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## Unauthorized Migration and Border “Control”: Three Regional Views

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## Unauthorized Migration and Border “Control”: Three Regional Views

### Abstract

This is a revised transcript of a talk given at the Latin American and Iberian Institute at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, on February 29, 2008.

### Keywords

migration, border control, illegal immigration, poverty, labor market

### Comments

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**Unauthorized Migration and Border “Control”: Three Regional  
Views**

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March 2008

This is a revised transcript of a talk given at the Latin American and Iberian Institute at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, on February 29, 2008.

## Introduction

I want to talk about how three countries located in different regions of the world are addressing the issue of “unauthorized migration” at their borders. Let me say a little about how I got interested in this topic.

This is in some ways a real departure from my past work on Latin American labor movements, although not entirely. Besides the obvious overlap between labor and migration, it was the Mexican teachers that I studied in the 1980s for my dissertation who were migrating to California’s Central Valley to work in agriculture in the 1990s. So I had an interest in Mexican migration, and had followed some of the policy changes in this country that made migration increasingly difficult. But there was also a coming together of events in 2000-01 that made me begin to think more about migration as a global phenomenon.

Around that time I began to see more and more stories about migrants dying in the Arizona desert because they were going around the walls built in California and at other points along the border. I was also in Spain in 2001-02 and saw daily press reports about African migrants drowning in the waters of the Strait of Gibraltar and washing up on the southern beaches. About the same time, I saw photos of asylum seekers who were in detention in Australia, and who had sewn their lips shut as a protest against the mandatory detention policy in that country.

So I became interested in learning more about what produced these desperate acts of migration, and especially about our role (those of us in the rich destination countries) in creating this situation. On sabbatic in 2006 I went to these three sites, to see what was happening and to do some initial interviews with migrant advocates, to try to understand how they carried out their work in these frontline sites and in these political environments that were becoming increasingly difficult and hostile to migrants.

Today I want to talk about one aspect of these migration environments: the efforts by states to control their borders and to enact measures aimed at deterring unauthorized migration. Despite these different areas of the world that I just mentioned, there are strong similarities in the way that “advanced liberal democracies” are addressing this issue –and I think they signal a disturbing convergence in border policies and in the treatment of migrants.

In using the term, “unauthorized” migration or migrants, I am also making a distinction between migrants who cross borders without any form of authorization, and those who may enter a country through border inspection points with either false documents or with legal visas, and who then simply overstay their visas.

In most cases the majority of those who find themselves with illegal status are in this latter category, and those who enter “unauthorized” (or without inspection) are usually a minority. In the U.S. the undocumented

population is about evenly divided between those who first entered legally and those who entered unauthorized, according to Jeffrey Passel of the Pew Hispanic Center. Yet it is the concern about unauthorized entry that often drives public debate and policy.

### Desperate Acts

I want to start by recounting three events that occurred almost simultaneously last year—during February-March 2007—in these three different regions of the world.

#### 1. Sri Lankan Asylum Seekers in Australia

On February 20, 2007, eighty-three Tamils from Sri Lanka and two Indonesians, including a 17-year-old boy, who were crowded into a boat heading from Indonesia to Australia, were intercepted by an Australian navy vessel and taken to a high-security detention center on Christmas Island. Although part of Australian territory, Christmas Island is one of several areas in Australia that have been “excised” from the migration zone—meaning that asylum seekers that reach these parts of Australian shores are not able to gain access to Australia’s asylum-processing machinery. After being held at the Christmas Island detention facility for one month, the Sri Lankan asylum seekers—who were Tamils fleeing unsafe conditions in Sri Lanka—were shipped to the small island republic of Nauru, where they were held in another detention center. This facility had been hastily built in 2001

to house 438 Afghans and Iraqis rescued by the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa in September 2001. (Some of you may recall this incident—the Tampa rescued these people from a sinking ship and then was refused access to Australian territorial waters in order to offload the asylum seekers on Christmas Island, in violation of international human rights conventions and the convention on refugees, as well as Law of the Sea.)

