

# Venezuela Situation

October 2017

Large numbers of Venezuelans continued to leave in October, with Colombia reporting a net increase of **3,600** Venezuelans **arrivals per day** and a total estimated population in the country of over **470,000** persons.

The number of asylum claims lodged by **Venezuelan** nationals globally between 2014 and 2017 has now exceeded 100,000, over half of which filed this year alone. It is expected that this number will continue to grow.

The **primary receiving countries** of Venezuelan asylum seekers in the region between 2014 and 2017 are: USA: 46,000, Brazil: 18,400, Peru: 9,500; Costa Rica: 3,300 and Panama: 3,000.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

- In Brazil, over **13,600** **asylum applications** have been lodged in 2017 and **1,680** temporary residence permits issued. It is estimated that between **20,000 to 30,000** **Venezuelans** **currently** live in **Brazil**.
- In Colombia, over **67,000** **Venezuelans** have applied for the Special Stay Permit (PEP), and over 1 million for the Border Mobility Card. Some **500** asylum cases have been registered since 2014,
- More than **62,000** Venezuelans are estimated to be living in Ecuador, of whom some **40%** have obtained temporary **residence permits**. Over **1,500** **Venezuelans** **have applied for asylum** in the country.
- At least **60,000** Venezuelans are estimated to be residing in the Southern Caribbean. Some **370** have registered as asylum-seekers in Trinidad and Tobago since 2014; followed by Curacao with **70** and Aruba, with around a dozen.
- Some **81,000** Venezuelan nationals are believed to have entered Peru between January and July 2017, 60% through Tumbes, at the northern border. In 2017, over **6,000** Venezuelans have lodged asylum claims and over **11,000** have received temporary residence permits (PTP).



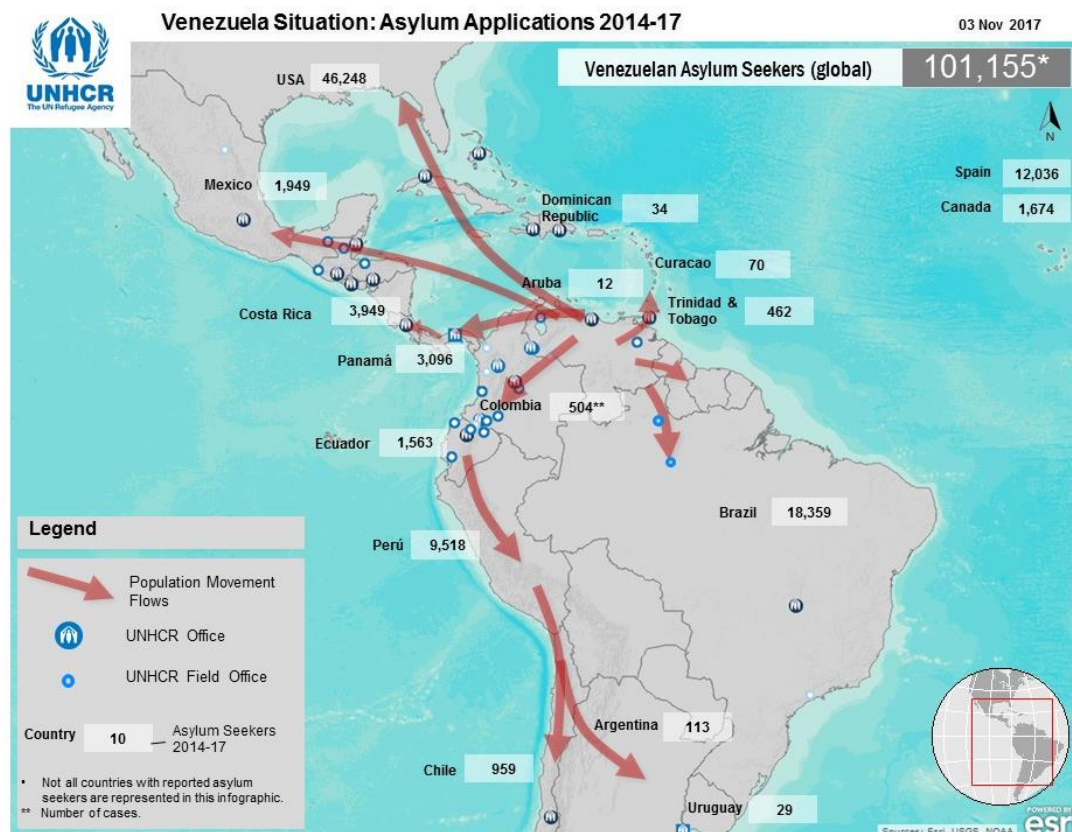
Children play at the shelter in Boa Vista, Brazil, where new tents have been set up with the support of UNHCR.

