

Venezuela Situation

April 2018

The number of **Venezuelans seeking asylum** has **risen yearly** since 2014. Between 2014 and 2018, some **170,169 asylum claims** have been lodged.

Venezuelans arriving recently have **stronger humanitarian needs** and less financial resources to cover them, and are therefore **more vulnerable** and in need of assistance.

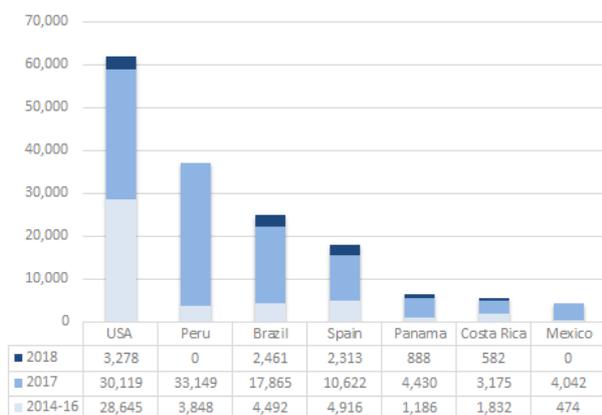
Peru is the **largest host country** of Venezuelan asylum seekers in Latin America and the Caribbean with almost 37,000 registered asylum seekers.

Context

By the end of 2017, more than 1.5 million Venezuelans have moved into neighbouring countries and beyond. While the responses of States have been generous, local host communities are facing mounting pressure in view of the increasing needs. Greater international support is needed in critical sectors, such as health and education, to ensure that communities have the capacity to respond.



Asylum Applications 2014-18
Primary Countries of Asylum



A Venezuelan mother and her young child hand their ID documents to a UNHCR officer who processes their relocation to the Nova Canaa shelter © UNHCR/ Reynesson Damasceno

Colombia

Operational context

- With only a few weeks until the new Government is elected, presidential candidates Germán Vargas Lleras, Iván Duque and Humberto de la Calle participated in a discussion forum held by the Universidad del Rosario and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation on policy approaches towards Venezuelans arriving in Colombia. UNHCR participated in the forum and will coordinate the discussion of these topics with presidential candidates in the lead up to the elections and during the administration's handover.
- The number of Venezuelans exiting Colombia through the border with Ecuador has risen from 230,000 during the whole of 2017 to 206,000 between 1 January and 16 April 2018.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- On April 6th, the Colombian Government began a mass registration of undocumented Venezuelans in Colombia known as *Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos (RAMV)*. UNHCR and IOM are jointly assisting the process, providing technical support, equipment, human resources, supporting on identification of people with specific needs and providing relevant information to Venezuelans arriving to Colombia. The exercise is taking place in 188 municipalities in 27 departments across the country at 753 registration points.
- UNHCR is extending its partnership with the Registry Office (*Registraduría*), formerly dedicated to working with IDPs, to focus on border and reception areas with the aim of ensuring universal birth registration, and identifying and providing documentation to Venezuelan individuals with a right to Colombian nationality.
- UNHCR, with the Jesuit Refugee Service, continues to assist Venezuelan members of the indigenous Yukpa people, who are informally settled in the metropolitan area of Cúcuta, facilitating their relocation to a safe and culturally-adequate space. Over the past few months, UNHCR has built trust with community leaders and has participated in mobile campaigns to provide orientation and basic services.



PROTECTION

Brazil

Operational Context

- 24,818 asylum claims have been lodged since 2014, 6,917 in 2018 alone.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- The first Reference Centre for Refugees and Migrants in Boa Vista was inaugurated on April 20th. With a capacity to attend up to 200 people per day, the centre provides orientation, protection and integration services to arriving Venezuelans. UNHCR coordinates the centre, identifies and responds to specific needs, and provides pre-registration services and counselling on how to request refugee status, their rights and duties, and procedures to obtain documentation.
- Two new temporary shelters – Sao Vicente and Nova Canaã - opened this month in Boa Vista, and are being managed by UNHCR with the support of the Brazilian Army. Sao Vicente can host 389 people, and is already at full capacity. Priority is given to families with children, pregnant women, elderly and other persons with specific needs who were living in public spaces. In Nova Canaã, 65 UNHCR tents were pitched and received 339 people in the first day. UNHCR supported the site planning and management, provided shelter units, basic need items, drinking fountains, and supported the biometric registration through our partner Federação Fraternidade Humanitária Internacional. The Brazilian Army is coordinating the security and maintenance of the site, the distribution of food items and the provision of health care. With these two new openings, there are a total of eight UNHCR-supported shelters in Boa Vista and Pacaraima, hosting over 3,500 people.
- In April, UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA and the Brazilian government started the voluntary relocation of Venezuelans from border regions to the interior of the country. In total, 265 Venezuelans have been relocated with flights departing from Boa Vista (Roraima) travelling to Sao Paulo and Cuiaba (Mato Grosso state). Sao Paulo received 198 individuals, of which 30 were sent to civil society shelters and 168 to public shelters. Cuiaba received 66 individuals who were all received and hosted in sites managed by civil society organizations.



