

Fact checking the Globe & Mail's refugee caravan "fact check"

By Grahame Russell, Nov.6, 2018

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/fact-checking-the-globe-mails-refugee-caravan-fact-check>

The U.S. and Canada are 'refugee producing countries', helping cause why 10s of 1000s of Hondurans and Guatemalans flee annually

On November 2, 2018, the Globe and Mail published two quite moving articles on the hardships faced by thousands of mainly Hondurans and Guatemalans fleeing their home countries, making their way to the United States.

- "This is a fact check on the migrant caravan from the Globe's Latin America correspondent", by Stephanie Nolen, Nov.2, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-the-migrant-caravan-who-are-they-and-where-are-they-going/>
- "The caravans are coming – and Trump's tactics won't stop them", by Lauren Markham, Nov. 2, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-trumps-bluster-wont-stop-the-caravans-from-coming-only-change-in/>

Both articles acknowledge the refugees are fleeing entrenched poverty, violence, corruption and impunity.

Both articles –like most establishment media in the U.S. and Canada- reported on the militaristic, racist, scapegoating response of the U.S. government.

Yet, both articles –common to all the establishment media- ignore how Canada and the U.S. contribute to, and actually benefit from the underlying causes of the exploitation and poverty, violence and government repression, corruption and impunity that force so many to flee.



(Photo: Jeff Abbott. Suchiate river, part of Guatemala-Mexico border)

‘Refugee producing’ policies and actions

The argument is not that all the ills of Honduras and Guatemala derive from U.S. and Canadian policies and actions. It is a fact-based argument that the Canadian and U.S. governments and private sector interests pressure for and maintain mutually beneficial economic, political and military relations with the regimes in power that are creating and perpetuating the conditions that force 10s of 1000s of people to flee.

These government policies include providing extensive support for the Honduran and Guatemalan militaries and police (particularly from the U.S.), and maintaining full diplomatic and political relations with the corrupt, repressive governments and economic elites in power. Private sector interests include corporate and investor involvement in the sectors of mining, tourism, for-export agricultural production, hydro-electric dams, garment “sweatshop” factories.

Electoral fraud and violence have been widely documented in both countries, particularly Honduras. Yet after every election cycle the U.S. and Canadian governments, on cue, endorse the elections and therefore the “legitimacy” of the incoming (corrupt, exploitative, repressive) governments, and then get back to promoting North American corporate, investor and political interests in the region. The local populations are condemned to suffer –or flee from- another four years of the same.

Why?

The Globe and Mail is not alone in ignoring the contributory roles of Canada and the U.S. I wrote a similar comment related to CBC coverage: “While refugees flee Honduras, the CBC does not report on how Canada contributes to underlying causes”

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/while-refugees-flee-honduras-the-cbc-does-not-report-on-how-canada-contributes-to-underlying-causes>).

The main question is why are the Globe and Mail, the CBC, and most establishment media, misinforming the public about the harmful and even deadly impacts of some of the policies and actions of the Canadian and U.S. governments, our companies and investors?

Non establishment media outlets regularly report on the underlying causes of why so many people flee, year after year, decade after decade. U.S. and Canadian non-government organizations and solidarity groups (Rights Action, GHRC, Honduras Solidarity Network, NISGUA, Breaking the Silence, Witness for Peace, and more) have documented, for years, systemic human rights violations, forced evictions, corruption and repression occurring across both countries. These same groups have documented how many migrants have been forced to flee the very places where U.S. and Canadian companies are operating in partnership with corrupted government officials and economic elites, oftentimes directly supported by the militaries and police.

Vicious cycle

The actions and policies of our governments, companies and investors beyond our borders are as much “Canadian” and “United States” issues as they are inside our borders.

It is urgent that the media report properly on how the Canadian and U.S. governments and private sector interests sometimes participate in, and benefit from corruption, violence, exploitation and impunity in other countries, such as Guatemala and Honduras.

It is urgent for our politicians, congress, parliament and both senates to start providing regular, transparent and rigorous oversight into what our governments, companies and investors do beyond our borders.

Otherwise, the vicious cycle will repeat: this particular refugee caravan will soon disappear from the headlines; the U.S. and Canadian governments, companies and investors will continue with ‘business-as-usual’ with corrupted, exploitative and repressive regimes and economic elites in Honduras and Guatemala; 10s of 1000s desperate people will soon pack their meager knapsacks and flee into exile.

(Grahame Russell is a non-practicing Canadian lawyer; activist; adjunct professor at University of Northern British Columbia; and, since 1995, director of Rights Action (www.rightsaction.org). For over 25 years, Grahame has worked on human rights issues in Central America, focusing on the oftentimes complicity of the U.S., Canada and other actors in the “international community”.)

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