Once on Nauru, the Sri Lankans' claims to protection were to be processed by Australian immigration officers. But Australia's offshore asylum policies prohibit any judicial review or any appeal of these officers' decisions. Moreover, even if the asylum seekers were found to be refugees, Australian policy under the government of John Howard was to keep them in detention on Nauru while the government shopped around for third countries to accept them. The men would languish on Nauru, a remote Pacific Island about 2,500 miles from Australia, without access to lawyers, visitors, or phones, waiting for a determination on their refugee status. In September 2007 fifty of them went on a hunger strike to press for some action on their status. Eventually, seventy-five were determined to be refugees. But this was still no guarantee that they would be resettled anytime soon. If past experience was any guide, their destiny was to wait months, years possibly, on Nauru until Australia could convince another country to take them or else persuade the refugees to return to where they came from.

Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews defended sending the Tamils to Nauru. He said, “Ideally, we wouldn’t want people coming to Australia in boats whatsoever. The question in these circumstances is what will be the strongest possible message of deterrence.”<sup>i</sup>

These procedures followed the outlines of the “Pacific Solution,” the Howard government’s response to unauthorized boat arrivals since 2001. The Pacific Solution was to prevent the onshore arrival of unauthorized asylum seekers at all cost---by turning them away at sea, or by moving them to excised offshore or foreign facilities for processing and mandatory detention. It began when Pauline Hanson’s anti-immigrant One Nation Party”threatened to divert votes from John Howard’s Liberal Party in the 2001 elections. Howard’s government responded by moving toward the One Nation Party’s restrictive position on immigration and asylum seekers, a stance Howard sustained throughout his administration.

The result has been thousands detained in detention camps onshore and off and asylum seekers returned to their countries despite evidence that they would be in danger. The policy has been sustained despite riots at detention centers, hunger strikes, incidents of self-harm, and suicides; and despite international condemnation and scathing domestic inquiries and reports (including one sparked by the case of a schizophrenic Australian citizen [a former Qantas flight attendant, Cornelia Rau] who was



“accidentally” thrown into a detention facility in the middle of Australia for 10 months, where her family couldn’t locate her.)

## 2. Marine I—Spain

On February 2, 2007, the Italian-built prawn trawler *Marine I* sent a distress call from international waters off Mauritania. Aboard were 369 people from several countries, including Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Myanmar, India and Pakistan. The ship was heading to the Canary Islands. Spanish rescue aircraft picked up the distress signal, and there began the wrangling between Spain and Mauritania over who would take responsibility for the stranded migrants. Spain offered to give Mauritania 655,000 euros and assistance with identifying and repatriating the migrants. A Spanish rescue ship towed the trawler into the Mauritanian port of Nouadhibou on February 12, ten days after the first distress call was sent.

As the migrants were unloaded under the watch of sixty Spanish police officers flown to Mauritania, efforts began to try to identify their nationalities. This was done with the aid of an EU-funded international commission that tried to identify the men on the basis of physical features, language, and other clues, since most of the men lacked documents and refused to identify themselves for fear of being returned. Some of the migrants were determined to be possible asylum seekers and were sent on to the Canary Islands for further processing.

The remaining 299 migrants were moved to a former fish warehouse in the Nouadhibou port, where conditions were so poor that the international aid organization, the Red Crescent, initially refused to provide assistance in an effort to get authorities to improve conditions. Despite the fact that the warehouse was never conditioned to hold this human cargo, Spain refused to take the migrants onto Spanish soil for processing, and the men remained in limbo in Mauritania. Spanish Foreign Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba justified this, saying, "...we cannot establish the criterion whereby every boat we find between Africa and the Canaries should be allowed to proceed to the Canary Islands."<sup>ii</sup>

Over time, and as conditions became more unbearable, migrants in the warehouse began to reveal their identities and nationalities, facilitating their return. In late May, nearly 100 days after the migrants' arrival in Nouadhibou, twenty-three remaining "Asian" migrants were transferred from the warehouse to a detention facility built by Spanish military engineers with EU funds in 2006. The transfer also shifted responsibility of the migrants from Spain to Mauritania, although Spain would continue to assist with repatriations. (While the migrants remained in the warehouse, they had been under the custody of the Spanish police.) For Spain's migrant rights groups, Spain's role in the Marine I episode was in direct violation of international conventions regarding return of migrants and their right to have their

asylum claims heard, and it revealed the darker side of Spain's "border control" policies.

