



SNAPSHOT 16

PROTECTION CRISIS IN THE NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA, MEXICO AND PANAMA.

Key data July to September 2021

This sixteenth bulletin provides an update on the protection crisis in the North of Central America, Mexico, and Panama, consolidated by monitoring criminal violence indicators, barriers to access rights, migration and asylum policies, and protection needs. Various governmental, non-governmental and media sources of information were consulted, and this is the outlook they show for the third quarter of 2021.

These quarterly bulletins include an analysis of the evolution of protection crisis indicators from the beginning of the year to the date of publication. At the request of the organizations that make up the Protection Group, this edition includes, exceptionally, an annex of analysis on the situation in Haiti due to its importance and impact on the cycles of mixed and successive movements in the region.

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CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

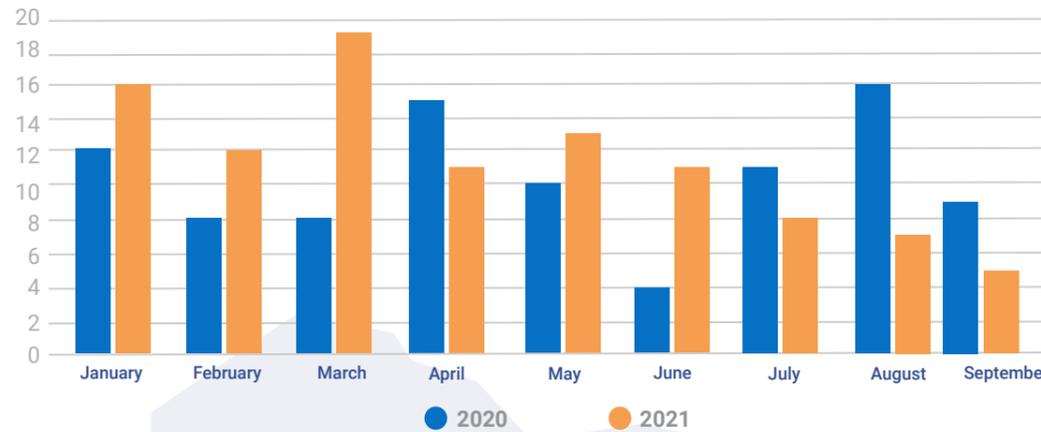
210
 Homicides

registered by the National Civil Police during the third quarter of 2021, assuming a **decrease of -43.7%** compared to the same period of 2020. From January to September of this year, the **cumulative total is 848.1**

36
 Femicides

Reported in the third quarter of 2021, assuming a **cumulative total of 131 femicides** on the ninth month of this year. It represent a **decrease of -44.44%** compared to those reported in the same period of 2020.²

Graph prepared in-house based on statistics published by the Observatory of Violence against Women
Comparison of the number of femicides on the 9th month of 2021 vs 2020



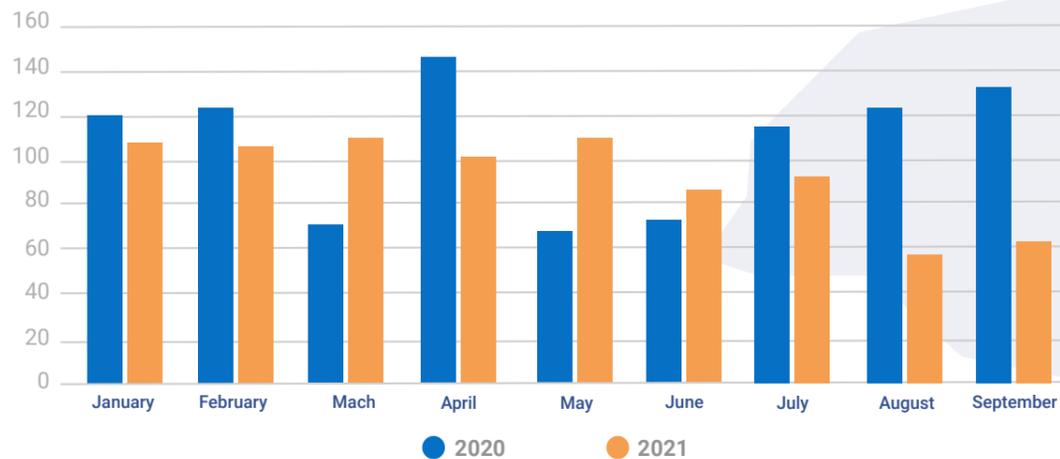
2,164
 cases of sexual violence

were registered in the third quarter, assuming an **increase of 247.35%** compared to the same period in 2020. During the first nine months, **5,359 cases of sexual violence** were registered.³

23
 active cases of disappearances of children and adolescents

The "Missing Angel" Alert continues in the third quarter of 2021.⁵

Comparison: number of homicides from January to September 2020 vs. January to September 2021



Prepared in-house based on the statistics published by the transparency portal of the National Police of El Salvador

936
 Missing persons

In the nine months of 2021, an **increase of approximately 145.03%** over 2020 (382 cases).⁴

Data from the Attorney General of the Republic of El Salvador (FGR, for its acronym in Spanish), obtained through the Law on Access to Public Information

PROTECTION NEEDS

3,4 M
 People received the full schedule of Covid-19 vaccination

52.7% of total population.
 63.3% had received a dose of vaccine (4,107,518 million) against Covid-19

177
 Attacks on journalists and human rights defenders

Most of the cases would involve the participation of state agents.⁷

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

2,460
 Salvadoran people were deported

during July and September 2021, for a **cumulative total from January to September of 4,623 people**. The total number of people deported in the nine months of 2021 represents a **reduction of -46.6%** compared to the same period of the previous year.¹¹

49,2% U.S **45,8%** Mexico
75% Men **25%** Women
62% Boys **38%** Girls
(of total children)

The main reasons reported for migrating were:



The people deported in the first half of 2021 are mainly concentrated in the departments of San Salvador, San Miguel and Usulután.

5,170
 Salvadoran applied for asylum in Mexico

until the end of the third quarter of 2021.⁸

Until July 2021, it was reported that **5,281 people entered El Salvador in an irregular condition** along the borders of El Amatillo and La Hachadura. Among which a population in conditions of vulnerability of **299 children under 17 years of age, 10 under 5 years and 36 pregnant women** was recorded.⁹

Until July 2021, it was reported that **4,452 people left El Salvador in an irregular condition** along the border with Guatemala. **Children and adolescents are the most represented profile of people identified as vulnerable.** (They represent at least 14% of the identified flows by key informants).¹⁰

El Salvador

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

The context of violence in El Salvador indicates that homicides have decreased in relation to the 269 cases registered in the second quarter of 2021. There has been a significant decrease of 22.8% for the third quarter of 2021, in which 210 cases were reported. Between January 1 and September 20, 807 homicides were registered, 115 less than the 922 calculated in the same period of 2020, which represents a decrease of 12.5%. Public officials argue that this decrease is a consequence of the military deployment.¹²

Despite the fact that homicide indicators have dropped significantly, the multiple manifestations of violence have not ceased, and, in fact, some have increased. Among the figures of these worrying increases are the femicides that from January to August 2021 have increased by 15.5%, compared to the same period in 2020.¹³ In addition, 1,777 rape cases are reported from January to September 2021 and 620 rape cases in the third quarter of 2021¹⁴

This is a problem that persists and limits the construction of safer social spaces for women and girls. Criminal groups and violence itself also remain one of the main causes of forced displacement and the reduction of the multiple manifestations of violence in Salvadoran society continues to be a challenge.

PROTECTION NEEDS

Covid-19

As of September 30, 2021, El Salvador registered 104,348 confirmed cases of Covid-19. The confirmed rate was 72.01 per hundred thousand inhabitants and there was evidence of 2,376 people deceased by coronavirus. Until September 30, 2021, 7,584,818 doses had been applied and 3,416,168 people had been vaccinated with the complete schedule.¹⁵ The Ministry of Health of El Salvador began at the end of September of this year, the implementation of vaccination against Covid-19 house by house, at a time when the country registered an increase in the number of daily infections and deaths. The strategy, according to official information, was carried out to bring vaccination closer to Salvadorans who for various reasons have not received even the first dose after the Central American nation registered 107,335 official Covid-19 infections, of which 14,347 cases are active, 735 people are in serious condition and 339 in critical condition, according to data published on the official site.¹⁶ Therefore, immunization of the total population remains a challenge.

Food Security

According to data from Analysis of the Integrated Classification of Food Security in Phases (IPC), presented in September 2021, for the current period from July to August, there are 841 thousand people in crisis or emergency condition of acute food insecurity. This would represent 13% of the analyzed population. In addition, based on current data, projections affirm that prior to the period of seasonal hunger, from March to May 2022, there would be more than 900,000 people in El Salvador in crisis or emergency conditions of acute food insecurity. This analysis was carried out on 6.3 million people corresponding to the 14 departments of El Salvador.¹⁷

Attack on journalists and human rights defenders

For the third quarter of 2021 (July to September), there is not much update on the subject. Nevertheless, between February and May 2021, the Salvadoran Network of Women Defenders, the Association of Journalists of El Salvador, and the Passionist Social Service recorded 370 digital attacks against journalists and women human rights defenders. Most of the recorded attacks are attributed to public officials.

Political landscape

The political situation in the third quarter of 2021 has been characterized by the increase in contradictions between the government and some sectors of civil society, which oppose the different measures adopted by the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The conflict has worsened since the inauguration of the new term of the Legislative Assembly on May 1. On the other hand, the entry into force of the bitcoin as legal tender has generated mobilizations of rejection. What seems to point to a trend towards greater social conflict for the remainder of 2021.



