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People in camo uniforms stand next to twisted razor wire. Clothing is caught in different parts

Members of the Texas National Guard stand near a razor wire fence used to prevent migrants from crossing into the United States, along the Rio Bravo, at the U.S.-Mexico border, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, Jan. 22, 2024. (OSV News photo/Jose Luis Gonzalez, Reuters)

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The U.S. Supreme Court Jan. 22 allowed Border Patrol agents to cut through or remove razor wire that Texas installed on a portion of the U.S.-Mexico border as part of the state's effort to prevent illegal border crossings.

A closely divided court in a 5-4 vote sided with the Biden administration, granting their emergency request that argued the state of Texas unlawfully prevented federal agents from performing their duties as the wire deterred them as well as migrants. Migrants have been injured by the sharp wire, according to emails from state employees.

Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Amy Coney Barrett, joined with the justices who are perceived as the court's liberal wing -- Justices Ketanji Brown Jackson, Elena

Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor -- siding with the Biden administration. Justices Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Clarence Thomas sided with Texas.

Catholic immigration advocates have condemned the razor wire as inhumane.

Dylan Corbett, executive director of Hope Border Institute, told OSV News Jan. 23 that "although this ruling doesn't yet resolve the central issue of Texas' many actions to militarize the border, it is important."

"The physicians who treat migrants in our clinic in Ciudad Juarez have treated the flesh wounds of children and mothers who have been injured by this razor wire," Corbett said. "All that Texas is doing -- the razor wire, the National Guard, the Humvees and the dangerous river buoys -- is exacerbating the crisis of border deaths in El Paso. It is unconstitutional, completely political and hasn't stemmed at all the arrivals of migrants. The federal government needs to step in to stop these games and also put in place a humane and functioning system once and for all."

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The White House applauded the high court's order.

"Texas' political stunts, like placing razor wire near the border, simply make it harder and more dangerous for frontline personnel to do their jobs," White House spokesperson Angelo Fernández Hernández said.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said in a statement the Supreme Court's temporary order "allows Biden to continue his illegal effort to aid the foreign invasion of America."

"The destruction of Texas's border barriers will not help enforce the law or keep American citizens safe," Paxton said. "This fight is not over, and I look forward to defending our state's sovereignty."

The case remains before a lower court judge, and is one of several ongoing disputes about immigration policy between Texas officials and the Biden administration.