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Study: Migrant Minors' Rights Systematically Violated in Central America, U.S., Mexico

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The two-year study, to which Efe gained access on Wednesday, describes the abandonment of more than 20,000 children who in 2014 were deported from Mexico and the United States to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The project also details the experience of tens of thousands of Central American children who, on their own, attempted the dangerous trek to the United States in recent months.

“Instead of paying more attention to dealing with the violence and other factors that spur the migration of children from Central America ... they continue focusing on increasing immigration controls,” Lisa Frydman, with the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies at the University of California, Hastings College of Law, told Efe.

These controls and the risks of the journey did not dissuade the more than 50,000 children from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador who tried to cross Mexico and get to the U.S. border, according to detention figures compiled by Mexican and U.S. immigration authorities.

Frydman said that “the United States is exporting its immigration controls to Mexico and Central America.”

The study notes a lack of attention to the causes of migration, including violence, social exclusion and poverty, and the priority accorded to immigration control measures in lieu of the children’s interests, the absence of reintegration programs for repatriated kids and the lack of

regional agreements and policies based on human rights and development.

In 2014, while deportations of minors from the United States dropped off significantly, figures compiled by Mexico's Government Secretariat show that deportations and assisted returns of children from that country to Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras doubled.

That, taken together with the roughly 30,000 children who arrived in the United States during the same period, shows the massive exodus of Central American youth.

"Protection of the children is not a priority in the allocation of U.S. government funds to the region," Megan McKenna, with the KIND children's assistance organization, which collaborated with a pilot project to reintegrate repatriated children to Guatemala, told Efe.

The authors of the study – including civil organizations and academics with expertise in childhood issues, immigration and human rights – urge Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and the United States to reform their laws and policies and to develop a regional response in the countries of origin, transit and destination.

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