### 3. Raids and Immigration Detention in the United States

On March 6, 2007, 300 federal immigration agents raided a New Bedford, Massachusetts, leather manufacturer, taking into custody about 350 employees, most of them immigrants from Guatemala and El Salvador. Most of these workers were transferred to another facility in the state for processing; about 90 workers were flown to a detention center in Harlingen, Texas. Many of those taken into custody had children in schools and day care, and no way to make arrangements for their children to be picked up and looked after. Widely publicized was one case of a dehydrated baby, who was taken to the emergency room after she refused to drink milk from a bottle. Her mother, who had been nursing her, had been detained in the raid. Eventually, after pressure from the Massachusetts State Governor Deval Patrick and Senator Ted Kennedy, among others, the Department of Social Services in Mass. was allowed to interview workers to determine if they had left children behind or if they had another condition that would warrant release from detention on humanitarian grounds.

This was not the first of the raids carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a division of the Department of Homeland Security. In the last two years, ICE has stepped up its raids of American workplaces across the country. Ostensibly an effort to capture "fugitive

aliens,” the workplace raids rounded up thousands of men and women whose chief “crime” had been illegal entry and unlawful presence in the United States, a civil violation. The raids wrenched families apart; some parents had to face the decision of leaving their U.S.-citizen children in the care of others or to take them back to the homes they had left, in some cases as many as ten years earlier. Raids did not only take place at workplaces; homes were also vulnerable to the incursions of ICE officers. [ ICE agents do not need a court-issued warrant to enter a home, it is enough for a supervisor to approve the “administrative warrant.”] The pre-dawn knocks at the door and ensuing “warrantless” searches have created terror in immigrant communities and have led to thousands taken into custody, placed in immigration detention, and deported.

Although communities, church leaders, and even state governors expressed outrage at ICE’s tactics, others blamed the migrants for any difficulties the children faced. Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, D.C., said, “They knowingly put their children in that position, and I find it hard to describe that as anything other than child abuse.”<sup>iii</sup> A spokesman for FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform, another group that supports restrictive immigration policies), criticized undocumented immigrant parents for using their children as “human shields.”<sup>iv</sup>

In an editorial, the *New York Times* said that the failure of comprehensive immigration reform is creating a “path of misery” for undocumented immigrants in this country, and called the measures being implemented “narrow, shortsighted, disruptive and self-defeating.”<sup>v</sup> Another editorial from August 9, 2007, said, “The American people cherish lawfulness but resist cruelty, and have supported reform that includes a reasonable path to earned citizenship. Their leaders have given them immigration reform as pest control.”<sup>vi</sup>

### Different Countries, Common Trends

These scenarios occur in three different regions of the world, yet their similarities point to some common trends in immigration and asylum policies emerging in “advanced” democracies. I want to highlight three of these trends here:

1. “Criminalization” of migrants & asylum seekers.

Harsher policies against unauthorized migrants and asylum seekers have been justified by portraying these individuals as “law breakers” and “queue jumpers.” There is a growing tendency, especially in the United States, to justify actions at the border by arguing that those trying to enter may be terrorists and criminals. In Europe as well, the “fight” against illegal immigration is put on the same level as the fight against organized crime and the fight against terrorism.

Resorting to imprisonment of migrants and asylum seekers is probably the clearest evidence of this criminalizing trend. The detention of immigrants is something that has for the most part remained off the public's radar, even though it has been around a long time. But whereas before undocumented immigrants might be allowed to wait out their time outside of immigration prisons before a hearing or deportation, ICE has been phasing out this so-called "catch and release" policy in favor of what they are now calling "catch and remove", passing through detention. In the U.S., not only are immigrants housed in ICE detention facilities, they are also often placed in city and county jails, and often together with the regular prison population.

This has meant a surge in detention facilities and in business for private prison contractors, who often run facilities (and sometimes build them) for ICE. Private security firms such as Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the Geo Group (formerly Wackenhut) profit off the harsher immigration detention and deportation policies.