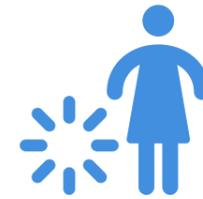
CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

833
Homicides



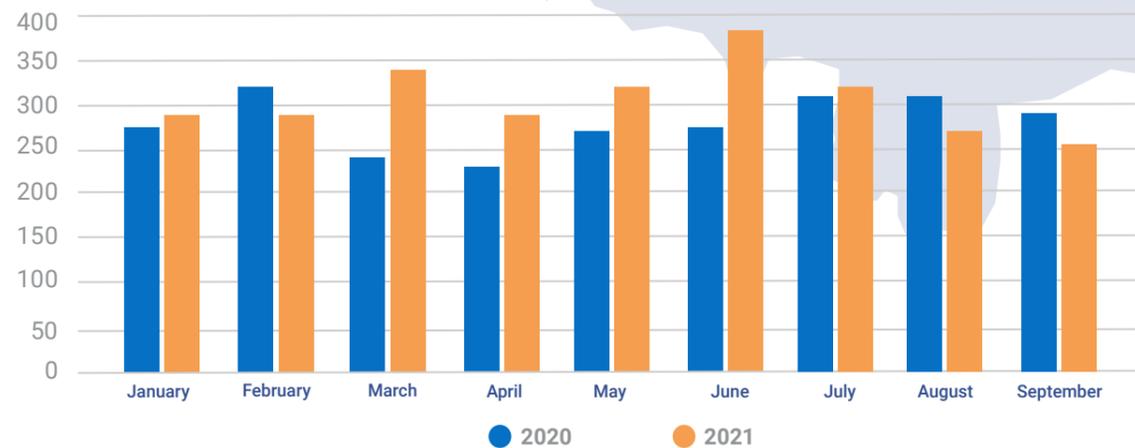
Registered by the Ministry of Security of the National Police in the third quarter of 2021, assuming a **decrease of -9.65%** compared to the number of homicides reported in the same period of 2020. **From January to September of this year, the total accumulated number of homicides is 2,744.**¹⁸

97
Femicides



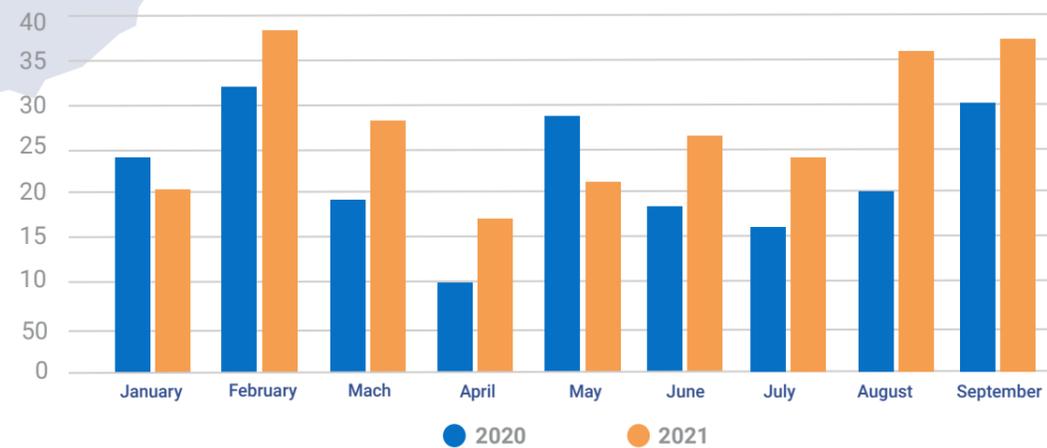
Registered between July and September 2021, assuming an **increase of 46.97%** compared to the same period in 2020. **From January to September this year, the total accumulated number of femicides is 247.**

Comparison: number of homicides from January to September 2020 vs January to September 2021



Graph prepared in-house based on statistics published by the Department of Police Statistics from the National Police of Honduras

Comparison of the number of femicides on the 9th month of 2021 vs 2020



Graph prepared in-house based on official statistics from the Centro de Derechos de Mujeres

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

39,960
Honduran
people
were deported²³



from January to September 2021

28,1% ↑
more than the
same period of the
previous year

10% U.S
82% Mexico

88% Men
65% Boys
(of total children)

12% Women
35% Girls
(of total children)

PROTECTION NEEDS

20,36%



of the population received the complete schedule of the Covid-19 vaccine

32.38% had received one dose of the vaccine (3,207,579 million) against Covid-19. Therefore, 52.46% of the population was partially or totally protected against Covid-19 (5,196,072).¹⁹

31,894



Honduran people applied for asylum in Mexico

until September 2021, is a data in exponential ascendancy in relation to 2020 (15,398). In both years, Honduras leads the nationality with the most asylum applications.²⁰

16,690



people entered Honduras in irregular condition along the southern border

Until July 2021 (Guasaule, Las Manos and La Apertura-Trojes). Population in conditions of vulnerability was registered for 408 children under 18 years of age, which would represent 33%, 815 under 5 years, which would represent 66% and 8 pregnant women, which would represent 1%.²¹

12,130



people left Honduras in irregular condition

Until July 2021 (border of Agua Caliente and Corinto). Population in conditions of vulnerability was registered for 185 children under 18 years of age, what would represent 29%. 447 under 5 years, which would represent 70% and 2 pregnant women, which would represent 2%.²²

Honduras

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

The manifestations of violence in Honduras continue to be critical in light of the figures. For the third quarter of 2021, 833 homicides have been registered, assuming a drop of 22.48%, in relation to the second quarter of 2020, in which 922 homicides were reported. The differences have not been very significant, which would imply the need for social and public policies against violence in all its dimensions, and also more rigorous investigative processes against impunity. According to the 2020 Global Impunity Index Report, which evaluates 69 countries, Honduras obtained a score of 59.6, ranking first in the Americas and second internationally.²⁴

On the other hand, cases of aggression against women are also recorded, and what is alarming is that femicide -the most extreme manifestation- is the data with the highest number of cases, registering 247 - assuming an increase of 26.2% in relation to the same period of 2020 -, followed by rape with 116 cases. Injuries, kidnappings, and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation are also added.

On average, every 23 hours a woman dies in the country due to violent conditions and 90% of femicides in Honduras so far in 2021 are unpunished.²⁵ All this, despite the fact that there are legal frameworks that criminalize the different forms of violence against women.²⁶

This in the framework of the months prior to the elections to be held on November 28, in which 12 homicides due to political violence were recorded.²⁷ Therefore, allowing the free exercise of women's rights continues to be an important challenge for democratization, the consolidation of the rule of law, and the advancement of equity and equality in the country.

PROTECTION NEEDS

Covid-19

Despite the fact that the number of vaccinated has increased in relation to the second quarter, there is still a significant number of Hondurans who have not been vaccinated, only in the group of 12 to 17 years there are 1,174,000 people as a goal to be vaccinated, however, only 300,000 adolescents have been inoculated.²⁸ Access to the vaccine for the population in conditions of human mobility is not guaranteed, in an unprecedented context of mixed flows, thus increasing the protection risks of the displaced population. However, there have been vaccination campaigns on the southern border of Mexico for people in a condition of human mobility, coming from Honduras and Haiti. There is an estimate of 80,000 people stranded and more than 600 have been immunized.²⁹ Thus, vaccination access and coverage continue to be a protection challenge.

Attacks on journalists and human rights defenders

For the third quarter of 2021 (July to September), there is not much update on the subject. Nevertheless, Particular cases of human rights violations against defenders in Garífuna communities are

reported. According to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the State of Honduras should have titled, delimited, and demarcated the traditional territories of the Garífuna communities of Punta Piedra and Triunfo de la Cruz according to a 2015 verdict. The ruling was a consequence of reparation for human rights violations against the Garífuna people. Six years later, they have not received those reparations. On the contrary, they have imprisoned three women human rights defenders belonging to the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras, OFRANEH. Faced with the fact, [UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#) expressed concern after the arrest of Marianela Mejía Solórzano and Jennifer Mejía Solórzano (arrested on March 3) and the activist Silvia Bonilla, who was deprived of liberty on June 16 and on July 2 a provisional dismissal of the charges was issued against her. In addition to these arrests, as of July 9, 2021, there are 29 arrest warrants against defenders of the Garífuna peoples of Honduras.³⁰

Another case that has shocked the country is that of the murder of the human rights defender of the LGBTIQ+ population Tatiana García, who was murdered on September 27. According to the documentation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights OHCHR, this is the eighth murder of the LGBTIQ+ population reported in 2021. They also mention the alarming figure of 168 attacks on human rights defenders, including threats, physical attacks, harassment, and murders.³¹ The context is critical considering that it adds to the already mentioned political conflict prior to the elections of November 28, 2021.

Political landscape

The political context is circumscribed in the polarization and conflict in the face of the general elections of November 28, 2021. It is also marked by the tendency of the opposition parties to create alliances to confront the ruling party. This conflict is materializing in political violence between people belonging to the political parties in contention.

According to data from an analysis from December 2020 to May 2021, carried out by the University Institute for Democracy and Peace (IUDPAS), trends in political violence have increased. The total number of victims is 35; segmented by sex, there are 6 women and 29 men. The deadliest demonstration adds to 12 homicides, in addition to cases of kidnapping, threats, coercion, duress and attacks. The victims are from the National Party 21, the Libertad y Refundación Libre Party 8, the Liberal Party 5, and the Anti-Corruption Party PAC 1.³² This conflict affects the exercise of civil and political rights. Added to this context of growing political tension was the mobilization for clarifying the cases of forced disappearances for political reasons in the 1980s. Among the demands of the population that mobilized, there was also dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Strategic Development Zones ZEDES.³³

On the other hand, the consequences of the devastation caused by hurricanes Eta and Iota, and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic still persist. In addition to the aforementioned vulnerability processes that the population in conditions of human mobility faces, added to the intensification of these problems due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



CRIMINAL VIOLENCE



per 100 thousand inhabitants as of August 2021, presented a decrease of 3.6% in relation to the rate of August 2020.³⁴



for causes associated with criminal acts from January to September 2021, presented an increase of 20% in relation to the same period last year.³⁵



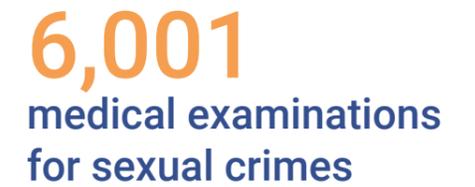
of which 40% were deactivated.
Alba-Keneth Alerts activated from January to September 2021.³⁶



It presented an increase of 39% in relation to the same period of the previous year.
Isabel-Claudina alerts activated from January to September 2021.



