Twitter Thread by No More Deaths | No Más Muertes

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In LEFT TO DIE, we document how families of the disappeared face a negligent and hostile Border Patrol search and rescue response system.

Lacking adequate government emergency services, many seek help from aid groups.

Border Patrol routinely obstructs these efforts. ■■■



Families often receive urgent calls from loved ones who are lost and in distress in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, or from an eyewitness who was with them in the desert.

These calls can contain crucial details regarding the person’s location and medical condition.



Faced with an inadequate and discriminatory emergency response system controlled by Border Patrol, family members take on the monumental work of acting as emergency first responders.

Here’s a partial list of actions family members have taken to locate their missing loved ones...

Family Efforts to Locate Disappeared Loved Ones

Actions taken by family members to locate their loved ones documented in emergency cases fielded by the Derechos Humanos Missing Migrant Crisis Line:

- Searching the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detainee Locator
- Calling area hospitals
- Calling law enforcement agencies
- Calling immigration attorneys
- Calling prisons, detention centers, jails, ICE offices directly
- Traveling to meet with consulate staff directly
- Traveling to meet with Border Patrol directly
- Contacting humanitarian organizations
- Calling news outlets and doing interviews with journalists
- Contacting private helicopter companies
- Contacting private investigators
- Filing complaints with foreign embassies
- Contacting search and rescue outfits in Mexico
- Maintaining contact with eyewitnesses
- Traveling to join a humanitarian group searching for their missing relative
- Searching map/satellite databases to try to piece together their loved one's location
- Crossing the border through wilderness terrain to conduct a search themselves
- Renting ATVs and dirtbikes to search themselves
- Printing posters and taking out ads with their loved one's face and name to try to locate them
- Calling medical examiners offices, sending photos, providing DNA samples to assist with forensic identification
- Traveling to Morgues to identify loved ones' remains

Humanitarian teams operate on shoestring budgets, are run mostly by volunteers, and have only basic resources at their disposal. Unlike the government search teams that normally respond when a presumed citizen goes missing in remote terrain, humanitarian search and rescue responders do not have access to helicopters, canine teams, ATVs, drones, or cell-phone-tracing technology. Nevertheless, humanitarian organizations often play a decisive role in the rescue and recovery of people who go missing in the borderlands.

> *"In the past, when we received a call concerning missing and distressed border crossers, we at Colibrí worked closely with Border Patrol Search, Trauma, and Rescue (BORSTAR). Over time, however, we learned that BORSTAR was generally unresponsive to calls for distress. Even in cases of a distressed migrant who had been seen within an hour of the rescue call, even in cases we provided BORSTAR a map of the last known location of the distressed migrant, agents at BORSTAR would not initiate search and rescue operations—at times affirmatively denying the request to us in writing and at other times simply not responding to the request . . . Colibrí now refers search and rescue calls to No More Deaths."*
>
> – Dr. Robin Reineke, co-founder of the Colibrí Center for Human Rights[140]

Families turn to non-governmental humanitarian groups because they may mobilize emergency searches when Border Patrol and other government agencies refuse. Humanitarian groups frequently dedicate much more time to an emergency case than Border Patrol. One former Derechos Humanos Crisis Line volunteer recalled that when their call volume tripled in 2014, "humanitarian volunteers on the ground were often more responsive and more willing to go out on less information than any government agency," while Border Patrol frequently demanded exact GPS coordinates to launch an emergency response.[141] As emergencies pile up and law enforcement proves systematically unhelpful, families and humanitarians continue to respond to the crisis as best as they can.

1. Repeatedly calling police, Border Patrol, ICE offices, hospitals, detention centers, morgues, immigration attorneys, non-profits, and news outlets.



2. Taking out missing persons ads, putting up posters, searching and posting on the Internet, in hopes of hearing word of their loved ones whereabouts.



3. Hiring private detectives and private helicopter companies to search for their loved ones in deserts and detention centers.



4. Traveling to the border area where their missing loved one disappeared to search in person, or to meet with authorities and humanitarian groups to advocate for a search.

Family members have even made the dangerous border crossing themselves to search for lost loved ones.



Family members may also be undocumented and thus assume serious personal risk in reaching out to immigration enforcement or traveling to militarized border regions.

Families not only take on the burden of searching; their efforts face active obstruction from Border Patrol.



We found that Border Patrol obstructed family and humanitarian search efforts in at least 25% of cases.

