

AMERICAS MONTHLY REPORT

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of key developments affecting the displacement situation in the Americas and some of UNHCR response activities in line with the 2019 strategic objectives for the region.



Honduras. Helping gang-affected communities in city ravaged by violence © UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

VENEZUELA SITUATION

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

1 The **Peruvian** Government introduced a requirement for the issuance of Humanitarian Visas for Venezuelans to enter the country, which was made effective on 15 June. This visa can only be acquired in consulates in Venezuela and in exceptional cases in Colombia or Ecuador. The announcement of the Peruvian humanitarian visa prompted a sudden increase of arrivals at Tumbes, the border town with Ecuador from approximately 1,800 daily entries to a record peak of over 8,100 by June 14th. On 22 June, the Government began applying an accelerated procedure to resolve asylum requests directly at the border.

Peru's new visa requirements also had a major impact on Ecuador's border with Colombia. According to Ecuadorian authorities, the number of arrivals in Ecuador reported an increase from 12 June, with over 5,000 entries to 14 June when over 8,000 Venezuelans entered the country through the Rumichaca and San Miguel border crossings with Colombia. The Migration report reveals that only 30% of Venezuelans currently arriving in Ecuador hold a passport.

2 On 20 June, **Chile** introduced a new visa requirement for Venezuelans to enter the country as tourists. From now on, all Venezuelans will need to obtain a visa from a Chilean consulate before arriving at the border. Chile introduced in May 2018 a "Democratic Responsibility Visa" for those Venezuelans who intended to stay in the country. According to the authorities, 37,000 such visas have been issued since then.

3 The Ministry of National Security of **Trinidad and Tobago** announced the implementation of a new entry visa requirement for Venezuelans as of June 15. Until now Venezuelans didn't need a visa provided they had a valid passport and proof of the financial means to cover their stay in the country.

4 million

Venezuelans living abroad
(as of May 2019)

3.2 million

in Latin America and the
Caribbean states (as of May 2019)

464,229

registered asylum-seekers
by the end of 2018

227,325
in Peru

99,858
in Brazil

81,800
in United States
of America

31,620
in Spain

3,519 in Mexico

1.8 million obtained some form
of legal stay arrangement
(as of May 2019)

In **Brazil**, the National Refugee Commission (CONARE) announced the recognition of 'grave and generalized threat to human rights in Venezuela'. The decision aims to expedite the analysis of asylum claims from Venezuelans in Brazil under the application of the Cartagena refugee definition.

4 A boat that departed Punta Aguide, in Venezuela, for **Curaçao** on 7 June with 32 passengers, including children is still missing at sea and search missions continue.

The **Colombian** Minister of Health announced the mobilization of USD 20 million to the public hospital network in the country, after the Constitutional Court ruled to include Venezuelan newborns in the health system. 80% of these resources will be allocated to hospitals at the border.

UNHCR RESPONSE TO THE VENEZUELA SITUATION

In **Peru**, the contingency plan for large influxes of Venezuelans was activated between the 10th and 18th of June at the Binational Border Centre (CEBAF). Under the coordination of the national inter-agency platform, UN agencies and NGOs deployed extra staff and resources to support the institutional response at Peru's northern border with Ecuador. The humanitarian response was scaled up, including medical assistance, food and non-food items, shelter and transportation.

Financial and technical support to the Special Commission for Refugees was strengthened, allowing them to scale up their presence at the border. During June, over 6,200 people received transportation support from the border center to Tumbes, some 1,000 received shelter support in Tumbes and 1,700 received basic kits at the border center, all provided by UNHCR. In addition, UNHCR installed Refugee Housing Units at the CEBAF to host about 100 vulnerable Venezuelans, mostly mothers with small babies and over USD 83,000 were delivered through Cash Based Interventions.

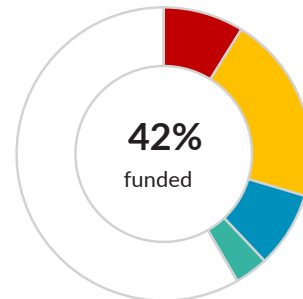
INSIDE VENEZUELA

It is estimated that 7 million people inside Venezuela are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. In the framework of the United Nations System "Scale up strategy" in Venezuela, UNHCR will expand its operational footprint from 54 communities in 6 states to 120 communities in 9 states by the end of 2020, starting in mid-2019.

