



Bulletin 21

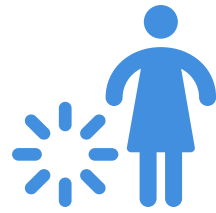
PROTECTION CRISIS IN NORTHERN CENTRAL AMERICA, PANAMA AND MEXICO

Key data from October to December 2022

This twenty-first bulletin provides an update on the protection crisis in Northern Central America, Mexico, and Panama, consolidated by monitoring indicators such as criminal violence, access barriers to rights, migration policies and protection needs. Various governmental, non-governmental and media sources were consulted, and this is the landscape they provide for the fourth quarter of 2022.

PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

10
femicides



The Observatory of Violence Against Women of the Salvadoran Women's Organization for Peace (ORMUSA, for its acronym in Spanish) reported 10 femicides between October and December 2022.

The femicides recorded in these months of 2022 represent a decrease of 66.67 per cent compared to those reported in the same period of 2021, in which there were 30 cases.

Comparison of the number of femicides between the fourth quarter of 2021 and the fourth quarter of 2022

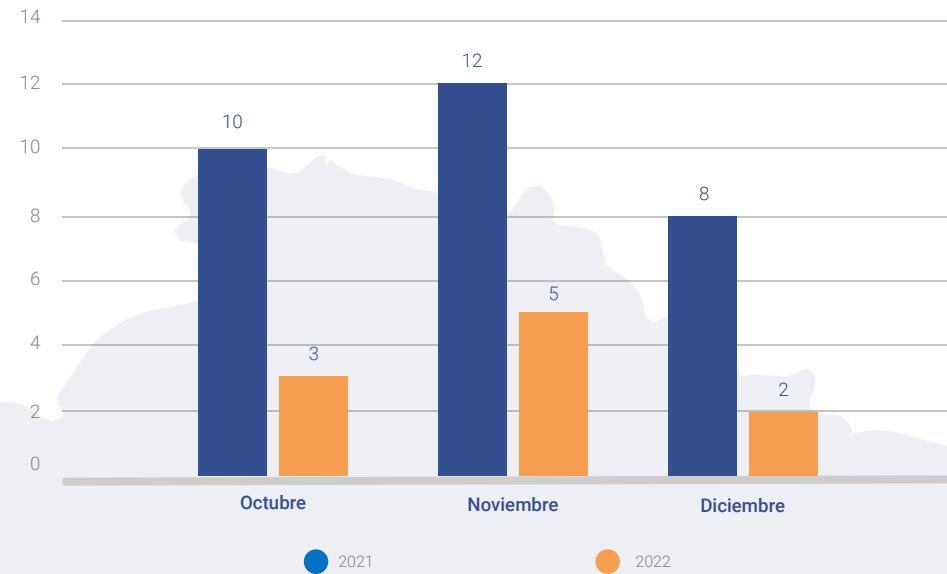


Chart prepared in-house based on data from the [Observatory of Violence Against Women](#)



27 cases of survivors from femicides attempted by their partner registered in 2022

18 cases of femicides perpetrated by their partners registered in 2022

Human rights organizations report at least 557 people missing¹ in the first five months of 2022

3
active cases of disappearances of children and adolescents

maintains "Missing Angel" Alert during the quarter of 2022.²



No recorded homicide data for the fourth quarter of 2022.

PROTECTION NEEDS

7,441

Salvadorans applied for asylum in Mexico.³

(through November 2022). In the same period of 2021, the number of asylum applications was 5,944.



557
people missing

Reported by human rights organizations in the first five months of 2022.¹



BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

12,670

Salvadorans were deported

between January and October 2022 from Mexico and the United States.⁴

The total figure for the first half of 2022 had an increase of 106.9 per cent compared to the same period of 2021, year in which in total there were 6,124.



62.5%
Men

53.4%
Boys

(of total minors)

37.5%
Women

46.6%
Girls



People deported until October 2022 are mainly from the departments of San Salvador, San Miguel, Usulután, and La Libertad.

El Salvador

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

Official homicide figures for the last quarter of 2022 are not available at the close of this bulletin. However, ORMUSA's Violence Observatory recorded 63 femicides between January and December 2022.

The 63 femicides recorded in 2022 represent a decrease of 52.27 per cent compared to the total figure of 2021, in which 132 cases were reported.