## CONTEXT INFORMATION

Following the regional elections in Venezuela on 15 October 2017, in which President Maduro's party won 17 of the 23 state governorships, the country's divisions continued to deepen. The opposition also continued to fragment, as four out of five of the opposition Governors-elect agreed to be sworn in by the National Constituent Assembly, as required by President Maduro, despite calls not to do so by the opposition coalition. Even though there are indications of a possible resumption of negotiations between the government and opposition, the political situation remains fragile. Economic difficulties continue to strain access to basic goods, and people continue to struggle with food and medical shortages. CARITAS reported, based on a recent study, that in four Venezuelan states five (5) to six (6) children die from malnutrition every week.

Through ongoing profiling exercises, UNHCR continues to identify Venezuelans in host countries in the region who fear that they will be in danger of harm should they return to Venezuela, due to insecurity or violence, or that they will be unable to access sufficient food and medicines.

*\*\* Data on Venezuelan arrivals and asylum claims are based on government sources.*



## Operational Context

### Brazil

- The Warao indigenous continue to arrive in Brazil. However, instead of staying in Roraima state and Manaus (Amazonas state), as had been the case until recently, some are moving on to the cities of Santarém and Belém (northern state of Pará).
- On 28 October, the government of the border state of Roraima, relocated approximately 400 Venezuelans, both indigenous and non-indigenous, from the International Bus Station of Boa Vista to a public gymnasium in the Caimbe neighbourhood. As the building did not meet basic requirements for a safe shelter, UNHCR offered immediate support, including installation of an industrial drinking fountain, and distribution of personal hygiene kits and mattresses. Food was distributed by civil society organizations. UNHCR also initiated a documentation process for those in the facility, giving them ID-documents to provide for continuous support and effective follow-up of specific needs.
- With the support of UNHCR, the Federal Government is considering a voluntary relocation programme for non-indigenous Venezuelans living in Roraima to inner States, to alleviate the pressure on local services and provide a more adequate response to those arriving.
- The Government is finalizing its Contingency Plan, with ministries and international organizations, including UNHCR, assuming different responsibilities based on the scenarios presented.

### Colombia

- Arrivals from Venezuela continue to pose challenges for local authorities, who are working to provide access to basic services. Officials at both the local and national level are increasingly requesting UNHCR support for the government response. UNHCR continues to lead the inter-agency protection response.
- The deterioration of security conditions on both sides of the Colombia-Venezuela border, including near formal crossing points, is increasing the risks for Venezuelans and Colombians crossing into Colombia.

Armed clashes, due to the growing presence of illegal armed actors, have resulted in the death of at least one woman in Norte de Santander. Homicides have also been reported nearby.

- On 1 October the bilateral cease-fire between the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) guerrilla force and the Colombian armed forces, to be supervised by the UN Mission, went into force. It is hoped that this will lead to a decrease in violence in ELN-controlled territories, including areas along the Venezuelan border in Arauca and Norte de Santander.
- UNHCR has noted a worrying increase in xenophobia against Venezuelans, as well as against those perceived to be promoting their rights. UNHCR's anti-xenophobia campaign, hopefully to be launched in Colombia before the end of the year, will seek to counter this trend.

### **Ecuador**

- The arrival of Venezuelans in Ecuador through the Rumichaca International Bridge, border with Colombia, continued at a high rate (approx. 500 per day).
- Ecuador has become both a destination and transit country for Venezuelans on their way to Peru and Chile. An increasing number are crossing into Peru through the Huaquillas border, which has led UNHCR to organize monitoring missions, particularly to border areas to better assess the protection risks and needs.

