



October 2023

Dear All,

It is impossible right now to avoid reading and hearing news about immigrants and the border between Mexico and the United States. Ciudad Juárez/El Paso is one border area with a lot of movement. From the South, we are receiving people from South and Central America and Mexico, even people from Europe, Asia, and Africa. From the North, deportees arrive from the United States.

Every day people arrive in Mexico by plane, bus, train, taxi, or on foot. They hope it will be their last border to cross. Day after day, single dads, single moms, children, families, and thousands of young men and women arrive in this city in the cold desert. Perhaps the most popular and dangerous way of transportation is by train; people are risking their well-being by jumping onto the train, grabbing onto anything they can, and climbing to the top of the railroad car—moms and dads jumping or climbing with their children, adults trying to hold fast and keep their eyes on their loved ones. Some of them fail, but many can get to the train's top.

Once on the top of the train, people must remain alert to the weather, the changes in temperature between day and night, and the insecurity posed by the local police, army, or cartel. Even though the train is the riskier option, it has become the most common way to cross Mexico. People can move in big numbers. Although it is financially cheaper than other transportation, people can hurt themselves badly or die while trying to climb the train. In the last couple of months, Ciudad Juárez has received between 800 and 1000 people via train every three days—this is too much for any city or place at the border.



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The number of people arriving in Juárez has changed the city. People are arriving in great numbers every week and from all directions, and the arrivals are constant. Many leaders from both nonprofits and the government are struggling to keep up with those who are arriving day and night. The local population and politicians have expressed their frustration with immigrants and with the current governments on both sides of the border.

It seems that from 2019 to 2023 the circumstances have not changed. In 2019, Cubans were sleeping on the streets of Juárez, and in 2023 Venezuelans and other nationalities are sleeping on the streets of Juárez. Shelters in the city cannot keep up with the demand, and many of the recent arrivals have no other choice but to sleep near the USA border. Local leaders and pastors are tired, and there is so much to do in the city. They wonder when this will end—when immigrants and the government will find a path to relieve the border. As I heard the local leaders, they agreed that it was only after the lifting of Title 42 (May 10, 2023) that many of the shelters rested a bit, as people who wanted to go to the North hesitated because of the legal challenges posed by this “new” law. We saw very little movement arriving in Juárez during that short time; however, the rest of the years have been a great movement of people, with no pauses and no end in sight.

Frontera de Gracia has been opening its doors to our guests since 2019, and Samuel, Frank, Carmen, and the leaders of Frontera de Gracia Church are wondering when this will end. People are tired, we are tired, and we don't see the end of people moving from the North or the South. Please pray for us.

I am taking two groups from Holland to Mexico this November:

Nov. 8-12 -Intersection Ministries group and Nov. 11-15 Fellowship Reformed Church. We will be visiting local leaders, pastors, and organizations. Our groups hope to learn more about Frontera de Gracia Ministry and the challenges of the immigrant community endures in Juarez, Mexico.

- Please pray for safety for our groups going to the border.
- Pray for wisdom on how we can continue to open the doors of Frontera de Gracia as immigrants arrive in the city.
- Pray for leaders and governments of both countries—Mexico and the United States—to find ways to have a more peaceful and just experience for those waiting at the border.

Gracia y Paz en Cristo Jesus,
Angel Lopez

P.S. Frontera de Gracia is featured in the new Gift of Hope catalog that just hit mailboxes this month. For \$10 a day, you can provide safe shelter and a meal for an individual on the move. [Watch this video \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUOKuGzmCpA\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUOKuGzmCpA) to learn more and give here: <https://giftofhope.rca.org/product/shelter-migrant-families-on-the-move/>.