Corrections Corporation of America and Geo Group operate eight of the sixteen federal detention centers. Private companies also manage a number of county jails, which house 57 percent of immigrants in detention. The federal government pays an average of \$95 a night to house these detainees, or about \$1 billion dollars a year.

A *New York Times* article in 2006 said that CCA stock prices rose 27 percent in a six month period, and profit margins averaged about 20 percent. One brokerage firm analyst quoted in the article said, “What’s great about the detention business, is not that it’s a brand-new channel of demand, but that it is growing and significant.”<sup>vii</sup>

In 2004 Congress passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act, which authorized 40,000 additional immigration detention bed spaces. The senate immigration draft bill last summer also called for the construction or acquisition of federal detention facilities for “aliens detained pending removal” and for indefinite detention in some cases, including for the mentally ill and those whose home countries will not accept them. As of last fall, 27,500 non-citizens were being held in immigration detention on any given day. As of June of last year, sixty-two immigrants had died in custody since 2004, many of these in circumstances that remain obscure.

Following Australia’s lead, the United States is also detaining families together in a former prison, the T. Don Hutto Family Residential Facility in Taylor, Texas. Portrayed by ICE and CCA as a more humane alternative to separation of families, the facility has been criticized by rights groups for its limited facilities for children, including inadequate access to education and nutrition, and its prison-like cells, uniforms, and rules. A United Nations Special Rapporteur, who was reviewing conditions for detained migrants in the U.S., was denied access to the Hutto facility in May 2007, and the

American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit on behalf of children detained at the former prison.

In reporting on its apprehensions and detentions, ICE often lumps together immigrants who have committed serious crimes with those who have committed minor offenses such as shop-lifting or “non-criminal” immigration violations: those who did not heed a deportation order, or who are simply unauthorized to be in the country. The immigration agency’s “Fugitive Operations Teams” were created to track down the more “serious” offenders but the majority of those they have arrested in their operations have no criminal records.

In the U.S. congress a bill that passed the house in 2005 (HR 4437—also known as the Sensenbrenner bill) would have made unlawful presence a felony as well as criminalized any humanitarian assistance to undocumented migrants. The bill did not move forward, but in spite of this the government has targeted humanitarian action. In 2005 two 23-year-old volunteers with the humanitarian aid group No More Deaths were arrested while transporting migrants in need of medical care from the Arizona desert to a clinic in Tucson. The government dropped the felony charges against them fifteen months later [“transportation in furtherance of an illegal presence in the United States,” and “conspiracy to transport in furtherance of an illegal presence in the United States,”], but not before a large public campaign under the banner “Humanitarian Aid is Never A Crime” was carried out by



local migrant rights groups and their allies across the country. The targeting continues: Just last week, a No More Deaths volunteer was cited for “littering” for leaving water jugs out near a known migrant trail. Ironically, he was also picking up trash along the way.

Although the efforts in congress to make unlawful entry a felony failed at the time, in Arizona the Border Patrol is trying another tactic to deter border crossers: this is a new “zero-tolerance” policy that will make migrants crossing into the state illegally subject to detention of up to 180 days, even for first-time entrants. (It is now being called a “partial tolerance policy,” because there is not enough detention space to house the projected 100 migrants a day that Border Patrol wanted to prosecute under this policy, and the court system in southern Arizona cannot handle the load).

In Spain, detention is limited by law to forty days, yet migrants are often housed in substandard former prisons, and collective deportation procedures often overlook the fate of migrants returned to Africa, where they may be jailed upon arrival or else abandoned in the desert, as has happened with returns to Morocco. International human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have come out with several reports criticizing these policies, as well as the conditions under which migrant unaccompanied minors have been housed.

In Australia, entire families of asylum seekers have been held in detention camps behind razor wire, for as many as five years. Children were

routinely held in these detention centers until 2005, when public pressure finally caused them to be moved to “community detention,” supervised arrangements in the community (and some still behind razor wire).

Imprisonment in these centers has taken its toll on the detainees, many of whom the government eventually recognized as refugees. Some have died in detention. Reports of suicide attempts, self-harm, and severe depression among detainees, including children, are now well known in Australia. In the last year there has been an attempt to move people out of onshore detention centers, and some of these have closed. Yet a recent investigation by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of Australia decried the government’s treatment of asylum seekers as if they were criminals, called the remaining detention facilities “prison-like,” and urged that they be shut down.