### **Peru**

- The main entry point of Venezuelan nationals to Peru has shifted progressively from the Lima Airport in 2016 to the northern border with Ecuador, in 2017.
- The asylum system has been heavily impacted by the increase of asylum applications from Venezuelan nationals, raising a number of concerns, such as the timely provision of documentation, identification of vulnerable cases, and timely eligibility interviews. UNHCR is reinforcing its collaboration with the Peruvian Special Commission for Refugees (CEPR) and increasing staff capacity to address the current backlog.

### **Southern Caribbean**

- In Trinidad and Tobago, the Deputy Director of the Office of Disaster Preparedness & Management (ODPM), responsible for contingency planning and emergency management, resigned on 23 October. UNHCR looks forward to working with his replacement once designated.

## **UNHCR Response**



### **Brazil**

- UNHCR registered some 200 Venezuelans (indigenous and non-indigenous) who had settled in Pacaraima (Roraima state) and who were not expected to move on to Boa Vista, the only city in Roraima where a person can lodge an asylum claim or a temporary residence request, due to financial or other reasons.
- UNHCR held a brief needs assessment exercise with a small number of non-indigenous women in Pacaraima, which highlighted the challenges that they face in terms of documentation, education, discrimination and harassment. None of the participants had Brazilian documents and only one had accessed the education system. UNFPA and the NGO Canarinhos da Amazonia also participated.

- UNHCR, the Public Defenders' Office (DPU) and UNODC conducted a joint mission to Caimbé in Boa Vista to better assess the living conditions of sex-workers, and to establish contact with them. Information on Federal Defender's Office's (DPU) services and contacts was distributed, as well as on possibilities to regularize their status in the country.

### Colombia

- UNHCR has been providing capacity trainings to local ombudspersons in border areas in Arauca, Boyacá, Norte de Santander and Vichada on their responsibilities towards Venezuelans, including on how Venezuelans can access healthcare in Colombia.
- UNHCR and the Registration Office in Arauca registered 43 children of Colombian nationality, born to Colombian returnees or mixed families arriving from Venezuela. Confirmation of their Colombian nationality will allow them to access State services.
- UNHCR is stepping up profiling exercises to inform public policy and decision-making. In the last week of October, for example, an information and assistance brigade in Tibú (Norte de Santander) led by UNHCR, partners and the Office of the Ombudsman, also provided an opportunity to capture information on the needs of almost 1,000 Venezuelan people, including over 400 children.

### Ecuador

- UNHCR is evaluating the situation of separated children who are not allowed entry into Ecuador at the Colombian border, usually because they are traveling with adults who are not their guardians and who are not carrying proper travel authorization. UNHCR is working in coordination with the Public Defender's Office to ensure that the situation of these children is monitored and addressed.