UNHCR's protection and assistance programmes in Venezuela include community based projects in protection, health, education, water and sanitation benefiting some 510,000 refugees, asylum seekers, persons at risk of statelessness, persons in transit and host communities. This response is delivered through community-based interventions and individual direct support provided by protection networks and safe spaces.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, visited Venezuela upon the Government's invitation from 19 to 21 June. In her [statement](#), she noted having met with victims of human rights violations and their relatives, as well as with civil society. As a result of her visit, the Office for Human Rights will establish presence in the country and will carry out an evaluation of the National Commission for the Prevention of Torture and assess the main obstacles for access to justice in the country.

FUNDING (as of 9 July 2019) UNHCR's financial requirements 2019 for the Venezuela Situation



\$158.2 million required

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

In order to support Venezuelans who were not allowed entry in **Chile** following the new visa requirements, UNHCR and partners increased their presence at the border to support and complement the response put in place by the authorities. Most of the children presented acute need of medical assistance, being malnourished or dehydrated. In Santa Rosa, on Peru's southern border with Chile, UNHCR has been distributing blankets and hygiene kits to Venezuelan families sleeping out in the open.

On 8th June, the main border crossing between **Colombia** and Venezuela was reopened, leading to an increase in the number of arrivals through regular crossing points and to a reduction of people using irregular pathways. Overall entry figures remain stable. During 2019, an average number of 780 people per day have received information, orientation and legal assistance on access to rights, asylum procedures and complementary regularization measures in the 31 UNHCR Information and Orientation Points distributed throughout the country. These people include refugees and migrants, Colombian returnees and IDPs.



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NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA SITUATION

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

On 27 June, the tragic [image](#) of the drowned bodies of Salvadoran Oscar Alberto Martinez Ramirez and his 23-month old daughter Valeria washed up on the banks of the Rio Grande, deeply shocked the whole world.

5 On 1 June, Nayib Bukele was sworn in office and became President of **El Salvador**. During his five-year-term, the President announced he will aim to contrast El Salvador's legacy of gang violence and corruption.

6 **Mexico** and **El Salvador** launched the programme 'Sembrando Vida'. The cooperation agreement includes a \$30 million Mexican donation for reforestation in the Central America, and seeks to reactivate the rural economy in the south of Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, where the dry corridor has taken its toll on development. The project will reforest 124,000 acres (50,000 hectares) and is expected to create 20,000 jobs.

Honduras has passed the inclusion of the criminal classification of provoking forced displacement under Chapter II on Crimes against Freedom of Determination in the new Penal Code. The Executive Decree is a result of the proposal submitted by the Interinstitutional Commission for the Protection of People Displaced by Violence in September 2016, to classify the act of forcing the displacement of people as a crime. The proposal was developed with UNHCR's technical assistance.

The National Refugee Commission of **Guatemala** (CONARE), created under the new migration law (Código de Migración), invited UNHCR to participate in their third session and join the Commission as a member with voice only. Together with the government efforts, UNHCR will support the strengthening of capacities of the new members.

7 A **joint U.S.-Mexican declaration** was issued on 7 June specifying that Mexico will take unprecedented steps to increase enforcement to curb irregular migration, including the deployment of its National Guard throughout Mexico, taking decisive actions against human smuggling and strengthening coordinated actions with the United States of America (USA). The U.S. expanded its Migrant Protection Protocols across the entire Southern Border, returning asylum seekers to Mexico while their claim is processed in the U.S.

The **Mexican** Ministry of Interior announced on 6 June the deployment of around 6,000 members of the National Guard at the Southern and Northern Mexican borders. Following this move, on 23 June, the deployment of 52,000 additional members of the National Guard to combat crime was announced. The deployment was planned to start on 30 June and will eventually reach 82,000 troops by the end of 2019.