The recent elections in Australia have produced some good news. John Howard was defeated in the November elections and the Labor Party is now in power. The Labor Party had played a rather shameful role under the Howard government in backing most of its policies with regard to asylum seekers. Thanks to mounting pressure by a small but active asylum seeker rights movement in Australia, the new government is moving away from the Pacific Solution policies. In the last couple of months it has begun to resettle in Australia the Tamils that were left on Nauru ... which is a huge change. Nonetheless, the government has not agreed to abandon the policy of

mandatory detention of asylum seekers nor to reverse the policy of excision of its northern coast and islands, and it is proceeding with the opening of the Christmas Island facility. Immigration Minister Chris Evans justified the decision, saying that “[w]hile the Government is ending the Pacific solution with the closure of the centre on Nauru ...[it] remains committed to strong border security, tough anti-people smuggling measures and the orderly processing of migration to our country.”<sup>viii</sup>

2. “Securitization”/ fortifying the borders & tightening controls.

Each of these countries has vastly increased the sums spent on border security. The cost to Australian taxpayers has so far come to several billion dollars for the government’s use of navy ships to turn around boats at sea, its construction, refurbishing, and operation of detention facilities inside Australia, and its offshore detention and processing of just under 1,700 asylum seekers. The detention facility on Christmas Island, which asylum seeker advocates are calling Australia’s Guantanamo, is costing \$396 million dollars.

In the United States, border security funding has more than doubled between 2001-2006, from \$4.6 billion to \$10.4 billion. Border security has entailed hiring more Border Patrol officers, putting National Guard on the border, constructing a fence, and installing ground sensors, stadium lights, unmanned aerial drones, and new, 90-foot radar towers produced by Boeing that record images and relay these to Border Patrol. (These towers made the

news some time ago when they were first installed in Arizona because apparently they couldn't tell the difference between a rock, a cow, or migrants, but Chertoff assures us that the bugs have been worked out. )

The mantra of all of presidential candidates, whether Democratic or Republican, when talking about immigration is to "secure the border first." In the later Democratic debates, the candidates have been a bit better on this issue, yet they still emphasize construction of a "virtual fence," using some of the technology I just described. So this spending on the border is likely to continue even under a Democratic administration.

With EU assistance, Spain patrols the long coast of western Africa, operates a technologically sophisticated surveillance system in the Mediterranean (the SIVE), and returns migrants on chartered jets accompanied by an extensive security detail. Repatriations cost the Spanish government over 45 million euros between 2004-2006. Although Spain mostly patrols a marine "border" or area, it has also fortified its enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (which are located next to Morocco) in order to curb attempts by migrants—both North Africans and sub-Saharan Africans-- to scale the walls. In October 2005 a coordinated attempt by several hundred migrants to scale the fences led to thirteen deaths, most of these caused by gunshots from Moroccan forces. Shortly after this incident, 1,500 sub-Saharan African migrants were rounded up by Moroccan authorities and abandoned in the desert. The Spanish government responded to these events with a greater

fortification of the border, including higher fences, additional layers of fencing, razor wire, optic and acoustic sensors, watchtowers, lightposts, automatic tear-gas dispensers, and surveillance cameras.

### 3. “Externalization” of immigration policies.

What I mean by externalization is the shifting of responsibility for aspects of border control and management of migration to third countries.. Some have also talked about a “thickening” or “buffering” of the border.

Australia is perhaps the prime example of a country pushing its immigration detention and processing practices offshore. Under the Howard government, Nauru became the country of first resort for detention and processing of asylum seekers. Papua New Guinea and Indonesia have also played this role. Australia has an MOU with Indonesia in which it can return any migrants coming from that country back to Indonesia, regardless of their point of origin. Indonesia is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees, and so the concern is that it is not bound by the commitment to prevent the return of people to countries where they face danger. As I mentioned, Australia has also taken the unusual step of making its own territory “foreign” by excising the northern islands and coastline from its own migration laws. These measures help the government to prevent boat arrivals from entering Australia; they also remove the government’s handling of migrants and asylum seekers from the gaze of the Australian public, the press, and lawyers.

