News

Migrants from Central America, who were returned to Mexico under Title 42 after seeking asy

Migrants from Central America, who were returned to Mexico under Title 42 after seeking asylum in the U.S., stand inside the El Buen Samaritano shelter in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, April 21, 2022. (CNS photo/Jose Luis Gonzalez, Reuters)



by Catholic News Service

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WASHINGTON — A federal judge at an April 25 hearing said he would grant the requests of three states to force the federal government to keep in place a public-health order at the U.S.-Mexico border that has increased the number of expulsions of immigrants trying to cross into the United States.

The public-health order, known as Title 42, allows the United States to bar entry of persons who have recently been in a country where a communicable disease was present. It was applied by the Trump administration in March 2020, soon after the coronavirus pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization.

U.S. District Judge Robert R. Summerhays of the Western District of Louisiana, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, said he would sign an order to keep the policy in place, and to order the federal government to certify that it is not acting ahead of its announced May 23 date to drop the Title 42 provision.

The Biden administration has come under fire from both Republicans and Democrats for planning to end the policy. The Centers for Disease Control and Protection

announced in April that the restriction could be dropped in late May.

Catholic groups that support immigrants have long been calling for an end to this restriction.

Since Title 42 was applied at the border, 1.61 million people have been expelled by the United States through January, the latest month for which statistics are available. The vast majority, 1.56 million, were expelled by the U.S. Border Patrol, while 52,735 were expelled by the Office of Field Operations.

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Immigration advocates criticized the policy when it was first enacted by Trump, and have pressed the Biden administration to drop it.

Some elected officials have predicted an overwhelming surge in immigration should Title 42 be lifted, predicting 12,000 to 13,000 border crossings daily. The Biden administration said it is planning for 18,000 daily crossings effective May 23.

Summerhays has not yet ruled on another request in the suit to force the Biden administration to keep Title 42 in place. The United States has made exceptions to the policy, particularly in the case of well-founded fears of violence and death if not admitted into the country.

The suit was brought by the states of Arizona, Louisiana and Missouri, the latter two of which have no land border crossing with Mexico.

While the majority of immigrants hail from the "Northern Triangle" countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, a growing number of refugees from countries even further from Mexico — such as Cuba, Brazil and India — have shown up at the border. Mexico has been loath to accept them after they were expelled by the United States.

In recent weeks, Ukrainians fleeing their homeland after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine have also been seeking entry into the United States from Mexico.