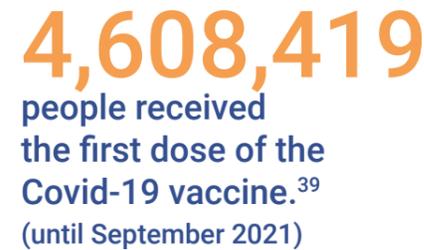
before the Public Ministry from January to July 2021.³⁷



carried out by the National Institute of Forensic Sciences from January to August 2021.³⁸

PROTECTION NEEDS

Covid-19



BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES



6,6%
more than the same period of the previous year

11%
U.S

89%
Mexico

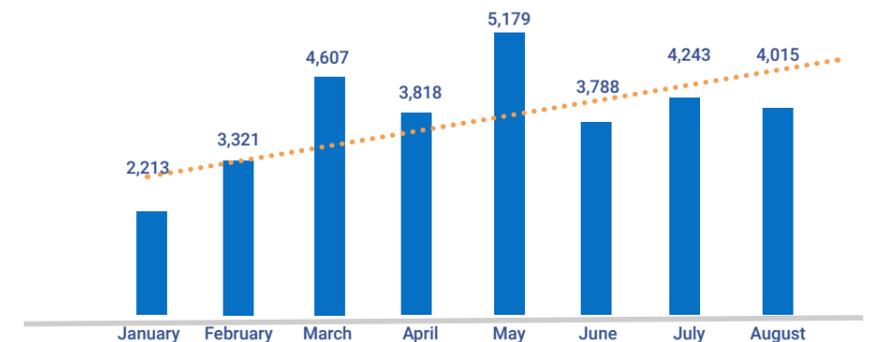
84%
Men

16%
Women

70%
Boys

30%
Girls

People deported, January to August 2021



Source: based on the Human Mobility Information Management in the Northern Triangle, August 2021.

Guatemala

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

According to the National Institute of Forensic Sciences, from January to September, the number of homicides (violent deaths associated with criminal acts) in men decreased 7.54% in relation to the same period of the previous year (from 2,707 during 2020 to 2,503 in 2021) and in women increased 19.95% (from 381 during 2020 to 457 in 2021).⁴² On the other hand, the Observatory of Human Rights and Violence due to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity documented 21 violent murders against people from the LGBTIQ+ community from January to August.⁴³

It is important to highlight that, according to the latest available data, the complaints received by the Public Ministry of crimes such as sexual violence, human trafficking, and exploitation in most cases the victims are women. From January to July, women represented 87% of the 9,687 victims of sexual violence, 68% of the 155 victims of exploitation, and 63% of the 247 victims of trafficking. In this same period, for the crimes mentioned for both men and women, the Judicial Body entered 2,571 cases and sentenced 27%.⁴⁴

The National Civil Police received 9,109 complaints of extortion from January to August, the interannual rate to August was 80.9 complaints of extortion for every 100,000 inhabitants in the country.⁴⁵

PROTECTION NEEDS

Covid-19

The immunization process against Covid-19 continues to be slow in the country, as of September 15, only 17% of the population had received a complete vaccination schedule and 37% the first dose. In addition, immunization has presented territorial inequalities that place populations that have historically been vulnerable in situations of lack of protection. According to reports from the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance, as of September 30, the percentage of people vaccinated with a complete schedule by department did not exceed 35% of the population, with the department of Guatemala being the highest with 33.5% of its vaccinated population, with a complete schedule, on the other hand, there are departments that have not reached 15% of their population vaccinated with a complete schedule, such as Alta Verapaz 8%, Totonicapán 10.5%, Quiché 10.8%, Sololá 12.2% San Marcos 13.9% and Petén 14.6%; It is important to point out that these departments have a majority indigenous population.

The *Diálogos* research center conducted a study on vaccination disparities in the department of Sololá, where 95% of the population is indigenous and the population with a complete vaccination schedule does not exceed 15%. In said study, two

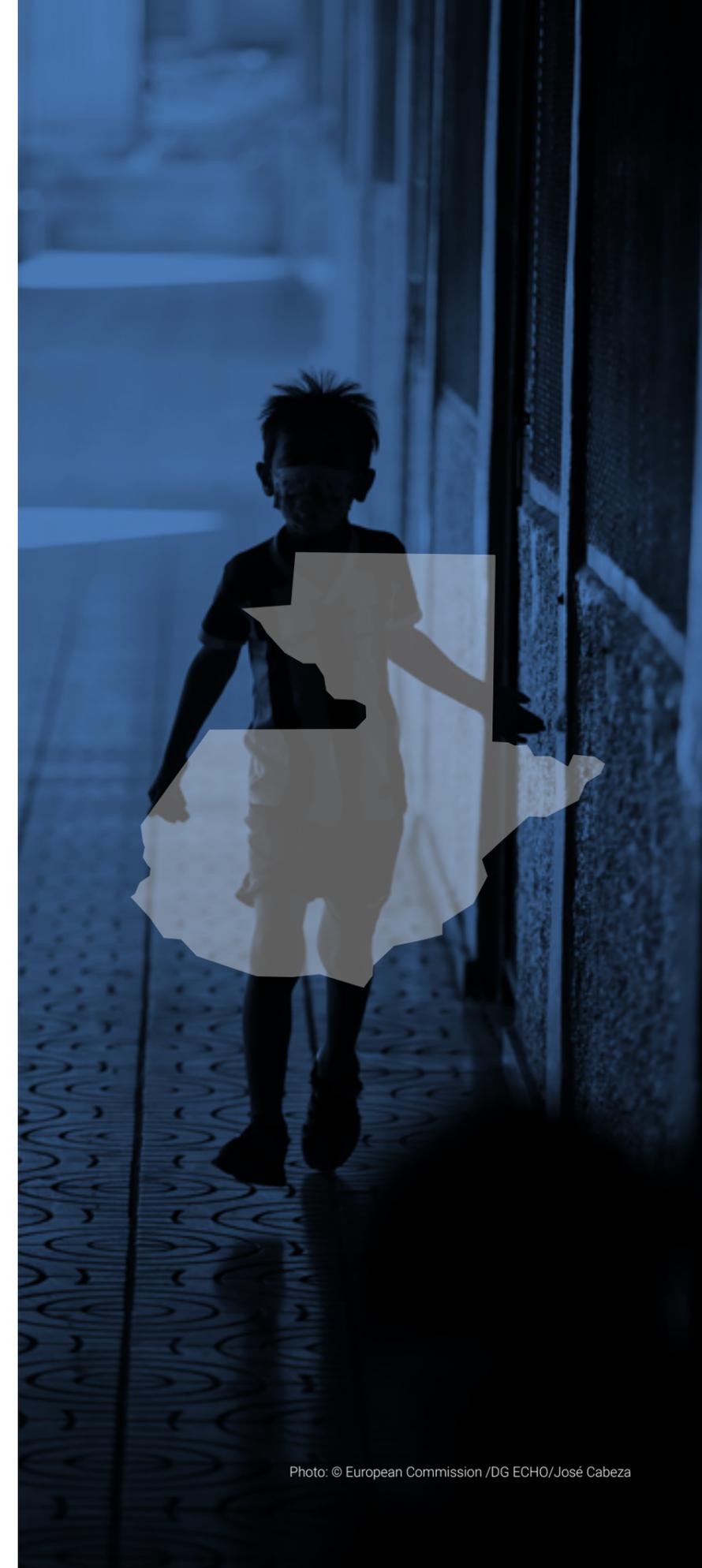
barriers to access vaccination were identified: first, those of a physical nature, related to the historical precariousness of the health system, including the absence of appropriate physical spaces that allow social distancing, limitations at the level of health personnel that limits service hours and the distance from health posts, forcing people who live in some communities to walk up to 3 hours to reach the nearest health post, which implies an investment in time and money. Second, the rejection of the vaccine due to the lack of clear information about the pandemic and vaccines.⁴⁶ These situations may be repeated throughout the country.

People in a situation of mobility

Deportations to the country have increased compared to the previous year and the protection needs that people are presenting are diverse in view of the immigration policies that have been adopted, such as the continuity of Title 42 and the reactivation of the MPP that forces those who seek asylum in The United States to wait for the resolution in Mexico.⁴⁷ In addition, last June, Kamala Harris, during her visit to Guatemala, addressed the migrants saying “don’t come” and reported on the possibility of an accelerated return to family units.⁴⁸ As reported, accelerated returns began in July (*expedited removal*) by air from Guatemalan families who could not be expelled under title 42.⁴⁹ In August, thousands of Central American people were deported and expelled through new routes that do not have the necessary infrastructure to provide humanitarian assistance and state reception. On this new route, people were transferred by air from the southern border of the United States to Villahermosa, Mexico and then by bus to Guatemala to enter through the El Ceibo border in the department of El Petén.

Changing the route of deportations and, in many cases, expulsions, has implied risks for people, mainly because the El Ceibo border lacks adequate reception conditions with a limited presence of humanitarian organizations and is located 550 km from Guatemala City⁵⁰. In addition, the only shelter on this border has the capacity to serve 30 people and was overwhelmed by the massive flow of people. They not only deported Guatemalans but also people of 11 different nationalities, most of them Hondurans. Among the returned and expelled people, people with international protection needs were identified.⁵¹

The Guatemalan Migration Institute reported 14,108 people deported through this border since August 22, of which 10,279 were Hondurans, 1,445 Guatemalans and 2,210 Salvadorans.⁵² It is important to note that the data is not exact, since just 20 days after the deportations or expulsions began, government authorities showed up at the border and began to make some kind of record. The first group entered the country on August 5.⁵³



CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

10,839 **Homicides**
registered out of a total of 33,008 during the three quarters of the year (33%).

251 **Femicicides**
registered out of a total of 495 during the first semester (51%).

20,478 **registrations of gender-based violence**
out of a total of 31,260 during the first semester (54%).

2,140 **registrations for extortion**
out of a total of 4,136 during the first semester (52%).

5,891 **registrations for crimes against personal liberty**
out of a total of 11,021 during the first semester (53%).

PROTECTION NEEDS

54.3 M **doses of vaccine against Covid-19 applied**
Around 38 million people have 1 dose and approximately **21.6 million with the complete vaccination schedule.**

89 **deaths and disappearances of refugees and migrants**
occurred along displacement routes out of a total of **190** during the first semester (47%).

