

LATIN AMERICA

The World This Week



LACK OF PROTECTION IN EL SALVADOR

A new report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) outlines the threats faced by repatriated Salvadorans following deportation from the United States. The report, which is the first to monitor and document human rights violations of repatriated Salvadorans, found that 138 returned Salvadorans have been killed since 2013, while another 70 have been the victim of assault, sexual assault, torture, extortion, or kidnapping.

Concerns have surfaced regarding El Salvador's ability to safely receive and protect migrants and asylum seekers. The Central American country has long been a victim of gang violence with one of the highest homicide rates in the world.

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“Salvadorans are facing murder, rape, and other violence after deportation in shockingly high numbers, while the US government narrows Salvadorans’ access to asylum and turns a blind eye to the deadly results of its callous policies.”

– Alison Parker, managing director of the US Program at HRW and co-author of the report

With many people fleeing El Salvador, rights groups are worried about its agreement with the United States to allow the US to send asylum seekers to instead apply for asylum in El Salvador. El Salvador is one of three countries that signed this agreement; Guatemala began accepting asylum seekers in November and Honduras is expected to follow.

El Salvador’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexandra Hill Tinoco, has declared that the country will not accept asylum seekers “until it can offer them the necessary protections and support.” In the meantime, rights groups continue fighting the US government to repeal harmful immigration policies.

Haitian President Negotiates with Political Opponents

Haiti’s government has been at a standstill. In 2016, President Jovenel Moïse, an ex-banana farmer, won the presidential election with 56% of the votes. Moïse’s main objective as president was to promote bio-ecological agriculture as an economic engine to create sustainable jobs and increase tourism. The president was able to make substantial progress on rural infrastructure projects during his first two years as president, but the end of subsidised Venezuelan oil aid to Haiti caused its economy to plummet.

With a shrinking economy, rising concerns brought investigations that found questionable spending of aid money. These investigations led to extended protests in the fall of 2019, which in turn led to a lockdown of the National Assembly. Many of President Moïse’s proposals were blocked by the opposition, causing the National Assembly to shut down in January 2020 and leaving Moïse without a constitutionally recognised government.

Although the Haitian constitution allows the president to rule by decree, Moïse has chosen not to in order to promote national unity. Moïse hopes for a new constitution that will grant more power to the president and change political term limits to stabilise the Senate. While moderate opponents have joined discussions, more extreme opponents have declined to participate and are demanding the president’s immediate resignation.

President Moïse assures that he will not seek re-election, but hopes for reforms. Moïse expects that his proposed deal will end the government deadlock and re-establish effective government operation.