

US Border Patrol Unleashes Tear Gas Against Children in Mexico

By Jake Johnson, Common Dreams

In what human rights groups condemned as a “cruel and inhumane” act that must be independently investigated, agents with President Donald Trump’s Customs and Border Protection (CBP) on Tuesday reportedly hit women, children, and journalists near the U.S.-Mexico border with tear gas, smoke, and pepper spray.

According to an *Associated Press* photographer present at the scene, CBP agents fired “at least three volleys of gas” into Mexico at around 150 asylum-seekers who approached the border in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

Contradicting CBP’s claim that the tear gas was used to deter migrants who were throwing rocks over the border fence, the *AP* photographer said rocks were thrown “only after U.S. agents fired the tear gas.”

In a statement Tuesday night, Justin Mazzola, deputy director of research at Amnesty International, said CBP’s actions should be viewed as part of the Trump administration’s sweeping anti-immigrant agenda.

“Using tear gas against men, women, and children seeking protection is cruel and inhumane,” Mazzola declared. “There needs to be a thorough and independent investigation into the reported use of tear gas and other agents in this incident. However, this incident needs to be examined within the broader context of US policies at the border.”

“The Trump administration is defying international law and orchestrating a crisis by deliberately turning asylum-seekers away from ports of entry, endangering families who see no choice but to take desperate measures in their search for protection,” he continued. “These dangerous policies must end immediately. The U.S. must welcome people safely into the country while their asylum claims are reviewed.”

CBP’s use of tear gas against asylum-seekers on Tuesday marked the second time the agency has fired the chemical into Mexico over the past several weeks alone. As *Common*

Dreams reported, CBP agents fired tear gas across the U.S.-Mexico border in late November, forcing women and children to flee “screaming and coughing.”

The Trump administration’s use of chemical agents against asylum-seekers comes amid a government shutdown over the president’s demand for \$5 billion in border wall funding.

While Democratic leaders have thus far rejected Trump’s demand for wall money, progressive advocacy groups raised alarm in a letter last week that the Democrats’ plan to reopen the govern-

ment would still provide the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—which oversees CBP—with substantial funding to carry out the



A migrant family, part of a caravan of thousands traveling from Central America to the U.S., run away from tear gas in front of the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico in Tijuana, Mexico, on Nov. 25, 2018. Kim Kyung Hoon—Reuters



An activist helps a couple of Central American migrants who were affected by the tear gas that the border police threw into Mexican territory to prevent them from crossing into the U.S. on January 1, 2019, in Tijuana, Mexico. Cristopher Rogel Blanquet / Getty Images

ment’s anti-immigrant agenda.

“As much as we all desire an end to the shutdown,” the groups wrote, “rewarding Trump’s DHS with border barrier money is the wrong course of action, especially at a time when its personnel are tear gassing toddlers, separating and detaining families and presiding over custodial deaths, including those of a 7-year-old girl named Jakelin and an 8-year-old boy named Felipe in Border Patrol custody just this month.”

As Hurricane Trump intensifies his campaign of chaos and destruction, leaving federal workers, food stamp recipients and migrants in its wake, we need to redouble our efforts to end the devastation.

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