In Esquipulas, **Guatemala**, an increased military presence at the border was observed including Special Forces supporting police checkpoints along the route.

367,000 people of concern in Central America by the end of 2018

353,200 refugees and asylum seekers from North of Central America worldwide

245,500 IDPs in Honduras and El Salvador by the end of 2018

29,497 asylum claims in Mexico since January 2019 (257% increase over the same period of 2018)

KEY DEVELOPMENTS



UNHCR RESPONSE TO LARGE GROUPS IN LINE WITH 2019 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The number of refugees and asylum-seekers from the North of Central America (NCA) has soared in the last five years. Worsening crime and violence fuelled by drug cartels and gangs accounts for a 20% increase in the number of asylum-seekers. People from the North of Central America continue to make their way towards the north, traveling in small groups of up to 20 people across different borders often through irregular crossings.

To provide timely response for humanitarian and persistent needs, UNHCR gives immediate assistance to people on the move. During the month of June, UNHCR and partners provided information on asylum procedures, shelter, primary healthcare and food to around 800 people every week across **Guatemala**

The first Refugee Resource Center in **Belize** was inaugurated in Benque, a town close to the border where asylum-seekers cross into the country. The Center seeks to be a space of coordination with border authorities to provide people on the move with key information on the asylum procedures in Belize. It also provides emergency shelter to vulnerable people until proper transportation to Belmopan is secured.

In light of the continuous increase in asylum claims during June, especially in Tapachula, Palenque and Tenosique, in the south of **Mexico**, UNHCR offices prepared for an **increased response**, particularly in shelter and protection/detention monitoring capacity.

A UNHCR team has been joining efforts to reduce the **registration waiting time** in Tapachula. Since the beginning of May, 2,467 people have been registered, which represents a backlog reduction of 30 days. In Tenosique, people have been waiting for a week to get access to the asylum procedures, spending nights in front of COMAR's office, the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance, to avoid losing their turns.

OTHER SITUATIONS

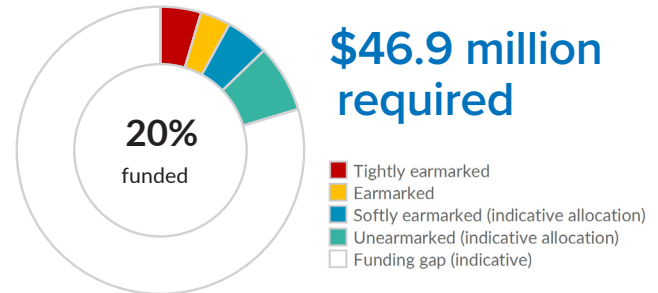
NICARAGUA SITUATION

Since protests started in April 2018, thousands have fled Nicaragua due to the political unrest, seeking safety in neighbouring countries, mostly to Costa Rica, where 33,696 asylum claims have been registered and 27,980 people are waiting for an appointment to register. The socio-political crisis in the country remains unresolved although efforts are taking place.

Nicaraguan authorities freed 56 people detained during a harsh crackdown on dissent, including leaders of a wave of anti-government protests and independent journalists. President Daniel Ortega promised to free all such prisoners by 18 June and claims to have met the requirement. Yet, according to the Alianza Civica opposition movement, 89 political prisoners remain in jail. Family members gathered outside La Modelo prison on 18 June to demand their immediate release.

On 17 June, **UNHCR Costa Rica** launched a six-week mass registration and information campaign in San Jose to address the registration backlog and to conduct socio-economic evaluations to determine eligibility of asylum seekers for cash-based grants.

FUNDING (as of 9 July 2019) UNHCR's financial requirements 2019 for the North Central America Situation



Detention centers continue to be overcrowded, and combined with precarious conditions, result in people with international protection needs opting to return to their countries out of despair. The general trend shows that detainees are being returned to their countries at an accelerated pace.

To meet **basic needs** such as food, household and domestic products, and providing a contribution towards housing and utility bills, UNHCR Mexico has delivered Multi-Purpose cash Grants (MPG) to 14,062 new people to the end of May.

