

Mixed Movements Darién

October 2022

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Context

Throughout October, the mixed movements in Darién shifted substantially. Authorities registered the highest number of irregular entries ever in Panama, with over **4,000 persons crossing daily**. Within a period of 15 days, after the United States announced on 12 October, a **new policy for Venezuelans**¹, these numbers decreased as low as **400 people crossing daily**, one of the lowest rates in the last three months².

Nevertheless, in October alone, almost **60,000 people** entered irregularly through Darién. As of 31 October, the number of entries in 2022 amounted to **211,355**³. Even though Venezuelans represent some **70 per cent** (148, 285)⁴ of the total population on the move, the DHS announcement triggered a drastic change with the number of daily arrivals of Ecuadorians and Haitians surpassing those from Venezuela. The latest UNHCR monthly protection monitoring exercise⁵ evidenced that **47 per cent** of those interviewed left their country of origin due to **personal or family threats**, as well as **generalized violence**, and around **36 per cent** fled due to fear of **violence and general insecurity** in their country, reflecting a change in the trends.

As a result of the new US migration policies, a considerable number of Venezuelans are stranded in Panama and throughout Central America and Mexico, with no official numbers published. Efforts made by the Venezuelan Mission in Panama, private donors, and other humanitarian organizations, allowed the establishment of a **temporary shelter** in the city, where an average of **500 to 600** people were staying daily.

The Panamanian National Migration Service in coordination with the Venezuelan mission in Panama has assisted some **3,800** Venezuelans with **voluntary return procedures** and reiterated that the Government cannot support the costs of humanitarian flights. Most Venezuelans have returned to their country of origin by their own means, or through private donations.

PROTECTION

UNHCR's Response

Through regular border monitoring exercises and **presence** at the **Migratory Reception Centers (ERMs)**, as well as in **transit** and **host communities**, UNHCR has supported and provided information on the new US policies for Venezuelans to over **600 persons**. The agency, together with partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) kept informing about procedures to access the asylum system in Panama in border areas and assisted 12 persons with their **refugee status application**.

Moreover, in the ERM Los Planes de Gualaca, Chiriquí, UNHCR through partner HIAS, provided **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)** related to traumatic experiences during the jungle crossing, and continued informing people in transit, in both Darién and Chiriquí provinces, on the **risks of the route** through individual **informative sessions**, and indirectly through the leading member of a group or in open gatherings in the registration queues.

From 13 to 31 October, UNHCR also provided **information** related to **humanitarian assistance** and voluntary returns through personal appointments, emails, phone calls, and WhatsApp line.



¹ Available at: <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/10/12/dhs-announces-new-migration-enforcement-process-venezuelans>

² Ministry of Public Security ³ National Migration Service

⁴ Idem ⁵ Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/96920>











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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

UNHCR conducted weekly **visits** to the **temporary shelter** of the Venezuelan Mission in Panama City and distributed 2,000 face masks, 250 cleaning wipes, 163 boxes of hand wipes, 13 gallons of hand soap, and 12 bottles of disinfecting spray, among other products, to support refugees and migrants with their **sanitation and hygiene needs**.

In Chiriquí, UNHCR donated **over 1,000 blankets** to assist people staying at the ERM in Los Planes de Gualaca and provided daily primary health care and assistance in the ERMs and transit communities in Darién and Chiriquí provinces.

Key Achievements

-  In October 2022, UNHCR and partner HIAS, reached out to **1,023 persons** with information on the journey risks (**816** in the ERMs and reception points in Darién and **207** in Chiriquí).
-  UNHCR and its partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) provided information to **153 people on the asylum system in Panama**, and 12 were assisted with their asylum application.
-  UNHCR provided information on the new US migration policies for Venezuelans to **634 persons** in Darién.
-  Through UNHCR and its partner Panamanian Red Cross, **1,256 persons** received **primary health care** and **first aid** (438 in ERMs in Darién and 773 in ERM Los Planes de Gualaca, in Chiriquí).
-  UNHCR facilitated a workshop for **19 officers**, and members of the local **Protection Group** in Darién, to define the response framework for protection cases, including international protection, gender-based violence (GBV), unaccompanied children, people living with HIV/AIDS, among other areas.
-  UNHCR distributed **2,506** sanitation items at the temporary shelter of the Venezuelan Mission in Panama City and donated **1,080** blankets to the ERM Los Planes de Gualaca, Chiriquí.
-  UNHCR, through partner Hogar Luisa, is supporting **35 Venezuelans** with urgent **temporary accommodation needs**.
-  At the ERM Los Planes de Gualaca, in Chiriquí, a total of **572 persons** received mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) related to traumatic experiences crossing the jungle.



UNHCR CHATBOT IS ACTIVE!
For more information on protection mechanisms and the asylum system in Panama, please contact us here!

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