51%
In Mexico

49%
In U.S

83,068 **services to refugees and migrants by Grupo Beta**
out of a total of **163,357** during the first semester (51%).

54,799 **repatriation events**
of Mexican people in which support from federal programs was accepted out of a total of **92,544** during the first semester (59%).

2,207 **episodes of massive internal displacement**
In Mexico out of a total of **3,719** during the first semester (59%).

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

68,413 **repatriations of Mexicans from the United States**
out of a total of **109,533** during the first semester (62%).

14,596 **applications for Refugee Status in Mexico**
out of a total of **29,132** during the first semester (50%).

48,002 **presentations by foreigners before the immigration authority**
out of a total of **84,100** during the first semester (57%).

24,052 **deportations of foreigners by immigration authorities**
out of a total of **46,302** during the first semester (52%).

In Mexico

28,806 **returns to the NCA from Mexico and the United States**
out of a total of **52,385** during the first semester (55%).

In the United States

426,522 **apprehensions on the southern border with Mexico**
out of a total of **732,621** during the first semester (58%).



306,279 **expulsions under Title 42**
on the southern border with Mexico out of a total of **537,959** during the first semester (57%).

Title 42 expulsions account for 72% of overall apprehensions.



120,243 **lack of admissions under Title 8 on the southern border with Mexico**
out of a total of **194,662** during the first semester (62%).

Title 8 lack of admissions account for 28% of overall apprehensions.

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

According to data from the National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE) 2021,⁵⁴ It is estimated that 281,373 households (approximately 911,914 people) had to change their place of residence or housing due to crime, figures that represent a decrease of 24% and 27%, respectively, compared to the figures presented for the year 2019. While, according to the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH), in the third quarter of 2021, situations of violence in the country caused the internal displacement of approximately 19,316 people.⁵⁵

In July, three episodes of massive displacement that occurred in Chiapas, Veracruz and Sinaloa stand out for their magnitude. In the first case, around 3,205 people, most of them indigenous, were displaced due to armed incursions and clashes between a group related to the Jalisco Nueva Generación Cartel (CJNG, for its acronym in Spanish)⁵⁶ and another that called itself “El Machete” and called itself a “self-defense” group that emerged to combat the first. In the second case due to violent eviction by state and federal authorities (Mariana, Civil Force and National Guard) presumably due to the construction of the Interoceanic Corridor.⁵⁷ In the third, due to the resurgence of violence between organized crime groups.⁵⁸

In August, five episodes stand out in Michoacán, Chihuahua, and Zacatecas. In the first entity, people from around 23 communities had to flee their homes due to extortion, attacks, and clashes between organized crime groups, including the CJNG and the United Cartels.⁵⁹ In the second and third states, violent actions by organized crime groups such as burning houses, land dispossession and kidnappings, caused the displacement of hundreds of people.⁶⁰

In September, five episodes of displacement stand out in Chiapas, Michoacán, and Zacatecas. In the first case, around a hundred people, mostly women, children and adolescents belonging to the civil organization “Las Abejas” had to leave their homes due to violence and political tensions. While in the second and third cases, it was the conditions of generalized violence caused by harassment and clashes between organized crime groups that caused the displacement of around 2,000 people. Finally, in Hidalgo, the overflow of the Tula River caused 31,000 damaged homes, up to 10,000 displaced people and 17 deaths;⁶¹ in the State of Mexico, the landslide of the Chiquihuite hill affected around 282 families;⁶² displacements due to disasters were also reported in Guanajuato, Jalisco, Querétaro, and Veracruz.⁶³

PROTECTION NEEDS

Hundreds of people, mostly from the North of Central America, continue trying to cross the country in precarious and high-risk conditions. For example, approximately 141 people, mostly from Central America, were located in a box of a trailer in the state of Nuevo León, less than 200 kilometers from the US-Mexico border.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, hundreds of foreigners with international protection needs and displaced families from Guerrero and Michoacán continue to seek asylum in the United States.⁶⁵

However, international organizations have already warned that the shelters on the border between Mexico and the United States are overwhelmed.⁶⁶ For example, in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, more than 70% of the shelter spaces were occupied and around 70% of their occupants were internally displaced persons.⁶⁷ Migrants and people in need of international protection also live in a desperate situation in the south of the country. In Tapachula, Chiapas, they began a hunger strike to pressure the Mexican authorities to allow them to move north in a caravan.⁶⁸

In the United States, authorities reported an increase in Covid-19 infections in various detention centers for migrants due to the large number of people who are detained in them.⁶⁹ While in Mexico shelters have denounced the deportation of migrants and refugees infected with Covid-19 from the United States, causing infections in their facilities.⁷⁰

In this type of situation, Congressmen in the United States requested to close the migrant detention centers in Florida due to allegations of health negligence and reprisals committed against migrants and refugees who have denounced the situation.⁷¹ For its part, in Mexico, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) denounced that authorities in the border municipality of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, were holding nationals and foreigners in inhumane conditions, without food and locked up among fecal waste and rats.⁷² Although it is also important to note that Mexican health authorities deployed health brigades to care for migrants and refugees stranded in Tapachula, Chiapas.⁷³

Finally, researchers pointed out the importance of paying attention to the disappearance of migrants and people in need of international protection on both sides of the Mexico-United States border.⁷⁴ In this regard, until July, Humane Borders recorded the death of almost 130 people on the border between Mexico and the United States, a desert region that has shown the highest temperatures in decades.⁷⁵ Whereby, Human rights organizations called on the government of Joe Biden to pay attention to the impact of climate change and



An update on the protection crisis

high temperatures, to implement migration policies with a human rights approach that do not put the lives of migrants and people in need at risk. international protection.⁷⁶

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

The migration policy with a focus on the detention and deportation of flows by Mexico and the United States continues to regain strength. Until July of this year, the United States Government claimed to have found more than 1 million people on its southern border, most of them expelled under Title 42.⁷⁷ In addition, The US authorities reported that the month of July registered a historical mark in the detentions and arrests of children and adolescents on this same border, which amounted to 19,000.⁷⁸ Finally, the Joe Biden administration announced the imminent expulsion of asylum-seeking families who do not meet the requirements requested by its officials;⁷⁹ in addition to the immediate prosecution of people who return to the United States after being deported.⁸⁰ Although he also announced that he will receive applications for the Central American Minors Reception Program (CAM) after it had been canceled in 2017 by Donald Trump;⁸¹ as well as the suspension of the imprisonment of migrant women who are pregnant or who have recently given birth.⁸²

In Mexico, until the month of August, the National Migration Institute (INM) detained around 147,000 people, including 3,625 children and adolescents.⁸³ Actions that the president of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, justified, since according to him, they prevent migrants from falling into the hands of organized crime.⁸⁴ In this context, the Secretary of National Defense declared that the Mexican Armed Forces have carried out a series of activities on the southern border (especially in Chiapas) whose objective is to stop all migration.⁸⁵ In this sense, human rights organizations denounced before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights the generation of an environment of hostility due to the militarization of borders⁸⁶ and it is that, in Mexico, for example, so far in Joe Biden's mandate, the government has increased by 275% the presence of elements of the Army and the Navy, as well as agents of the National Guard, in the migration border control area posts.⁸⁷

Finally, it also highlights the reactivation of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) by the United States Government, as well as the massive deportation of migrants from the United States not only to the northern border of Mexico,⁸⁸ but also to the southern border. Actions that various civil society organizations and international organizations have already openly denounced and rejected.⁸⁹ However, in this last quarter two caravans of migrants have been formed, mainly from the North of Central America.⁹⁰



BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

15,500

recognized refugees and applicants for refugee status.



The vast majority of these people are of Colombian, Nicaraguan, Venezuelan, Salvadoran and Cuban nationality.⁹³

2,887

people are housed in the Immigration Reception Stations of the National Border Service.⁹²



However, there are no disaggregated statistics on this population.



65,089

migrants in irregular status in the third quarter of 2021.



for a cumulative total of 91,305 people from January to September.⁹¹

62%



Country of origin

62% of this population in an irregular situation are of Haitian nationality. It is estimated that 13% of this population are children of Haitians who began their migratory route in Brazil and Chile. On the other hand, 14% of this mixed flow are people of Cuban nationality, followed by 2% of people from Venezuela.

59%



38%

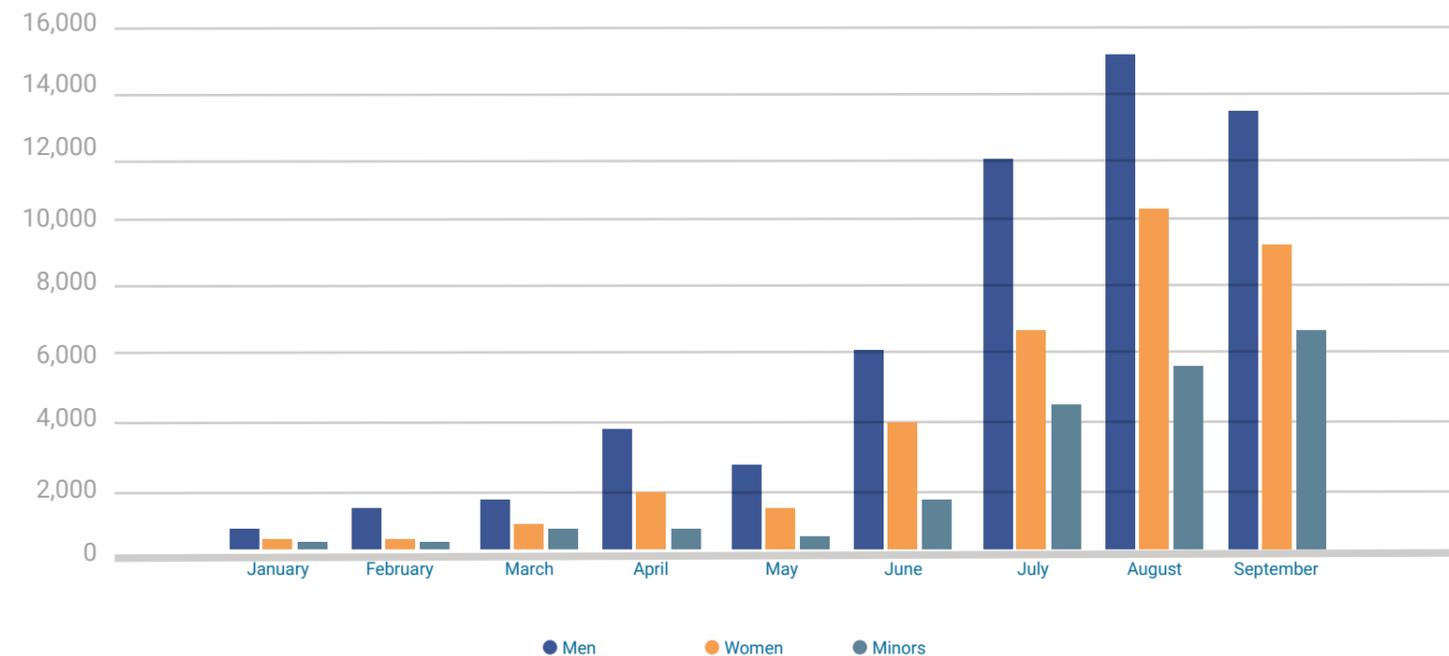


21%



Irregular border crossings into Colombia by gender and age between January and October 2021