We document numerous forms of obstruction and interference. These include…

Modes of Obstruction: Denial of Information, Bureaucratic Run-Around, Providing False Information, Denial of Eyewitness Interview, Denial of Parole

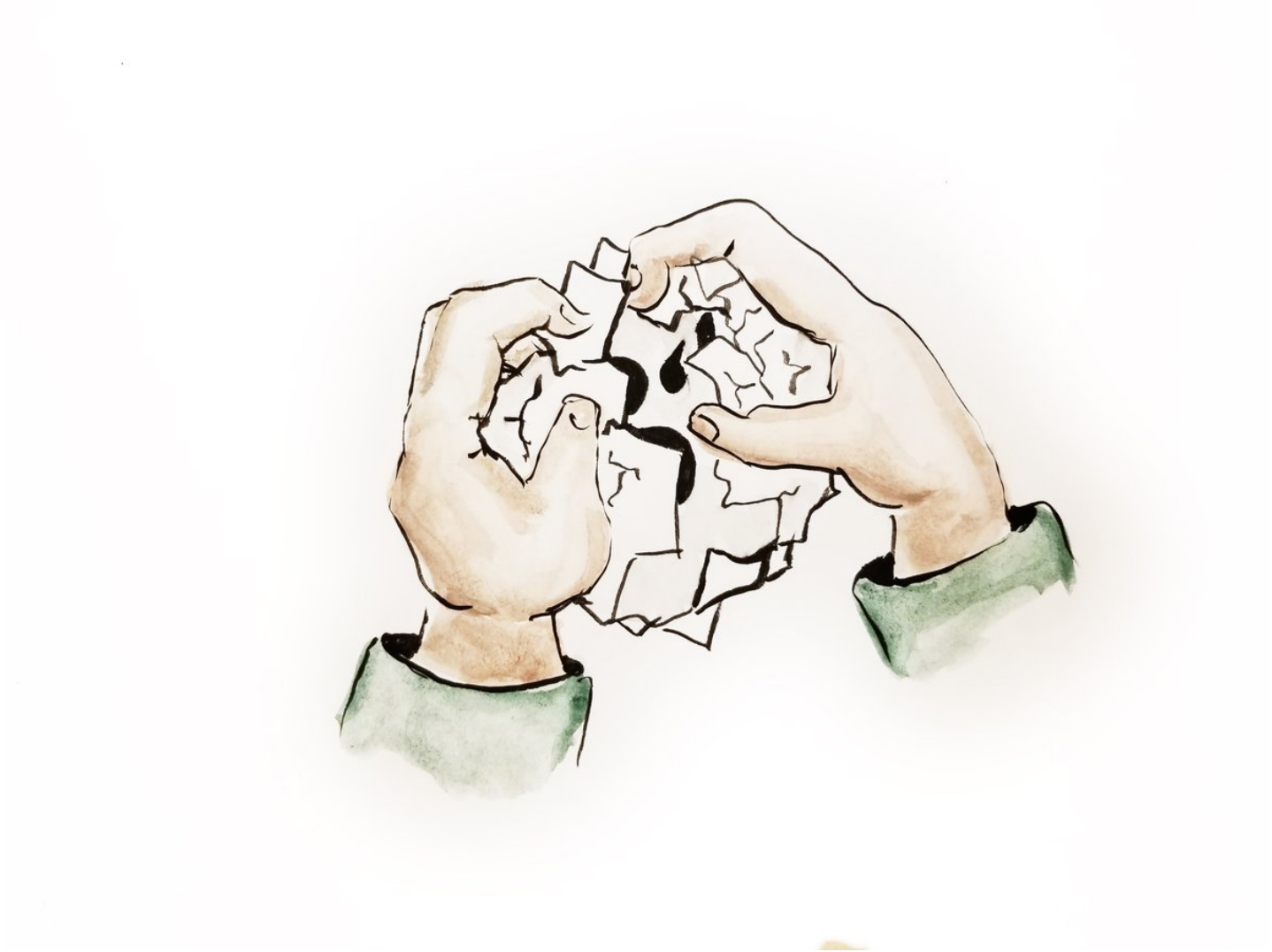
Refusing to Share Information

In June 2017, Oraldo went missing near Ajo, Arizona. His two traveling companions were arrested by Border Patrol and quickly deported. Once in Mexico, one of them drew a map of where Oraldo had gone to look for water, starting from the spot where he and the others had encountered Border Patrol. In planning their search response, humanitarian volunteers requested that Border Patrol share the GPS coordinates of the location where Oraldo's traveling companions had been arrested so that volunteers would have a starting point for their search effort. Agent Mario Agundez with Border Patrol's Arizona Missing Migrant Initiative (AMMI) refused, telling volunteers, "I will refer your request to my chain in command which in turn will have to refer this request to our legal counsel. One of our team members will reach out to you with the final decision." Border Patrol never reached out and never shared the coordinates. Oraldo remains disappeared.[142]

Families and humanitarian organizations must frequently turn to Border Patrol to seek information that is vital to locating a missing loved one. However, we find that Border Patrol routinely refuses to share information with family members and advocates. Numerous cases received by the Derechos Humanos Crisis Line include notes that the family or volunteer attempted to contact Border Patrol, but Border Patrol refused to give them any information at all. For example:

