

Extreme heat is new danger stalking US-bound migrants

June 22 2024, by Hérika MARTÍNEZ



The personal belongings of migrants abandoned on the banks of the Rio Grande, a natural border with the United States.

In the Mexican desert near the US border, security forces are on alert after a man was found dead from heat stroke on the journey to what he

hoped would be a better life in North America.

The 45-year-old Mexican man's body was found buried among sand and bushes under the merciless sun, a week after a woman died from dehydration in the northern state of Chihuahua, where temperatures are over 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

Migrants from Latin America already face risky river crossings, [wild animals](#) and violent criminal gangs that extort, kidnap and abuse them on their path to the United States.

The heat is proving a new enemy for [migrants](#) exposed to the elements.

The Mexican government on Thursday reported 155 deaths associated with high temperatures, with 30 in the past week alone.

"It's too hot, I am a little dehydrated since the temperature doesn't go down and it's 43, 44 or 45 degrees," said Dioner Jose Romero, a 25-year-old Venezuelan migrant.

His compatriot Nelson Ramos, at a Catholic Church shelter in border city Ciudad Juarez, said he was used to high temperatures, but "the sun is too strong... I feel a little suffocated."

'Don't do it'

The US Border Patrol says that since October it has recorded the deaths of 77 people in the El Paso sector close to Ciudad Juarez, which extends to other parts of Texas and New Mexico.



Aerial view showing dead fish due to drought in the Bustillos Lagoon, near Anahuac, Chihuahua State, Mexico, taken on June 5, 2024.

The main causes of death are [heat stroke](#), drowning, and falls from the border wall—sections of which are up to nine meters high.

Mauricio Rodriguez, the director of emergency management services in Ciudad Juarez, told AFP that people were being urged not to travel to the [border](#) "because of the high temperatures."

"I understand that people are forced to do so, but we recommend they don't do it. The heat can lead to death," he said.

The deceased Mexican man had initially been abandoned by the trafficker who was taking him to the United States, but he returned to

bury him in the desert.

The trafficker later agreed to reveal the location of the body at the request of the migrant's family, according to emergency services.

During the search, Mexican authorities found six other undocumented immigrants, one with symptoms of dehydration.

Nearly 1.3 million irregular migrants passed through Mexican territory between January and May of this year alone, according to figures from Mexico's National Institute of Migration (INM).

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