Europe has increasingly pressed countries like Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya to play the role of “policeman” in trying to curb migration coming from sub-Saharan Africa. Spain has had an agreement with Morocco to admit returned third-country nationals who have transited through Morocco to get to Spain. Spain has also sought out “readmission agreements” with a growing number of African countries, as migrants have increasingly come from farther away. These agreements often involve granting sums of money to induce foreign governments both to take back their nationals and to admit migrants from third countries who are apprehended trying to enter Spain. Human rights groups have criticized the Spanish government for turning over African migrants to Moroccan authorities at the Spanish territories of Ceuta and Melilla. They claim that Spain has been shifting responsibility for migrants’ welfare onto governments with fewer resources and a record of human rights violations, and that Spain bears responsibility for what happens to these migrants beyond its borders.

Spain has also enlisted African countries in policing their own coasts and smugglers’ jumping-off points to keep migrants from reaching Spanish shores or waters. Many African countries cooperate reluctantly, in exchange for financial assistance, military equipment, and sometimes, a limited number of temporary work permits for their nationals. African leaders argue that the political and economic root causes of migration have to be addressed and complain that Europe sees migration primarily as a security problem.

In the United States immigration prisons are still mostly sited on U.S. soil, but the U.S. government has held migrants and asylum seekers offshore. Before the Guantanamo Bay U.S. naval base held “terror suspects” it held Haitians, Cubans, and Chinese migrants, and it has deported immigrants to face torture and even death in their countries of birth. (Probably one of the most famous recent cases was that of Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen who wasn’t even trying to immigrate to the U.S., but who was merely transiting through, and who was sent to Syria, his country of birth, where he was imprisoned and tortured.) The U.S. has also been actively involved in turning migrants back at sea (notably, Haitians and Cubans) for some time.

#### Unintended Consequences for Migration

The aim of many of these border control measures is to deter unauthorized migration by making it harder, costlier, and riskier. But despite the sophisticated technology, the stepped up policing of borders, and the thickening and buffering of borders in the developed world, these countries (with the possible exception of Australia) have not managed to significantly slow unauthorized migration. The GAO (Government Accountability Office) estimates of undocumented entries into the United States between 1998 and 2004 showed only a slight decline, which not all experts attribute to enhanced enforcement. Crossings through Arizona have increased in this period, as barriers at other parts of the border funneled

crossers through the Sonoran desert. In Spain, meanwhile, some 33,000 migrants reached the shores of the Canary Islands in 2006, up from about 4,700 the year before.

Migrant deaths have also increased as a direct consequence of tighter border restrictions. The GAO estimates that deaths at the U.S.-Mexico border doubled between 1995 and 2005, with three-fourths of these occurring in Arizona. In 2007, 237 migrant deaths were reported in the Tucson sector (this is just one part of the Arizona border; there were 205 deaths in 2006, 279 in 2005, 234 in 2004). Actually, human rights groups on the border talk in terms of “recovered bodies,” not deaths, because many who died may not be discovered. At least 4,500 migrants have died all along the border in little over a decade since the U.S. started its border wall construction—most of these migrants died of dehydration and exposure as they struggled to cross the deserts and mountains where walls had not yet been built.

In Spain increased surveillance at the Strait of Gibraltar and along the southern coastline pushed migration routes down to the Canary Islands. New surveillance on the westernmost islands, together with patrols on the West coast of Africa, have pushed migration routes even farther south, so that boats that used to set out from Morocco, the Western Sahara and Mauritania are departing from Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde to try to go around the patrols and avoid being intercepted at sea.



In 2007 the number of confirmed deaths en route to the Canary Islands was 750, with an estimated total number of deaths at sea of 3,000, because of the boats that were presumed to have sunk at sea. (Numbers for 2006 were far higher because of an unusually high traffic to the Canaries). Of course it is not known exactly how many die in their attempt to cross, because many bodies are never found. It is especially hard to account for all the deaths that occur as African migrants make their way overland through the Saharan desert, and in the months and sometimes years that it takes migrants to pull the money together for the boat trip.