- "Called the border communications center with Laredo and the agent said that he could not disclose any information." (Case #163)
- "They called Border Patrol but they refused to give information." (Case #114)
- "She called the Border Patrol but they did not give information." (Case #277)
- "Called McAllen Border Patrol, gave no info." (Case #239)
- "Talked to Supervisor Agent Ott. He lectured me for a bit on the dangers of drug smugglers and gave me no information." (Case #305)
- "She called immigration, they did not want to give information." (Case #311)
- "Tried to call Border Patrol in McAllen but did not give information." (Case #50)
- "CBP refused to give any info." (Case #418)
- "He said that he called Border Patrol, and that they did not give him information and said that they can not do anything." (Case #115)
- "Called BP in Roma and Laredo Sector communications. They did not want to give information." (Case #86)
- "Ajo BP didn't give info." (Case #187)
- "Called the border communications center and the agent said that he could not disclose any information." (Case #163)
- "Falfurrias station would not give info." (Case #161)[143]

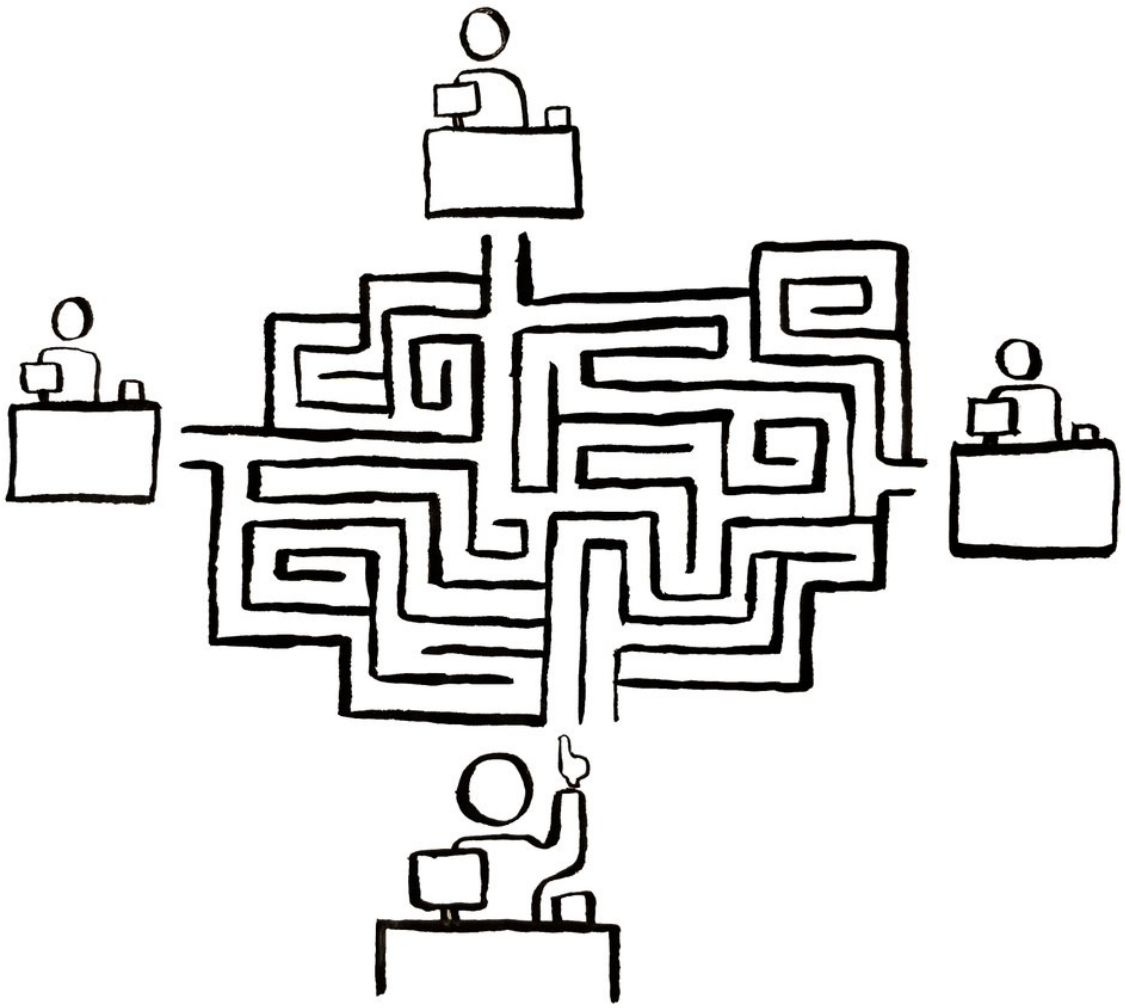
1. Refusing to share important information.



2. Providing false and misleading information to families.



3. Directing families & advocates to non-working numbers and full voicemail boxes.



4. Denying access and refusing humanitarian parole to eyewitnesses in immigration detention.



5. Criminalizing and harassing families and humanitarian search teams, and numerous other forms of obstruction and non-cooperation.



This pattern of Border Patrol interference directly undermines urgent efforts to save lives when government actors refuse to mobilize, further fueling the crisis of death and disappearance in the borderlands.



For details, read the full report at https://t.co/JGdys8OMus.

This summer, No More Deaths is launching a search + rescue volunteer program. For more information and to apply, visit: https://t.co/i8u9O011qT

Volunteer Opportunity!

The Arizona Borderlands
Search & Rescue Team
is looking for volunteers
this summer!



More info: bit.ly/NMDsar