



Coalición de Derechos Humanos

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147 bodies recovered on Arizona border, 33 in June alone; Mounting enforcement causing more migrants to go missing and die

Arizona— Coalición de Derechos Humanos, a Tucson-based human rights group, announced that the total number of recovered bodies on the Arizona border reached 147 by the end of June, 2007, up from 133 at the same time last year. Thirty-three bodies were recovered in the month of June alone, twelve of them not as yet identified and nearly a third of them female. These numbers do not reflect any of the 24 bodies recovered in first twelve days of the month of July, with reports coming out almost daily about remains found in the desert by residents, humanitarian groups and law enforcement officials alike.

Adding to this increasing tragedy are the families who are desperately searching for news of loved ones who attempted to cross the border and have yet to be heard from. Men, women and children are regularly reported missing to consulate officials and human rights groups, who attempt to search for them in detention centers, hospitals, migrant centers, and medical examiner offices.

“Rarely talked about are the *desaparecidos*, the people who have gone missing with no clue as to their whereabouts,” says Isabel Garcia of Derechos Humanos. “The desert is an ultimately unforgiving force, and can completely devour remains within a matter of weeks given the brutal conditions. This leaves mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and children lost to their families forever, with no hope of ever finding out what became of them.”

Every month has yielded more skeletal remains on the Arizona border, indicating that death could have taken place weeks, months, or even years prior to discovery. This—coupled with the fact that migrants do not always carry identification on their person, and their clothing can be torn away by animals or by themselves as they hallucinate and suffocate in the desert heat—makes identifying them even more difficult. Despite the recovery of an estimated 5,000 bodies on the U.S.-México border during the last 12 years, a direct result of the funnel-effect of border and militarization policies, the U.S. government has failed to acknowledge the deadly result of these strategies, and has, to the contrary, continued to increase efforts to militarize the border.

“To die because you sought a better future for yourself and your family is a human rights violation,” continued Garcia. “and to die without your family ever knowing what became of you, as they suffer the anguish of not being able to bury your body and mourn your death is a tragedy that we must demand be made right. Human life is the most precious thing on earth, and we all must work to change any government policy that threatens it.”

The complete list of recovered bodies is available on the Coalición de Derechos Humanos website: <http://www.derechoshumanosaz.net>. This information is available to anyone who requests it from us and is used by our organization to further raise awareness of the human rights crisis we are facing on our borders.

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