

U.S. Deports Children: Operation Captain Hook?

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While United States welcomes Cuban dancers and baseball players with open arms; it denies entry to tens of thousands of Central American children who cross Mexico's border alone to flee violence and poverty in their countries.

According to press reports, so far this year US authorities have noted a dramatic increase in illegal entry of children who travel alone, many of them under 12, and believe that 2014 will close with a record of more than 60.000 undocumented kids, especially from Central America.

Also, figures provided by Telesur show that the number of unaccompanied Central American children detained by US authorities increased by 66% in the last fiscal year (October 2013 through September 2014), compared with the same period between 2012 and 2013, according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The percentage does not include June, July, August and September of this year, which will close the current period. The same source stated that 9,850 Salvadorans, 11,479 Guatemalans and 13, 282 Hondurans have been detained from October 2013 through May 31, 2014, accounting for 34,611 minors.

Geared at finding a solution to this migratory "problem", which threatens to become a scandal, US Vice President Joe Biden, touring several Central American nations, announced that his country would provide the governments of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras with US \$9.6 million for the social reintegration of the deportees and other \$244 million for social development and security programs in the region.

Biden's effort takes place after former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and possible presidential candidate declared it was necessary to help Central America fight violence, but called on parents not to send their children alone to U.S. illegally because they would be sent back.

“Just because your child gets across the border, that doesn't mean the child gets to stay”, said Hillary in an interview organized by CNN chain, on occasion of the launch of her autobiographical book *Hard Choices (Decisiones Dificiles)*.

“So we don't want, she said, to send a message that is contrary to our laws or will encourage more children to make that dangerous journey”.

U.S. laws must have changed a lot since the 1960s when the State Department and the CIA, with the collaboration of the Catholic Church, implemented in Cuba the so-called Operation Peter Pan allegedly to save thousands of Cuban children from Communism.

In the interests of the anti-Cuban propaganda, a total of 14,048 children left Cuba through this operation. The children travelled without parents from the Caribbean island to U.S. by plane and were sent to orphanages.

Apparently, the case of Central American children fleeing to U.S. implies neither a human rights catastrophe nor a political problem for the current administration in Washington. Poverty and violence aren't consequences of the deep crisis that afflicts the capitalist democracy U.S. imposed in those nations throughout years of neocolonial domination.

The tragedy of the immigrant children shows the little effect of the US \$130 million in bilateral assistance for a variety of services related to health, education, climate change, military cooperation, economic growth and democracy that U.S. annually offers El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

Ironically, half a century after Operation Peter Pan, U.S. opens its doors to the achievements of the Socialist Revolution in the Caribbean, personified by its physicians, dancers and sportspeople, as it closes them completely to Central American children chased by “freedom” and “democracy”.

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