Graph prepared in-house based on official statistics from the National Migration Service



Panama

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

PROTECTION NEEDS

Covid-19

As of October 5, 3,137 active cases have been reported, with a fatality rate of 166.8 per 100,000 inhabitants. 5,567,463 doses of vaccines have been administered, 86.5% corresponding to Pfizer and 14.5% to AstraZeneca. 67.8% of the population have received at least one dose of the vaccine and 51.7% are fully vaccinated.⁹⁴

On the other hand, the Ministry of Health announced the implementation of the Vacatur Panama project to administer 500,000 doses of AstraZeneca to tourists starting October 1 as part of the National Government's strategy to reactivate the tourism sector. People who visit the country as tourists and want to access this program must bring Covid-19 test results with them and process their application through established and approved hotels and travel agencies. Some of the access requirements are having a minimum age of thirty years and reserving at least two nights in the country. They can also choose to stay in the country for the six weeks necessary to receive their second dose or return for their second appointment. If the tourist comes from a high-risk country, they must comply with the mandatory three-day quarantine and be responsible for their expenses, a requirement also applicable to those who have traveled to high-risk countries before arriving in Panama.⁹⁵

This strategy contrasts with the absence of a specific vaccination plan aimed at the population that is part of the mixed flows that transit through the Darién. However, the Ministry of Health has deployed a medical team to provide consultations at the Lajas Blancas Migratory Reception Station. In mid-September, two positive cases for Covid-19 were identified. However, at the beginning of October, 45 cases were registered. Likewise, despite the agreement between Colombia and Panama to define a daily quota for the entry of 650 people in August and 500 as of September through the Darién border, this has not prevented situations of overcrowding from continuing to occur in the Migratory Reception Stations.⁹⁶

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

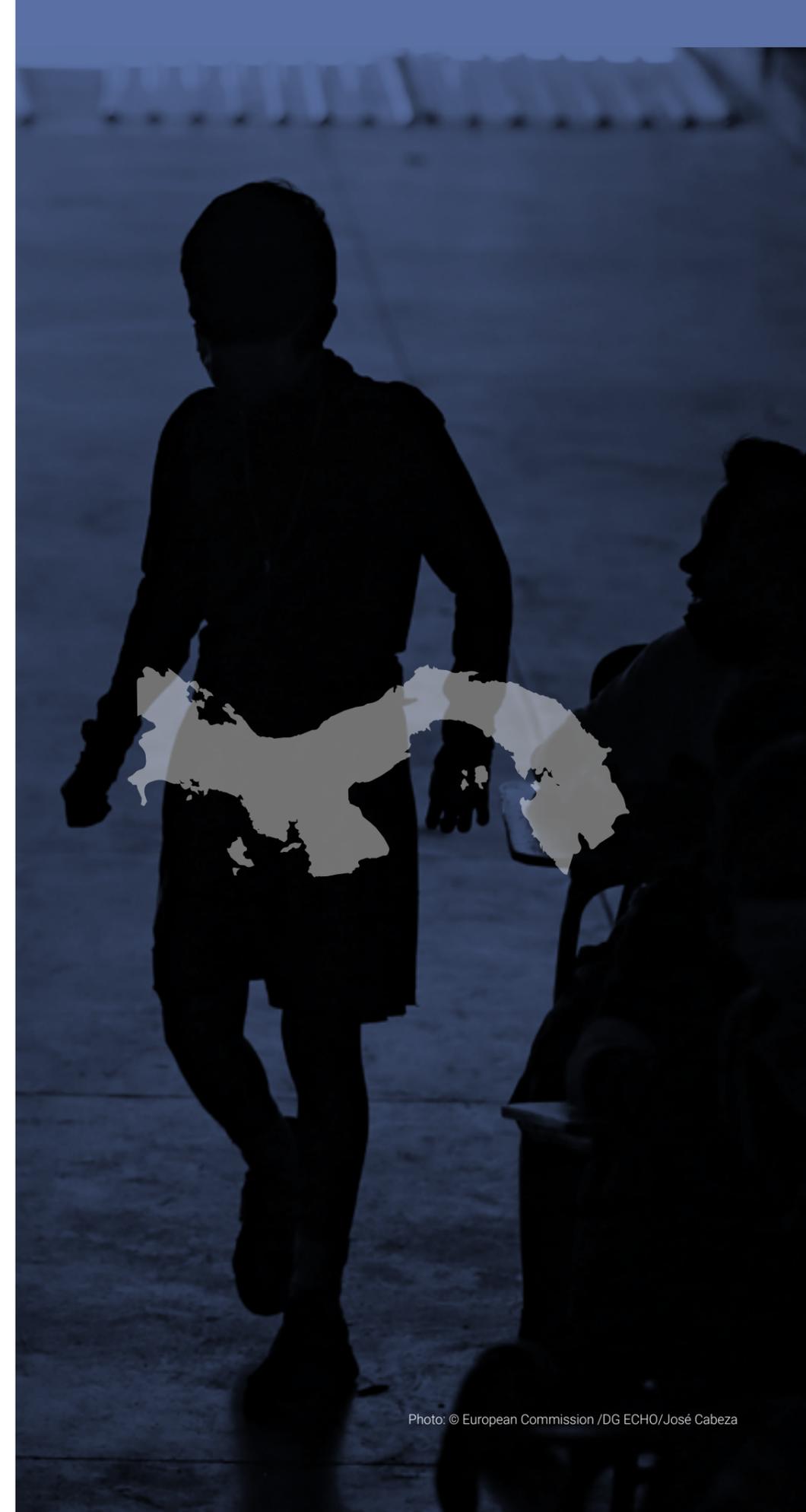
91,300 people have entered the Darién irregularly during the first nine months of 2021. These figures represent an unprecedented record: its magnitude is made clear if we take into consideration that it triples the last highest figure recorded to date: 30,000 people crossed this border in 2016. These data force us to reflect on the causes and factors that explain this increase in mixed mobility flows and for this it is necessary to disaggregate and characterize these figures.

Most of the people who travel this route are of Haitian nationality, although the starting point of their last journey is not necessarily Haiti. In this sense, according to the information compiled by the International Organization for Migration through surveys directed at the population in transit at Migratory Reception Stations, 43% indicated that their country of habitual residence was Chile, 20% Brazil and only 14% reported having left Haiti. In terms of nationalities, 14% of the people are Cuban and 2% Venezuelan. Although the number of Venezuelans may seem small, in recent years their relative weight in the mixed flow figures has increased by more than twenty points: in 2017, 66 Venezuelans were registered, but between January and September 2021 it rose to 1,529. This evolution could show a trend towards worsening living conditions and the situation of vulnerability that Venezuelans are experiencing in the South American countries where they have resided for years as a consequence of the deterioration of these national economies and the increase in expressions of xenophobia and discrimination.⁹⁷

On the other hand, 18,935 children and adolescents crossed this border irregularly, reaching its historical maximum and tripling the data collected from 2016 to 2020. More than 1 in 5 people who cross the Darién are children and half of them are under five years old. Between January and September 2021, up to 20% of the population in transit through this crossing were minors. This characterization implies a series of humanitarian connotations. UNICEF and other partner organizations provide psychosocial support and health services to children in mixed flows, especially those who have been separated from their mothers and fathers. They also facilitate the referral of children who have suffered violence to local protection services.⁹⁸

Mixed movements have become one of the main concerns, not only of humanitarian organizations, but also of state institutions. In this regard, at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Panama, Laurentino Cortizo, called on the international community to develop a coordinated strategy with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to anticipate a "regional humanitarian crisis of serious proportions".⁹⁹

In response to the increase in mixed movements through the Darién, Panama and Colombia reached an agreement according to which as of September the daily passage of 500 people is allowed. However, this measure does not provide a comprehensive response to the magnitude of the situation, since at the beginning of October 22,000 refugees and migrants are imprisoned in Necoclí waiting to continue their route to Panama. Due to this agglomeration and the institutional challenges to guarantee public services and health to the host communities and the migrant population, the Colombian Ombudsman's Office has requested the development of a humanitarian corridor that prioritizes the care of the elderly risk such as pregnant women, children, and adolescents.¹⁰⁰



An update on the protection crisis

ANALYSIS OF THE POPULATION SITUATION PART OF MIXED MOVEMENTS

The exhaustion of the economic resources of migrants and refugees is a recurring situation that has not been sufficiently documented or systematized. It should be noted that people wait a few days in Lajas Blancas to continue their route on a bus that crosses Panama and takes them from Darién to Los Planes in Gualaca, Chiriquí province, from where they continue their journey north, mainly to The United States of America. Many people who are part of the mixed movements in the region suffer robberies and assaults, leaving them without any financial resources to continue their journey. Crossing Panama supposes an approximate cost of 100 dollars. Those people who do not have a social fabric that sends them transfers or deposits, are stranded for several weeks in the Migratory Reception Stations. In Lajas Blancas there is no official office of Western Union, therefore, some people operate through a network based in Panama City: migrants and refugees provide the data to a person in the city, who collects the money and sends it to the people who collect the transfers in the host communities, with the risk that this implies. These money transfer networks can charge an interest of 15% to 25%. This economic challenge is crucial, since the lack of sufficient financial resources can permanently delay or paralyze the trip, exacerbating the already complex coexistence between host communities and the population that makes up the mixed movements.¹⁰¹

