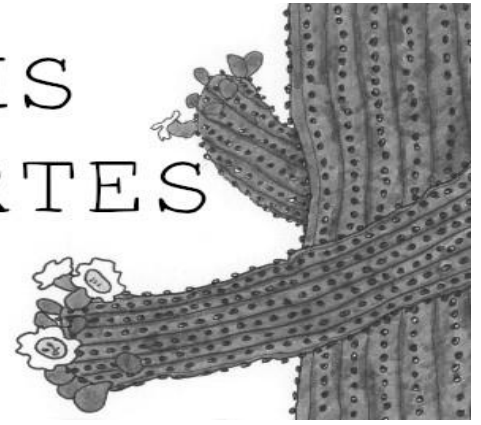


NO MORE DEATHS NO MÁS MUERTES



Summer 2023



Dear Friends,

On June 21, the longest day of the year, we ask you to join us in awareness and solidarity with the many people who spend this day crossing the Sonoran Desert. They will travel under the sun for 15 hours and 6 minutes. We know that their journey in search of a better life began many long days before this one. May they soon reach safety.

Summer is historically the most dangerous time of year for migrants. The number of recorded deaths in Pima County, where No More Deaths provides humanitarian aid, triples during June and July. This is a pattern that has been born out again and again throughout decades of xenophobic border enforcement practices. The fundamental principle of border enforcement, whether in the remote desert or at the border wall, is to force people into extremely dangerous situations. The Border Patrol strategizes so that people are “forced over more hostile terrain, less suited for crossing” (*Border Patrol Strategic Plan: 1994 and Beyond*).

It is physically impossible for migrants traveling from across the desert to carry enough water and food for their journey. Dehydration, malnutrition, and exposure are universally experienced, and data from the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner shows that environmental exposure is the most common cause of migrant death in the desert. Furthermore, minor injuries become life threatening if migrants are unable to continue walking because emergency rescue is rare. As you will read in this newsletter, No More Deaths’ Abuse Documentation group has gathered evidence showing that emergency 911 calls from migrants injured in the desert often go unanswered.

The policies of the US immigration system make it impossible for most people to attain asylum or other legal status which would provide stability and safety to people who need it. Its militarization of the borderlands destroys natural ecosystems and puts billions of dollars in the pockets of corporations. The beliefs and practices used to justify this system’s continuance encourages a culture of white

supremacy. It is a system that refuses accountability. We must continue to name the deliberateness of the US immigration system that results in the suffering, disappearance, and death of untold thousands of migrants.

No More Deaths is a grassroots powered organization whose work focuses on a specific moment of people’s migration: the days or weeks they spend in the



Sonoran Desert, and we are counting on your support. The **Longest Day of the Year Campaign** is our mid-year push for funding to help ensure that our supplies aren’t depleted by the demands of the summer heat. **Please donate to provide humanitarian aid for migrants in the desert.** You can do so by visiting our website, nomoredeaths.org, or by mailing a check or cash in the envelope provided. *Thank you!*

In 2016, No More Deaths began an abuse documentation project to bring to light some of the structural forces that create a crisis of migrant death and disappearance.

Disappeared: How the U.S. Border Enforcement Agencies are Fueling a Missing Persons

- Part 1 “Deadly Apprehension Methods: The Consequences of Chase and Scatter in the Wilderness”
- Part 2 “Interference with Humanitarian Aid”
- Part 3 “Left to Die: Border Patrol, Search and Rescue, and the Crisis of Disappearance”
- Part 4 “Separate & Deadly: Borderlands 911 System Segregation in Pima County, AZ” **Coming Soon**

Parts 1-3 of *Disappeared* are available online at www.thedisappearedreport.org. Part 4 will be published later this year.

