough that I’m alive,” the 17-year-old said resignedly.

“I came here fleeing from that, from the gangs, because I’m saying ‘what am I going to do here (in Honduras) knowing that at any moment they’re going to kill me,’” he told Efe.

The teen is one of the roughly 57,000 undocumented and unaccompanied minors whom U.S. Customs and Border Protection have detained for illegally crossing the frontier since the beginning of this fiscal year, which began on Oct. 1, 2013.

The vast majority come from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

This avalanche of migrants has forced the White House to set up shelters to house these thousands of children and modify its immigration policy agenda.

President Barack Obama, who is meeting on Monday with the Department of Homeland Security to discuss a plan to deal with the situation, has invited the presidents of Guatemala, Otto Perez Molina; Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernandez; and El Salvador, Salvador Sanchez Ceren, to the White House for talks on the crisis.

“The gangmembers who want to kill my son are the same ones who killed my dad and other gentlemen in 2005,” Milton’s mother, “Maria,” told Efe.

After arriving in the United States, Milton spent a month being held in a Texas detention center and a shelter in Arizona, where other minors, some of them victims of extortion, told him their stories of suffering at the hands of the Mara Salvatrucha and Mara 18 gangs.

“If the kids were deported they would say they gave everything to come to this country, but their life wasn’t worth anything,” Milton said.

The president of the Hondurans United of Los Angeles, Leoncio Velasquez, told Efe that the minors are emigrating due to “the social breakdown” in Central America and “the authorities here are treating them like animals.”