Robberies and thefts are not the only protection risks on the route through the Darién. Sometimes these risks lead to disappearances and deaths. Recently, the Public Ministry located 53 bodies of people in this jungle, of which 5 correspond to boys and girls. The Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences is preparing a registry that will serve as a basis for creating biological profiles and, in this way, determining the causes of death of these people.¹⁰²

In the community of Bajo Chiquito, a town where one of the Migratory Reception Stations is located, a special prosecutor's office has been set up to investigate reports of crimes suffered by refugees and migrants. However, some humanitarian organizations have indicated that not enough information is provided for them to file a complaint. In addition, their desire to continue the trip discourages starting a process that may take time and put an end to their goal of reaching the United States and Mexico in the shortest time possible. However, the transitory nature of this flow cannot serve as a pretext for not effectively addressing this underreporting of protection risks suffered by people on the move and which are at the root of the violation of their human rights.¹⁰³

Between January and September of this year, UNICEF registered 29 complaints of sexual abuse of girls and adolescents during the journey, and it is estimated that many more women could have suffered sexual abuse.¹⁰⁴ In this sense, for two months a Panamanian legislative commission has been investigating, for the first time, a thousand reports of women and girls who have suffered sexual abuse during their journey through the Darién. In the coming months, a report on sexual abuse of women and minors in mobility will be presented to the Commission for Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs of the National Assembly to urge the authorities to investigate these crimes.¹⁰⁵

One of the great research challenges on the mixed movements through the Darién is to effectively know how many people continue their route to the United States and what percentage of the population decides to stay in Panama. The Haitian population, the one with the highest representation in migration statistics along this border, experiences challenges in communicating with the authorities and organizations present at the Migratory Reception Stations, since there are not many people who can communicate in Creole at this point. It should be noted that only 1% of the people in transit through the Darién decide to apply for refugee status.¹⁰⁶

According to Panamanian Foreign Minister Erika Mouynes, it is estimated that up to 105,000 people could cross the Darién route by the end of 2021, the highest historical figure since migratory records have been compiled. Between 2018 and 2019, 28,000 people crossed this point irregularly. Despite the agreement established between Panama and Colombia to limit the monthly transit of 650 migrants in August and 500 since September, currently some 1,000 people are crossing this border daily. The Panamanian authorities are calling for a change from a logic of immediate solutions to a comprehensive regional approach that effectively addresses the structural factors that lead to displacement.¹⁰⁷



Regional Analysis

An update on the protection crisis

CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

The situation of violence and insecurity in the countries of Northern Central America continues to be critical and has a direct influence on the dynamics of displacement in the region. **In the last 6 years, 72,000 homicides were registered and up to 600,000 people were internally displaced as a consequence of the levels of violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.**¹⁰⁸

The reduction in the incidence of certain crimes concerning citizen security has not translated into achieving a life free of violence for all citizens, regardless of their gender, age, sexual orientation, or municipality where they reside. There is still a need to implement comprehensive policies that reduce violence in all its expressions.

In the case of El Salvador, although **the registered figures of homicides have been reduced notably there is not much evidence on the factors that have led to this decrease.** The lack of transparency in access to public information also makes it difficult to carry out a rigorous exercise of monitoring and evaluating their policies. Additionally, **the number of femicides that occurred between January and August of this year (97) has increased by 15.5% compared to the same period in 2020.** Civil society organizations have denounced this rise in the number of femicides and underline the need to establish a true policy of prevention and assistance to victims. It should be remembered, that **Amnesty International has identified the country as one of the most dangerous in the world for women.** In 2016 and 2017 alone, it registered femicide rates of 16 and 12 per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively, constituting numbers above what is considered an epidemic internationally.¹⁰⁹

As is the case with the statistical evolution of El Salvador, **Honduras** It has reduced homicides in the first nine months of 2021 by 11.71% compared to the same period in 2020. However, in this same time interval **the numbers of femicides have increased by 50%. The presence of police forces and the Army has been one of the elements highlighted in political rhetoric to explain the decrease in the number of homicides. While waiting to effectively contrast this foundation, it does not seem to be a sufficient or correct institutional response to effectively address femicides.**¹¹⁰

The citizen security situation in Guatemala is not more encouraging either. The number of homicides between January and August 2021 rose 8% compared to the same period last year. The geographical location seems to be a relevant factor in the causal explanation of the homicides, since, in this same temporal sequence **the homicides that have occurred in three departments have increased drastically: in Sacatepéquez by 133%, in Guatemala by 30% and in Zacapa by 26%. The country is one of the fifteen most violent countries in the world and in the last decade alone more than 60,000 homicides have been recorded.**¹¹¹

Likewise, there is not enough evidence to assess the effectiveness of policies aimed at combating gender-based violence. However, the numbers of girls and women who have suffered gender-based violence continue to be alarming. **In 2021 alone, more than 8,100 cases of sexual violence against girls and adolescents have been registered.**¹¹²

It is expected that **the recent launch of the Criminal Justice Flowchart platform is a first step in the construction of a more transparent information system that allows monitoring and evaluating the performance of the criminal justice system in the country.**

This platform is the result of a shared effort between the highest authorities and technicians of the seven participating institutions: the Ministry of the Interior in charge of the National Civil Police (PNC) and the Penitentiary System (SP), the Public Ministry (MP), the National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF), the Institute of Public Criminal Defense (IDPP), the Institute for Assistance and Attention to Crime Victims (IAV) and the Judicial Body -OJ- and the organizations that make up the Coalition for Citizen Security. With the Flowchart Platform, the information will be stored in the “cloud” (virtual servers that protect the information and ensure its immediate accessibility). Public institutions will update their data quarterly, in an automated manner, and the calculations will be instantaneous. It will be visible to everyone who enters the page www.justiciacriminal.gt.¹¹³

On the other hand, over the course of the first nine months of 2021, 686 kidnappings have been recorded in Mexico. It is worth highlighting the increase in the figures in the month of September compared to the previous month, assuming a rise of 9.7% in the number of kidnappings and up to 51.4% in the number of victims, ranging from 107 people in August to 162 people in September. Since the beginning of the mandate of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in December 2018, 3,993 kidnappings have been registered, showing an average trend of 118 monthly, 28 weekly and 4 daily.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the impact of organized crime is much more extensive, making it unfeasible for many people to continue living in the same territory. In this sense, it has caused up to 3,719 episodes of internal displacement in the first half of 2021, with 59% concentrated in the months of March to June.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the role of organized crime groups in the incidence and magnitude of criminal violence suffered by these countries. **The recent launch of the Global Organized Crime Index contributes to generating evidence on this phenomenon. It represents the first tool that assesses the levels of organized crime and resilience to prevent criminal activities in the 193 member states of the United Nations.** It is especially worrying that close to 80% of the world's population lives in countries with high levels of crime. In relation to the countries analyzed in this Bulletin, it is worth highlighting the magnitude of organized crime in Panama, located above Guatemala and El Salvador. The country is described as a destination for human trafficking, particularly of people from Venezuela, due to the existing socioeconomic crisis. In addition, organized crime organizations lead the trafficking of people from Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, Ecuador, Pakistan, Ghana, Ethiopia, India, and Bangladesh to the United States, taking advantage of the strategic location of the Darien Gap.¹¹⁵

The following table shows the score obtained by the countries of Northern Central America, Panama, and Mexico.¹¹⁶

Country	Crime score	International, regional and sub-regional classification of criminality	Resilience score	International, regional and subregional rankings on resilience to organized crime
El Salvador	5.94	46th country in the world with the highest crime rate, 12th in Latin America and the Caribbean and 6th in Central America	3.71	145th worst country in the world in terms of resilience index, 29th in Latin America and the Caribbean and 6th in Central America
Honduras	6.98	10th country in the world with the highest crime rate, 3rd in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2nd in Central America	3.92	138th worst country in the world in terms of resilience index, 28th in Latin America and the Caribbean and 5th in Central America
Mexico	6.48	23rd country in the world with the highest crime rate, 8th in Latin America and the Caribbean and 4th in Central America	4.42	114th country in the world with the lowest resilience index, 25th in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 4th in Central America
Guatemala	7.57	4th country in the world with the highest crime rate, 2nd in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1st in Central America	4.46	112th country in the world with the lowest resilience index, 24th in Latin America and the Caribbean and 3rd in Central America
Panama	6.68	17th country in the world with the highest crime rate, 5th in Latin America and the Caribbean and 3rd in Central America	4.83	17th country in the world with the highest crime rate, 5th in Latin America and the Caribbean and 3rd in Central America

PROTECTION NEEDS

Covid-19 in the region

The analysis of the social determinants that condition effective access to health services can help clarify to what extent the vaccination results are adequate and, especially, if they can be sustained over time without causing social inequalities.