Australia did manage to slow (but not stop) unauthorized boat arrivals, but only after 353 children, women, and men drowned offshore after their distressed boat was left to founder off Australian waters in October 2001.

These accounts go to my main point—Putting more money and resources into border control does not necessarily control the border: it escalates the costs and risks associated with migrating without stopping migration. Migration is dynamic; migrants and those who assist them respond to the barriers with new methods, new strategies, and new routes, which invariably involve more risk, more financial cost, and more loss of life.

I remember reading a news article about a man in Senegal who made it his mission to persuade other young men not to migrate. The journalist reported on this man's conversation with a friend who planned to leave for the Canary Islands. He was imploring the friend not to go, reminding him of

all the deaths that had occurred. But his friend said, “Yes, we all know people who have died, but we also know people who have made it. I will be one of those people.” This sentiment of hope, of “it can’t happen to me” is very human; we all recognize it. It is also the reason why methods of deterrence are so ineffective.

When I was in southern Spain, I frequently heard people say that so much news about migrant drownings generated a kind of fatigue, and inured people to the suffering. Articles about migrant deaths in the *Arizona Daily Star* usually generate a rash of responses in the “they get what they deserve” vein.

Last week, in Arizona, a volunteer with the humanitarian group No More Deaths came across the body of a 14-year-old Salvadoran girl who had been left behind by her group. Josseline was crossing with her younger brother to be reunited with her family in California. Relatives had sent out “missing” posters and asked humanitarians in Arizona to be on the alert for her. It is telling that this tragic story replaced another one I was going to tell you about, about a 5-year-old girl who was abducted by the man leading the group as he fled when the Border Patrol came upon them [about a month ago]. He abandoned the girl in an isolated area where she was forced to spend the night alone in 20-degree temperatures. Fortunately she was found safe the next day. But there are hundreds of stories like the story of Josseline, where migrants have either never been found or they were found too late.

Some of the humanitarian groups operating in the desert on the border now spend a good deal of their time looking for remains in the desert, after getting calls from family members in Mexico or Central America who ask after a lost relative.

Migrants rescued at sea en route to the Canary Islands have told horrific stories about having to throw their dead overboard, casualties of dwindling supplies after drifting for days at sea—here you have accounts of twenty dead, sometimes more, at one time.

I think that we have to pay attention to stories like these, to the human stories, because it is what motivates people to act, which is the only thing that can change or curb government action. A grassroots movement of Australian citizens has been hammering away at the government to change its practices and publicizing the worst abuses of the mandatory detention regime while offering hope and companionship to thousands of asylum seekers. In Spain, (and throughout Europe), a network of NGOs has been extending humanitarian aid to unauthorized migrants and working with counterparts in Morocco and elsewhere in Africa as they criticize government and EU policies. In the Arizona desert volunteers put out water and search for migrants in distress as they form networks and mount campaigns critical of U.S. border policy and in defense of humanitarian action. In the U.S. small improvements in detention facilities and in treatment of migrants—like the recent ICE internal memo requiring a court order before sedating someone

involuntarily during deportation—are the result of public pressure and lawsuits.

### Summary

Through these three regional cases, I've tried to show that there are three converging trends in countries' approaches to unauthorized migration: criminalization of migrants, tighter border security, and the externalization of migration control. Unfortunately, this convergence represents the most expensive, least humane, and ultimately, least effective path to address today's global migration.

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<sup>i</sup> Peter Symonds, "Australian Government Condemns Tamil Refugees to Years of Incarceration," *World Socialist Web Site*, March 21, 2007, at [www.wsws.org](http://www.wsws.org).

<sup>ii</sup> J.A. Rodriguez, "España repatriará a los 337 inmigrantes asiáticos del 'Marine I'," *El País*, February 11, 2007, at [www.elpais.com/articulo/espana/Espana/repatriara/337/inmigrantes/asiaticos/Marine/I/elpepiesp/20070211elpepinac\\_5/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/espana/Espana/repatriara/337/inmigrantes/asiaticos/Marine/I/elpepiesp/20070211elpepinac_5/Tes).

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