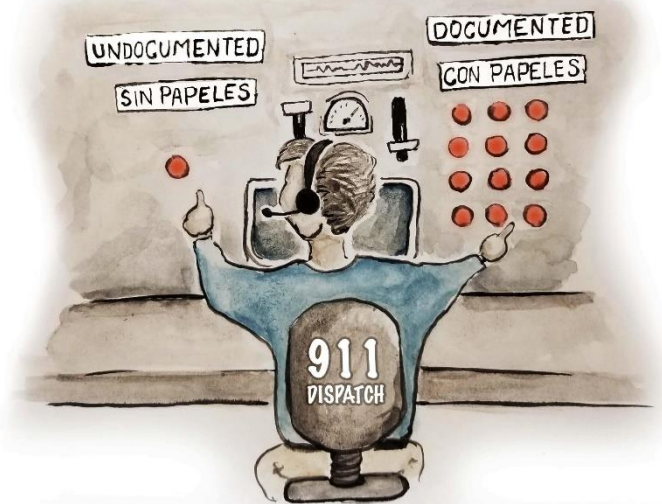
An Introduction to Part 4, “Separate & Deadly: Borderlands 911 System Segregation in Pima County, AZ”

- “The Search and Rescue Unit shall conduct a search when there is sufficient cause to believe that anyone is lost, injured, stranded, or deceased in a remote and normally inaccessible area.”
 - *Pima County Sheriff’s Department Policy Manual*
- “Did you guys ask them if they’re illegal, ‘cause we don’t go search for the illegals [sic].”
 - *Pima County Sheriff’s Office 911 Dispatcher*

In the US-Mexico borderlands, emergency services are separate and unequal. Whereas county search, rescue, and medical services respond to reports of US citizens in distress, 911 dispatchers forward calls from those they profile as undocumented migrants to Border Patrol. When families contact 911 after receiving a call from a loved one in distress, dispatchers instruct them to hang up and call the Border Patrol. When humanitarian volunteers contact 911 on behalf of people reported lost or in distress, sheriff’s departments also direct them to instead contact border enforcement.

In our last report, we showed that Border Patrol is not a consistent nor quality emergency responder, taking confirmed action in only 37% of emergency cases we documented. The quality of this response pales in comparison to that afforded to US citizens by local emergency services. As a consequence, more than 1 in 4 cases of all confirmed Border Patrol searches result in death

or disappearance. In 17% of these cases, the remains of the distressed person are never recovered or identified. When compared with the near 100% success rate of county-led search and rescues in the same or similar remote borderland corridors, the result of bifurcating the provision of emergency services along citizenship lines is a deadly form of systematic discrimination: one’s citizenship status determines what action, if any, government actors will take to prevent loss of life in an emergency case. These staggering rates of inaction in preventing loss of life led us to call for the demotion of Border Patrol as an emergency first responder, the dissolution of the agency, and the demilitarization of the border, as every day, untold numbers of people seeking safety and family reunification across borders find themselves stranded in the most remote areas of US soil without equal access to rescue.



“Separate & Deadly” examines the complicity of county-level emergency services in exacerbating the crisis of death and disappearance on the border. As the first point of contact in a life-or-death emergency, county-level conduct is pivotal to determining the fate of undocumented callers. Arizona’s Pima County alone sees approximately 50% of all known border deaths in the United States, nearing 4,000 recorded fatalities and thousands more missing persons cases. Its 911 dispatchers handle at least 1,500 distress calls from people crossing the border annually (an average of 4-5 such calls a day). According to a report from 2016, all other southern Arizona counties in the Tucson Sector (Cochise, Maricopa, Santa Cruz, and Pinal) have the same practice of transferring 911 calls to Border Patrol, as well as counties in South Texas, although each may have varying degrees of internal response to Search and Rescues. As one of the largest and most consistently deadly migration corridors in the US borderlands, Pima County represents a critical case study for the border-wide practice of segregating emergency response

for people perceived to be undocumented in US border states.