SHELTER



PROTECTION

Panama

Operational Context

- In March, the National Office for the Assistance of Refugees (ONPAR) received 454 new asylum claims from Venezuelan nationals.
- The Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela has expressed, in various forums, his concern regarding the situation in Venezuela and has urged other countries in the region to seek a peaceful and democratic solution as well as the need for a coordinated response for the growing influx of Venezuelans at the regional and national levels. Likewise, President Varela pointed out that the countries must be prepared to provide humanitarian aid if there is a mass exodus of Venezuelans after the upcoming elections.
- The Governments of Panama and Venezuela have resumed diplomatic and commercial relations, after they were interrupted in early April this year following the imposition of sanctions by Caracas on senior Panamanian officials amid an escalating diplomatic row. As of 1 May, COPA Airlines resumed flights to and from Venezuela.

UNHCR response and partnerships

- IOM and UNHCR have agreed to undertake a joint profiling exercise. The first phase of the exercise will consist of mapping the locations with highest concentration of Venezuelans in the country, in order to determine the overall scope needed for the exercise.



PROTECTION

Costa Rica

Operational Context

- In March, out of a total of 525 asylum claims lodged in Costa Rica, 334 were from Venezuelan nationals. By the end of April, 5,589 Venezuelans have lodged asylum claims since 2014.
- The National Council on Migration issued a resolution recommending to the Government the application of an alternative protection pathway for Venezuelan nationals who do not meet the definition criteria set in the 1951 Convention. The effective implementation of this option will be determined once the new Administration takes office on May 8th.

Mexico

Operational Context

- The new Commissioner of the Mexican Migration Institute (INM), Mr. Gerardo García, asked UNHCR to share with him the cases of Venezuelan nationals who were not allowed access to territory at Mexican airports, as well as cases in detention in order to release the affected individuals.
- The Mexican Refugee Commission (COMAR) presented this week new measures to speed up the processing of asylum claims made by Venezuelans, including abbreviated interviews. To date, Mexico has processed 4,516 Venezuelan asylum claims.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- Over 200 Venezuelans have been assisted by UNHCR and through its partner *Programa Casa Refugiados* in Mexico City. 113 of those have received cash-based assistance.
- UNHCR Facebook page *El Jaguar* - continues to receive messages from Venezuelans wishing to apply for refugee status or requesting more information on the refugee status determination procedure.
- On 17 April, UNHCR had a meeting with the Association of Venezuelans in Mexico (Venemex), who informed UNHCR that they produced a map of the Venezuelan community in Mexico and expressed interest in receiving information on refugee procedures to share with its members. UNHCR is working with Venemex to develop a public information product based on the experiences of Venezuelans in Mexico and to share further information on the refugee procedure.



PROTECTION

Southern Caribbean

Operational Context

- On 7 April, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs signed an agreement with Venezuelan Vice Presidents El-Aissami and Soteldo, lifting the border closure between Venezuela and the ABC Islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao).

UNHCR's response and partnerships

Trinidad and Tobago

- On 6 April, the Acting Chief Immigration Officer stated that an estimated 150 to 200 Venezuelans are arriving per week.
- UNHCR issued a press release on 23 April, expressing regret on the deportation of 82 Venezuelan nationals from Trinidad and Tobago. The group included registered 13 asylum-seekers and other individuals who had declared an intention to apply for refugee status, making their return to Venezuela a breach of international refugee law.
- UNHCR facilitated a two-day workshop, "International Protection of Refugees in Trinidad and Tobago: Principles and Legal Framework," for 21 immigration authorities attached to the Immigration Division of the Ministry of National Security.



PROTECTION

Curacao

- During the week of 16 April, the Curaçaoan Coast Guard arrested some twenty Venezuelans – including men and women – who came ashore on a boat from Venezuela. A spokesperson for the Coast Guard stated that boat arrivals are increasing following the ending of the border closure between Venezuela and the ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao).

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