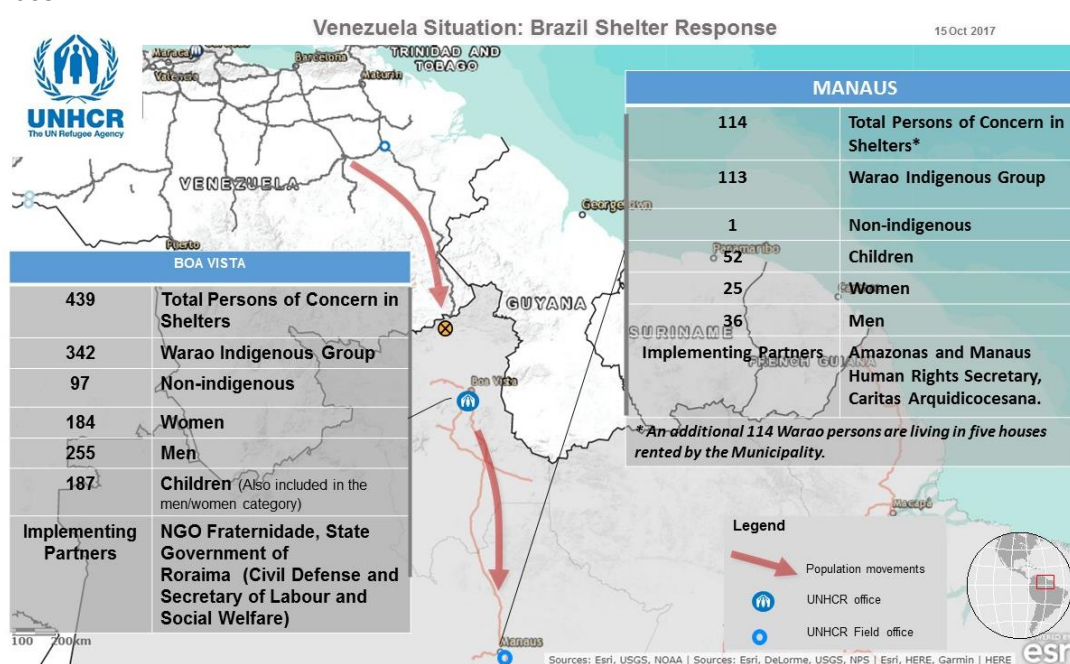
### Peru

- On 3 October, the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR signed a Cooperation Agreement to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation. This will facilitate implementation of activities currently under way by the Peruvian Special Commission for Refugees (CEPR) and UNHCR to strengthen the asylum system.
- In September, in an effort to step up its presence and strengthen its work in Peru, UNHCR established a National Officer position in Lima. Meanwhile, the Agency is also coordinating with its partner Encuentros to establish a presence at the border with Ecuador to monitor the influx, collect information on profiles of arrivals, and assist with vulnerable cases. Encuentros also plans to strengthen its presence at the southern border in order to monitor the outflow of Venezuelans towards Chile.
- UNHCR is coordinating with IOM to provide technical support and introduce international protection perspectives into their Data Tracking Matrix (DTM), to be applied in Lima following completion of DTMs in Tumbes and Tacna (border area).




**SHELTER**
**Brazil**

- The shelter response in Brazil is being deployed in three areas: Pacaraima town, Boa Vista, capital of Roraima state, bordering Venezuela; and Manaus, capital of Amazonas State. The response locations correlate with current displacement trends, as persons of concern enter Brazil through Pacaraima (approx. pop. 10,000), continue around 200 Km south to Boa Vista (approx. pop. 300,000) and then approx. 750 Km south to Manaus city (approx. pop. 3,000,000). While notable progress has been made, particularly regarding the involvement of local authorities and infrastructure improvements, living conditions remain precarious, particularly regarding Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and health services.



\*The number of persons of concern in Manaus refer to those living in the shelter and the 5 houses rented by the Municipality.

**Pacaraima (Roraima state)**

- UNHCR provided financial and technical support to finish renovations on the shelter in Pacaraima.

**Boa Vista (Roraima state)**

- UNHCR has completed the issuance of ID cards for Venezuelan nationals living in the shelter of Boa Vista. The registration exercise will allow for a more secure entry control system into the shelter, as well as better follow up on individual protection, health and nutrition cases.
- UNHCR coordinated with partners several infrastructure improvements, including a hammocks' structure, tents in the outside area, fans inside the gymnasium, repairs to the external wall, and start of construction of external toilets.
- UNHCR is supporting livelihoods activities of the Warao people at the shelter through provision of materials for traditional handicrafts and, with partners, the leasing of a tent in a local market where products can be sold.

**Manaus (Amazonas state)**

- The Municipality of Manaus hired a team of five professionals to support documentation and health and social assistance activities in the shelter houses rented for Warao groups. UNHCR and the Public Defender's Office (DPU) trained the recently hired staff on protection issues.

- The number of people living in the shelter in Manaus recently dropped, with a number of the residents continuing their journey on to Belém or Santarém in Pará State.



## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

### Brazil

- UNHCR was invited by Roraima's Health Surveillance Body (Vigilância Sanitária) to form part of the monthly meetings of the "Sala de Emergência" (Emergency Health Centre for Migrants), a coordination body led by the local Government to discuss and implement preventive and responsive health actions and policies, particularly for Venezuelans.
- Medical referral guidelines and standard operating procedures are being drafted by UNHCR, to be proposed for inclusion in the tripartite plan of action between the Federal, State and Municipal Governments' health authorities, currently under discussion.



## EDUCATION

### Brazil

- In Pacaraima, Brazil, the organization Canarinhos da Amazônia is implementing a small-scale project with indigenous and non-indigenous Venezuelans to provide a safe learning environment and to promote peaceful coexistence. UNHCR is assessing how it might improve infrastructure for the project.

## CONTACTS

**Regina de la Portilla**, Associate External Relations and PI Officer  
[delaport@unhcr.org](mailto:delaport@unhcr.org)