In “Separate & Deadly,” we share our findings from reviewing several thousand Pima County 911 calls which clearly evidence numerous unconstitutional and abusive practices of the Pima County Sheriff’s Department that factor in the humanitarian crisis on the border. We document the systemic mishandling of 911 calls from those in distress, county Sheriffs and SAR outfits flagrantly declining jurisdiction to mobilize for the undocumented, and the financially-motivated infiltration of county medical services with an abusive Border Patrol presence into every level of emergency care. From the point of first contact with a person in distress, the Pima County Sheriff’s Department has codified a segregated and deadly emergency response procedure wherein local officials knowingly wash their hands of responsibility for the lives of those in distress and without aid in their jurisdiction. This amounts to the denial of life-saving emergency services to a disfavored group in US territory—a constitutional violation of the 14th amendment, which guarantees all people equal protection under the law. By doing so, the Pima County Sheriff Department’s standard practices and protocols directly

contribute to death on the border. *Stay tuned for the release of the full report later this year.*

Reflections on the end of Title 42 and immigration policies under the Biden administration

“But it’s better now with Biden...right?”

This question gets thrown around all too often. The change in presidential political party doesn’t play out as a pendulum in the borderlands, swinging between good and bad policies. Instead, the middle ground between political parties continues to move towards increased militarization, exclusion and violence.

Most recently, Biden finally ended the infamous Title 42, a rule that allowed border officials to bypass due process for migrants trying to escape humanitarian crises in their home countries. In the weeks after the end of Title 42, the situation on the ground continues to shift. In some areas, like the Jacumba Wilderness in California and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Arizona, large numbers of people are crossing to apply for asylum. In other areas, not much has



No More Deaths volunteers hike the canyonlands to leave water, food, socks, and blankets on trails. We estimate that over 80% of our supplies are found and consumed by people migrating through southern Arizona. Volunteers adapt water drops to reflect changing migration trends, which have been impacted by border wall construction and increased surveillance.

changed. Media coverage has varied drastically, some sources claim there's a chaotic invasion, others say it's pretty quiet. The reality is much more nuanced.

On the same day that Title 42 ended, the Biden administration announced an array of new policies that will do just as much harm to migrants across the Global South. These include an "asylum transit ban" that would disqualify many asylum-seekers and an agreement to support increasing militarized enforcement of the Panama-Colombia border. Advocates predict that these new policies will reject asylum seekers at rates just as high as under Title 42, with disproportionate impact on Black and brown migrants. Politicians are intent on deterring migrants from ever reaching the US, causing harm that will impact generations and can never be undone.

US-Mexico border wall construction carries on, and the budget for the Border Patrol continues to rise year after year. While the true number of people crossing the border is unknowable, around the time Biden was inaugurated the number of migrant encounters, as reported by Border Patrol, increased from 400,000 to 1,700,000. This number has remained high, placing a continued strain on our work and the work of our allies. Humanitarian aid organizations border-wide have continued to provide care for people, but without the funding and interest many referred to as the "Trump bump." There is significantly lower interest, urgency and attention placed on the humanitarian crisis at the border. Last year had the highest number of known migrant deaths border wide.* If this had happened during the Trump administration, it's likely that his policies would have been blamed. But under Biden, people seem hesitant to be too critical. The cost of this complacency is enormous.

Through it all, our work at No More Deaths continues. Each month we train new volunteers who live in Tucson or come from out of town. We carry food and water to remote desert trails, help families navigate the emergency response system, provide first aid at Byrd Camp, take inventory of supplies and refill water tanks, trying to do as much harm reduction as possible.

**we hesitate to say it was the "deadliest year" because of the numerous factors that result in undercounted recoveries. The true toll remains unknown.*

Volunteer with No More Deaths

Our Desert Aid group, which leaves water and food on migrant trails and maintains our remote humanitarian aid camp, relies entirely on volunteer labor. We host three out-of-town volunteers each month. These "month-long" volunteers work alongside trained long-term No More Deaths volunteers, as well as a cohort of new local volunteers. Applications for Desert Aid volunteer programs are available on our website. If you have questions or concerns, please email the Desert Aid volunteer coordinator: volunteer@nomoredeaths.org.



The altar for La Virgen de Guadalupe at our remote humanitarian aid station, "Byrd Camp."

Thank you all for making our work possible!

Please donate to No More Deaths' Longest Day Campaign

Donate online by visiting nomoredeaths.org
Questions? Email fundraising@nomoredeaths.org

Mail checks for "UUCT – No More Deaths" to:
No More Deaths, PO Box 40782, Tucson, AZ 8571