In this sense, in **El Salvador** a group of researchers conducted a survey with 18 questions to a sample of 1,275 people, revealing how the application of vaccines against Covid-19 supposes a differentiation by zones and a tendency towards the centralization of health services, especially between the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (AMSS) and the western zone of the country. **In the AMSS there was a higher proportion of people who stated that they spent less than an hour traveling to their nearest clinic or health unit. However, in the central zone, up to 12% of the people surveyed indicated that it took them between one and three hours to access health centers and 1.6% indicated that it took more than three hours.**

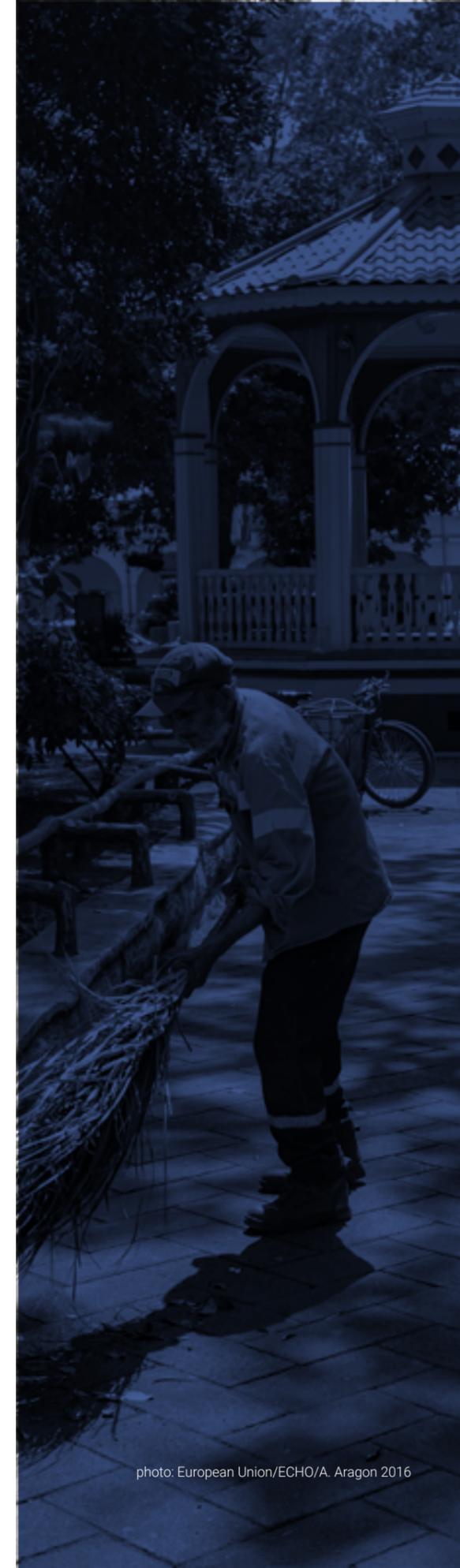
Likewise, 12.4% of the population of the paracentral area also takes between one and three hours to reach the care site. These results seem to show that people who live in areas outside the capital spend more time and resources to access health care.¹¹⁷

In **Honduras** The high number of positive cases and the overcrowding of hospitals are worrying. **Until 51.9% of deaths were recorded in metropolitan areas, specifically in the departments of Cortés and Francisco Morazán.**¹¹⁸ On the other hand, the Ministry of Health, along with the Ministry of Education, activated the seventh vaccination day from September 13 to 30, aimed at inoculating the first dose to 64,830 adolescents between 15 and 17 years of age.¹¹⁹

The epidemiological situation in **Guatemala** is alarming: 300 of the 340 municipalities in the country remain on red alert due to the increase in the number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. No municipality is on green alert and, therefore, in conditions for the reopening of activities. Additionally, **less than a quarter of the population has been vaccinated and only 12% of people are fully immunized. According to official figures, it is the Central American country with the highest number of positive cases and deaths.**¹²⁰

For its part, **Panama is the Central American country with the highest proportion of the population fully vaccinated.** 6 out of 10 people have received both doses of the vaccine. Starting September 22 **Vaccination of third doses against Covid-19 began** for moderately and severely immunosuppressed patients, people undergoing cancer treatment, people who have received an organ transplant and are taking immunosuppressive drugs, people who have had a stem cell transplant within the last 2 years or are taking immunosuppressive drugs, patients with moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency, **people who have advanced or untreated HIV infection** and people who are under active treatment with high doses of corticosteroids or other drugs that can suppress their immune response.¹²¹

Likewise, within the framework of the Project to Strengthen Capacities against the impact of the pandemic caused by Covid-19, PAHO, in collaboration with the Union of Domestic and Similar Workers (SINGRETRADS) and the Trade Union Convergence Confederation, developed the Legal advi-



ce workshop on migration and labor matters with the aim of guiding migrant domestic workers on Panamanian regulations and analyzing the main situations they face and the procedures they must carry out to regularize. **It is important to note that a significant proportion of domestic workers in Panama are migrants and refugees, and experience obstacles in accessing health and social security services due to their immigration and employment status. This training accompanies a broader process of support for the labor and migration regularization of domestic workers strongly affected by the health and economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.**¹²²

In Mexico, the authorities of the **National Migration Institute and the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS, for its acronym in Spanish) will facilitate the vaccination of migrants in a regular and irregular situation in the municipality of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, in Chiapas. According to official data so far, 99 doses against Covid-19 have been applied to 23 women and 76 men from Cuba, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Venezuela, and Haiti.** This process is being implemented through an IMSS mobile module at the immigration headquarters, where medical staff and nurses administer the doses. The vaccination will be extended to all people in the facilities of the National Migration Institute in Chiapas, including security personnel and cleaning services. In an official statement, the National Institute of Migration reiterated its commitment to respect and safeguard the rights of people in the context of mobility and the maintenance of an orderly, safe, and regular migration.¹²³

Food Security

According to the Integrated Classification of Food Security in Phases in the countries of Northern Central America, a total of 7,641,000 people were in a crisis or emergency situation of food insecurity in August 2021, representing 13% of the Salvadoran population, 31% of the Honduran population and 20% of the Guatemalan population.¹²⁴

In El Salvador, preventive measures need to be initiated. Although between July and August 2021 it was estimated that 800,000 people were in a food crisis or emergency situation, between September and February 2022 this figure will decrease to 600,000 but will rise to more than 900,000 people between March and May 2022 corresponding to the seasonal famine period.¹²⁵

The situation is especially worrying in Honduras, where, according to the World Food Program, the number of people in a situation of food insecurity has almost doubled, going from 1.8 million before the pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota, to 3.3 million today. It is considered that this figure could increase to 4.4 million at the end of 2021. In addition, more than 600,000 people are severely food insecure and 1.3% of the population suffer from chronic malnutrition. This context generates a negative impact on child development and well-being, since up to 23% of children under two years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition, and this figure rises to 48% in some departments.¹²⁶

Finally, while the number of people in a situation of crisis or acute food insecurity will decrease from 3.5 million to 2.5 million for the period September 2021 to January 2022, the number of people in a situation of minimal food insecurity and stressed will increase by 961,000 people. For the projection between September of this year and January 2022, it is considered that the cultivation of sugar, coffee, bananas, cardamom, vegetables, and fruit trees could require labor for several months. However, depending on the different departments and some products, this contracting

could be lower than expected, since some producers are still recovering from the economic impact of Covid-19 and the damage caused by tropical storms Eta and Iota.¹²⁷

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

The analysis of the figures and countries from which the deportations of people from the Northern Central America originate reflect a tendency towards the externalization of borders by the United States of America. The number of people deported from North Central America increased by 16.7% between January and September 2021 compared to the same period last year, ranging from 72,981 to 85,188. For this same period, the **deportations from the United States decreased by 62.8%, while deportations from Mexico increased by 93.9%.** It is worth noting how the deportation of children and adolescents from Mexico increased by 121.1% as opposed to the 35.3% decrease in deportations of this population profile from the United States.¹²⁸

In addition, the number of people part of mixed movements found on the southern border of the United States have reached an all-time high. The United States Border Patrol reported that in fiscal year 2021, 1,659,206 people in an irregular situation have been detained and/or expelled on the border with Mexico. 49% of this population comes, fundamentally, from Honduras and Guatemala, although there is an increase in the number of people from the Caribbean, South America, and Africa.¹²⁹

On the other hand, mixed movements, especially those made up of Haitians and people from Northern Central America, continue to rise. In Mexico alone, up to 62% of asylum applications registered between January and August 2021 correspond to Haitian and Honduran citizens. It is estimated that between 250 and 300 people from Haiti enter daily through the southern border of this country.¹³⁰ At the end of August, groups of hundreds of migrants and refugees, most of them Haitians, peacefully protested in front of the offices of the National Migration Institute in Tapachula, Chiapas state, Mexico. The situation of vulnerability of these stranded people has worsened due to the increase in processing times for asylum applications as a result of the considerable increase in the number of applications submitted to the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance. About 30,000 people were stranded at the end of August in this border region.¹³¹ The average time for the Mexican authorities to process these requests ranges between 45 and 90 days, in addition to a 10-day wait for notification. However, as a result of the restrictions by Covid-19, currently the period for these people to access a regular status can vary from 3 to 6 months. While waiting to receive this documentation, their economic resources are exhausted, and they lack documents to transit and work in the country. They demand that the authorities expedite the regularization of their stay in order to leave the city and go to another where they can work and support themselves economically or try to reach the border with the United States.¹³²

The increase in mixed movements across the borders of the United States, Mexico and Panama during 2021 prompted the organization of a ministerial meeting convened by the Panamanian authorities with the participation of the foreign ministers of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Chile to develop mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of information between countries and ensure a coordinated response to these flows.¹³³

PROTECTION RISKS OF PEOPLE IN SITUATIONS OF HUMAN MOBILITY

The continued use of the so-called Title 42 by the United States, according to a recent report by Human Rights First, represents a violation of asylum laws, an obstacle to the international protection process in the country and returns asylum seekers to contexts where their lives are in danger. From January to September 2021 **up to 7,647 kidnappings of people who had been previously removed through Title 42 have been documented.** Among those who suffered these crimes are a young Honduran woman who was raped and trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation for several months just after being returned from the United States; a Haitian couple who were prevented from seeking asylum in the United States and repeatedly suffered robberies, extortion, and threats of deportation by Mexican police; a Salvadoran family who was kidnapped and held captive for 20 days in a locked storage room, and a Honduran woman who was raped and trafficked from Mexican police to a cartel just after being expelled from the United States to Ciudad Juárez.¹³⁴ According to expert Dean Harold Koh, who recently resigned from the US State Department, the perpetration of Title 42 to immediately expel people seeking international protection is inhumane and illegal.¹³⁵ Likewise, the United Nations system and UNHCR have pointed out that Title 42 hinders individuals and families from having access to asylum procedures and the identification of their protection needs. Finally, Title 42 expulsion flights challenge already overstretched humanitarian response capacity in southern Mexico and northern Guatemala, increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission, and slow down measures being taken to share the responsibility among the countries of the region in addressing the root causes of forced displacement and migration.¹³⁶

