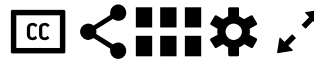


Migrant children sexually abused in ‘rape tents’ while crossing deadly Darien Gap: report

By Steve Janoski

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Hundreds of migrants have reportedly been sexually assaulted while trekking through the deadly Darien Gap jungle in Panama on their way to the United States’ southern border — including a number of children abused in so-called “rape tents.”

Doctors Without Borders — a nonprofit also known as Médecins Sans Frontières — said in a new report that its members had treated nearly 400 victims of sexual assault in the Darien Gap in 2023 alone, according to Border Report.

Much of the danger springs from groups of armed brigands who roam the wilderness, kidnapping, robbing and raping those who are attempting to pass through, the report said.

“They beat me on my legs with a bat, because those of us who had no money were beaten,” a Venezuelan victim said, according to the group.

“Those who said they didn’t have any money, but when searched were found to have some, were hurt even more,” the victim continued.

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A new report says migrants are often sexually assaulted in the Darien Gap, a particularly treacherous part of their long journey north.⁶
AP

The Darien Gap is a 60-mile stretch of jungle that cloaks marauders, wild animals and dangerous rivers.
AFP via Getty Images

“They said, ‘Oh yes, she has some money,’ and they raped them. I saw many people raped. I saw them left naked and beaten. One, two, or three of them grab you and rape you, and then the next one comes and rapes you again, and if you scream, they beat you.”

The Darien Gap has long been considered the most treacherous part of the extremely dangerous journey from South America to the US border.

The 60-mile stretch of rugged jungle that links Colombia to Central America often takes about six days to traverse — and its dense foliage cloaks bandits, wild animals and rushing rivers that threaten to kill migrants long before they can reach the US to apply for asylum.⁶

Doctors
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AFP via
Getty 6
Images

Some of
the
victims
are just
children,
the
group
said.

AFP via
Getty
Images

Drug runners use the same trails to traffic narcotics, and the armed groups patrol the boundaries of the lawless jungle.

Doctors Without Borders has asked regional governments to boost the law enforcement presence to deter sexual violence against the migrants.

In October alone, the group helped 107 victims of sexual abuse — including 59 in one week, Border Report said.

“Sexual violence has consequences for people’s physical and psychological health, such as sexually transmitted infections that can affect women’s fertility if not treated in time,” said Carmenza Gálvez, the group’s medical coordinator.

“It can expose them to HIV infection, with the consequent risk of infecting others. It can cause physical trauma, unwanted pregnancies, social isolation, feelings of guilt, recurrent thoughts about the events experienced, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, insomnia, and the risk of substance abuse, and it increases the risk of facing sexual violence in the future,” she continued.

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AFP via
Getty
Images

Men who try to help victimized women are often punished accordingly.

“Some young men were also beaten and thrown onto the ground for trying to defend the women,” said the Venezuelan woman. “They killed a boy in front of us with a shot to the forehead.”

“They say it is their land, that you have to respect it, and that whoever passes through there must pay,” she continued. “And if you pay or don’t pay, they do it anyway. They’ll abuse whoever they want. They have even raped men.”

The “rape tents” are set up for that purpose, the group said.

Mayor Adams
went to
Central and
South America
last month to
dissuade
people from
coming north,
but it appears
his trip did not
convince
many
migrants.

Carlos
Ortega/EPA-
EFE/Shutterstock

Some victims are children — the organization said it recently helped three rape victims who were just 11, 12 and 16 years old.

Often the crimes go unreported because victims don't want anything to slow their journey north and fear authorities in the countries they are crossing.

Despite efforts to slow the flood of migrants passing through the hazardous region — including a trip to Central and South America by New York Mayor Eric Adams last month — asylum seekers continue to stream through, Border Report said.

The toll for such efforts has been steep.

The organization has given 51,500 medical consultations, 2,400 mental health consultations, treated 17,400 wounds and dealt with 397 cases of sexual violence so far in 2023, according to the report.

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