Thanks to the **UNHCR local integration programme** launched in Monterrey, north of Mexico, during the first week of May 2019, 220 asylum-seekers and refugees have been relocated from the south to Monterrey. UNHCR and partners have provided support to obtain legal stay documents, find suitable jobs, housing and ensure access to health and education. In total, 1,542 people have been relocated from 1 January till 10 June 2019.

In line with strategic partnerships and aiming to provide reliable information and access to the asylum system, on 13 June, UNHCR and the University of Veracruzana signed an agreement for the creation of a legal clinic that provides **free legal assistance** to people with international protection needs.

To date, around 29,000 people have been estimated to have returned from Mexico and the USA to **Honduras**. UNHCR supports the local authorities in the identification of returnees with protection needs.

76,600 Nicaraguan asylum applications in neighbouring countries since April 2018

61,676 Nicaraguan asylum applications in Costa Rica



UNHCR leads an **Interagency Rapid Response Plan** requesting USD 5 million to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable asylum seekers in Costa Rica in the areas of protection, physical and mental health, and basic needs. The Plan was presented to the authorities and endorsed by the President.

COLOMBIA SITUATION

Despite the signature of the peace agreement, internal displacement and forced displacement outside Colombia continue unabated and in the rise. There have been **30 large group displacements so far in 2019**, which have affected 8,572 people as of June. 31 assistance and orientation points have been set up by UNHCR in key reception areas.

President Duque signed off on the statutory law on the **Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP)**, which will allow the new magistrates to take decisions autonomously and regulate the Transitional Justice System, being able to impose sanctions of reparative justice as part of the Peace agreements.

In Putumayo, near the border with Ecuador, UNHCR handed over a **community centre** and a **school canteen** which were built for two settlements of internally displaced people. The project was funded by the Korean Cooperation Agency (KOICA). Some 700 people are estimated to benefit from Relocation Plans which will be supported by UNHCR. Additionally, the Indigenous Zonal Organization of Putumayo (OZIP) with UNHCR's technical support, secured a **Technical Working Group** with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ethnic Directorate of the Victim's Unit, the Ombudsman Office and the Victim's Program of the Governor's Office in order to further work and implement the **Collective Reparation Plans of 13 indigenous people**.

8.8 million victims of armed conflict

7.8 million internally displaced people

8,572 displaced people in large group displacements in 2019

50,532 Colombian refugees in Ecuador by the end of 2018

10,029 Colombian asylum seekers in Ecuador by the end of 2018

UNHCR and UNDP launched the project **Improving durable solutions and peacebuilding through Human Security Business Partnerships in post-Peace Agreement Colombia**, with the support of the UN Human Security Trust Fund, the London School of Economics (LSE) and the NGO Peace Startup. The project aims to improve human security conditions for internally displaced people and host communities in the departments of Antioquia and Nariño. Furthermore, it is expected to support the dialogue between communities and the private sector strengthening economic activities and market linkages that bring investment from the private sector to the territories.

JUNE FEATURED STORIES



[Refugees and migrants from Venezuela top 4 million](#)

The number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela reached 4 million with 3.2 million hosted in Latin America and the Caribbean.



[Older Colombians and Venezuelans take care of each other under the same roof](#)

Grandpa's House hosts Colombian seniors who were left alone. Now it has increased its capacity to also shelter Venezuelans on the run.



[Angelina Jolie calls for leadership and humanity as millions flee Venezuela](#)

On a visit to Colombia, the Special Envoy met with refugees, returnees and government officials to assess the human impact of a mounting exodus.



[UNHCR appeals for regional talks on Central America displacement](#)

Forced displacement from Central America is straining asylum capacity across the region, placing growing numbers of individuals and families at grave risk.



[Support for Venezuelans "needed more than ever", says Deputy High Commissioner](#)

Kelly Clements visits Ecuador and Colombia to assess urgent needs amid a deeply underfunded regional response.



[UNHCR scales up response as record number of Venezuelans arrive in Peru](#)

UNHCR sent extra teams to the border between Peru and Ecuador to support the authorities to deal with an unprecedented number of Venezuelans entering Peru.

Special thanks to our donors:

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