Since the beginning of 2021, Mexican immigration authorities say they have prevented more than 19,000 asylum seekers and migrants from becoming victims of criminal organizations. Kidnappings and violent attacks against these groups are common in Mexico. In September of this year, the body of a twenty-three-year-old Honduran woman, Casta Pavón Solís, was found in Puebla. In that same month, approximately 40 Cuban, Haitian, Mexican and Venezuelan people, including children, were kidnapped, and held captive in a hotel in the city of San Luis Potosí.¹³⁷

The administrative difficulties to enter the territories on a regular basis continue to lead many migrants and refugees to take risks that can even endanger their own lives. On July 13, the National Guard and the National Migration Institute of Mexico rescued 130 Guatemalan and Honduran people, including 30 children and adolescents, who were crammed into the bed of a truck on a highway in the Municipality of Mezcalapa in the State of Chiapas.¹³⁸

On the other hand, it should be remembered that, until mid-September, approximately 22,000 refugees and migrants were stranded in Necoclí waiting to continue their route to Panama. Due to the precarious conditions of the route, diseases such as dengue, yellow fever and malaria were detected, which, together with the spread of Covid-19, represent a major public health challenge. On the other hand, a “speculative economy of migration” was installed, increasing up to four times the price of food and beverages sold to this population. This meant a weakening of their economic resources and an extension of their stay due to the impossibility of continuing to finance their trip. On the other hand, the mental health of this population was also affected, highlighting the need to articulate psychological first aid that would help alleviate this situation. Humanitarian organizations have stressed the need to implement a response to mixed movements in the region with a focus on human rights and a gender perspective.¹³⁹

In this sense, the damming of refugees and migrants in this Colombian municipality has been significantly reduced. In September, up to 1,000 people were transferred daily by boat to Capurganá, while at the end of November the daily mobilization was approximately 80-100 people. Due to the increase in the cost of tickets to travel by boat, many people exhausted their economic resources, desisting from continuing the trip. Others, on the other hand, given the danger of the Darién Gap route, have chosen to skirt the Pacific Ocean until they reach Jaqué, then Puerto Kimba and finally Metetí, where the Migratory Reception Stations are located. According to security authorities in Jaqué, the costs to move from the Ostional area to Puerto Kimba can reach \$220. The selection of this “new” route seems to be due to its less dangerous nature compared to the Darién Gap, where the flooding of the Turquesa and Chucunaque rivers, in addition to the impact of organized crime, endangers the lives of the people who make up the mixed movements in this area. Humanitarian care is one of the main challenges, since Jaqué represents one of the poorest municipalities in the province of Darién and the necessary institutional capacity to provide health services to people suffering from fever, dehydration and other ailments does not exist.¹⁴¹

The context in the Darién also does not contribute to guaranteeing the protection of people in the context of mixed movements in the region. The Public Ministry reported the discovery of 53 bodies of people in the Darién jungle between January and September 2021. However, this number could be higher if the shipwrecks that occur on the way between Necoclí and the Darién are counted. Likewise, the Committee against Enforced Disappearances of the United Nations Organization called on Panama to strengthen cooperation with other countries in the region to promote the search for disappeared migrants and refugees and investigate their disappearance in the Darién jungle and considered as positive the inclusion of forced disappearance in the Penal Code. However, the Committee expressed concern about the difficulties encountered by the Panamanian State in addressing the disappearances of people in the Darién, the mass graves located along the migratory route in the jungle, and the lack of investigation and impunity in these cases. Finally, they recommended that Panama guarantee the search for the disappeared migrants and refugees and, if their remains are found, their identification and restitution in decent conditions, as well as guaranteeing that the relatives and close friends of the disappeared persons, regardless of where they that they reside, have the effective possibility of obtaining information and participating in the investigations and search for the disappeared persons.¹⁴²

The country continues to experience a situation of profound political instability as a result of the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, the deep economic and social crisis, insecurity due to the territorial control of gangs, and the increase in the displacement of Haitians to other countries in the region. In addition, the Prime Minister of Haiti, Ariel Henry, revoked on September 27 the Provisional Electoral Council agreed between the Government and approximately 200 socio-political organizations for the peaceful governance of the Caribbean country, indefinitely postponing the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for the first days of the month of November.¹⁴³

The restoration of the constitutional order and the humanitarian and economic recovery of the country are a complex challenge for a State that barely functions. However, international actors can make a difference this time by providing humanitarian aid, supporting the country's law enforcement forces by planning operations, and investing in communities in situations of social exclusion to prevent gang recruitment in coordination with national authorities and institutions.¹⁴⁴

COVID-19

According to the latest data available on the portal Our World in Data, Until October 27, 23,773 positive cases accumulated by Covid-19 were detected and 662 people had died. 34% of these deaths were concentrated in the third quarter of 2021, despite the fact that the vaccination process began in this same time interval. Only 0.7% of the total population has received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.¹⁴⁵

In this sense, the Pan American Health Organization announced at the end of August the launch of a platform that serves to promote regional efforts to manufacture vaccines to promote better coordination between countries. It represents a consortium that will distribute the production of vaccines in all the countries of the region.¹⁴⁶ In early September, Mexico sent its third shipment of humanitarian aid to Haiti, carrying 2,000 tons of aid, including food, clothing, medical equipment, and medicine.¹⁴⁷

CURRENT SITUATION: PROTECTION NEEDS AND HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES

The situation of insecurity is exerting a notable impact on the right to access to health. The care capacity of hospitals is being reduced due to lack of fuel, limiting their services. As of October 26, it is estimated that approximately 300 boys and girls, 45 women in maternity and another 70 adults, including Covid-19 patients, are at risk of mortality, since two important hospitals in the Haitian capital could not provide care within 72 hours if they did not receive fuel immediately. UNICEF established a contract with a local supplier to supply 37,850 liters of fuel to hospitals in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area.

However, due to insecurity, the supplier finally declared that it could not transport fuel neither in the Haitian capital nor in other provinces, including the southwest of Haiti, where 12,200 people still need care after the injuries sustained during the earthquake of the past 14 of August. Likewise, despite the fact that there is fuel available at the terminals in Port-au-Prince, its transportation through the territory has become very complex, since many truck drivers do not agree to travel the roads that cross areas controlled by gangs for fear of being kidnapped along with their trucks.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, Doctors Without Borders personnel used several generators to make up for electrical failures caused by lack of fuel. The quality of medical care has been severely affected by this fact, making it difficult for staff to access health centers, where only 10% of the organization has been able to travel to their workplace.¹⁴⁹

2,246 people died in the August 14 earthquake and its impact affected 850,000 people in the departments of *South, Nippes Y Grand'Anse*. Additionally, 12,763 people were injured and 329 went missing.¹⁵⁰

Taking into consideration the growing and multiple humanitarian challenges in the country, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs launched an urgent appeal on Wednesday, August 25, to raise 187.3 million dollars to provide humanitarian aid to more than 800,000 Haitians. It is estimated that 650,000 people need humanitarian assistance, of which the appeal will focus on the 500,000 people in the most vulnerable situations. It should be recalled that, prior to the August 2021 earthquake, some 610,000 people in the Grand'Anse, Nippes and Sud departments had urgent humanitarian needs and more than half of them were in dire need. Of the 187.3 million dollars requested, some 120 million dollars will go to three items: food security, education, and emergency shelter.¹⁵¹

In the first eight months of 2021, 455 kidnappings have been registered, a figure higher than that accumulated in all of last year. Almost a third of the victims of these kidnappings are women (71) and children (37) compared to 59 women and 37 children in 2020. Most of the kidnappings take place in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and the vast majority of the victims are Haitian. This context of gang-related street violence in and around Port-au-Prince has caused more than 15,000 women and children to flee their homes. It should be noted that witnessing or having been victims of kidnappings generates a psychosocial or lasting impact. They often witness or experience humiliation, threats and, in some cases, violence. UNICEF has supported the national child protection agency to improve incident reporting and assistance to children in need of protection by reopening its toll-free telephone line that will support a Protection Brigade helpline juvenile. On the other hand, the expulsion of more than 7,600 Haitians, more than half of whom are women and children, from the United States and other countries, is estimated to put more children and children at risk. vulnerable women at risk of violence from criminal gangs if they return to their place of origin.¹⁵²

An update on the protection crisis

PROTECTION SITUATION OF HAITIANS IN MEXICO

From September 17 to 25, more than 10,500 people, the vast majority Haitians, as well as Cubans, Venezuelans, and Nicaraguans, camped for a week on the bridge that connects Del Río, in Texas, with Ciudad Acuña, in Mexico, waiting for immigration authorities to process their asylum applications. US Border Patrol agents on horseback aggressively dispersed Haitians massing at this point on the US-Mexico border. The Department of Homeland Security urged a “quick” investigation of the events and described them as “extremely worrying”.¹⁵³

US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayrkas stated that 8,000 people “voluntarily” returned to Mexico, more than 5,000 were transferred to US migrant processing centers along the border, and approximately 2,000 were deported to Haiti on 17 flights.¹⁵⁴ Mexico and the United States are not the only countries that are failing to comply with the principle of non-refoulement of Haitians who request international protection. Immigration authorities in the Bahamas and Cuba have carried out more than 1,000 irregular deportations of Haitians.

Some of these deported people may end up in Ciudad Acuña, a Mexican municipality that can become, like Tapachula, a funnel for migrants and those seeking international protection. The increase in mixed movements of Haitians to the United States could be related to the decision of the current administration to extend the deadlines for a temporary protection program known as TPS in August. Although this decision only affects Haitians who are already in US territory, it could have caused an expectation of welcome, as happened at the end of 2020 after Biden’s victory over Donald Trump.¹⁵⁵

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Children’s Fund, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a joint statement urging States not to expel Haitians without having previously assessed their protection needs. It should be remembered that most of these people come from South American countries, where they moved a decade ago due to economic prospects and are currently suffering a socio-political crisis that hinders their development prospects. They also advocate guaranteeing the fundamental human rights of this Haitian population in a situation of mobility and urge to guarantee access to asylum systems, offer protection mechanisms or legal stay agreements to guarantee effective access to regular migratory pathways. These agencies also invite the countries of the region to adopt a comprehensive regional approach to ensure that Haitians on the move in the region receive protection.¹⁵⁶



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