PROTECTION NEEDS

Public Health

Health authorities in El Salvador reported an increase of dengue cases in the country in 2022. The figure reaches 16,259 cases, tripling the 5,078 suspects of 2021. Fifty-seven (57) serious cases and no deaths, and 1,932 dengue hospitalizations have been reported in the first 47 epidemiological weeks of 2022. In 2020 (5,224), in 2019 (26,434).⁵

On the other hand, in mid-December the Ministry of Health reported decreases in the number of infections of covid-19, after stating that there was a six-week increase in infections. The country recorded the exit of the sixth wave of infections, but health experts insist that citizens should not lower their guard with biosecurity measures and the application of boosters.⁶

Food Security

There are no new projections or information related to the fourth quarter of 2022, other than the one launched from October 2022 to January 2023, which projects seasonal improvements in food security for households suffering from poverty in rural and urban areas, and also a slight decrease in the prices of basic grains.⁷

Attacks on journalists and human rights defenders

From January to December 15, 2022, the Association of Journalists of El Salvador (APES, for its acronym in Spanish) recorded 125 cases of violations against journalists, communicators, and the media, quantifying 151 individual violations. Data points at the State as the main violator of freedom of expression and of the press. In 24 cases the attackers were public officials and in 19 they were public security agents.⁸

Political Landscape

Within the framework of the Exception Regime implemented since March 2022, human rights organizations have reported human rights violations and abuses. In the Cristosal and Human Rights Watch investigation called "We can arrest whoever we want. Widespread human rights violations during the exception regime in El Salvador", it was revealed that, until the end of November 2022, judges had ordered the provisional detention of more than 51,000 people, applying a recent reform of the Criminal Code that expanded mandatory provisional detention. Two thousand (2,000) people, less than 4 per cent of the total detainees, had been released with alternative measures. Among the findings is also claimed that, during the exception regime, the prison population has increased from 39,000 people in March 2022 to an estimated 95,000 in November. The most recent public statistics, corresponding to December 2020, indicate that El Salvador's prison system has a capacity for 27,000 people, which is equivalent to less than a third of those detained as of November 2022.⁹

In addition, the Committee against Torture of the United Nations (UN) evaluated the human rights situation under the exception regime¹⁰. Among all the UN recommendations to the State of El Salvador, it emphasizes that the penalties are adequate, and that torture is taken as an independent crime. They insisted on the investigation of human rights violations in the 1980s and early 1990s. Regarding the rights of girls and women, the UN calls for access to means to terminate a pregnancy in the event that it is the result of rape or incest, if the woman's life is in danger or the foetus is malformed. On the issue of migration, it was recommended to follow up on cases of deaths and disappearances¹¹. In light of human rights advocacy, reducing manifestations of violence in the exercise of rights is an important step



PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

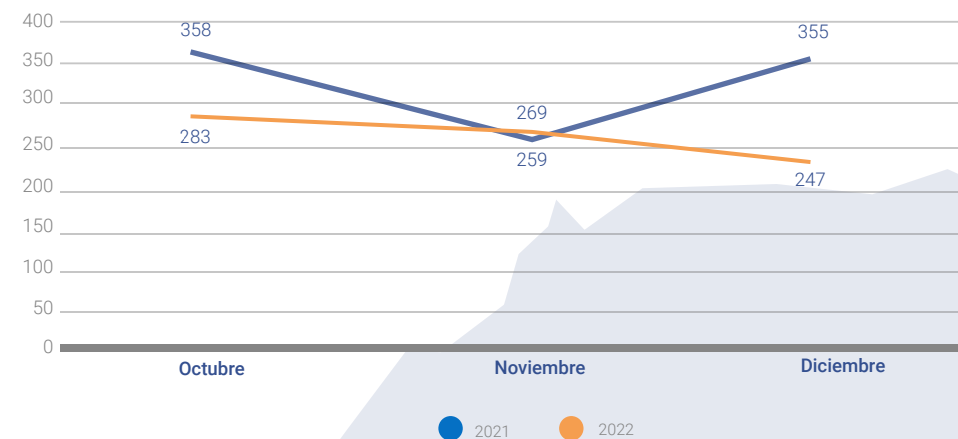
799
Homicides



homicides were registered by the Ministry of Security of the National Police in the fourth quarter of 2022, representing a **decrease of 17.08 per cent compared to the number of homicides reported in the same period of 2021 (972 cases).**¹²

Chart prepared in-house based on the data of the [Police Statistical System \(SEPOL\)](#)

Comparison: Number of homicides from October to December 2021 vs October to December 2022



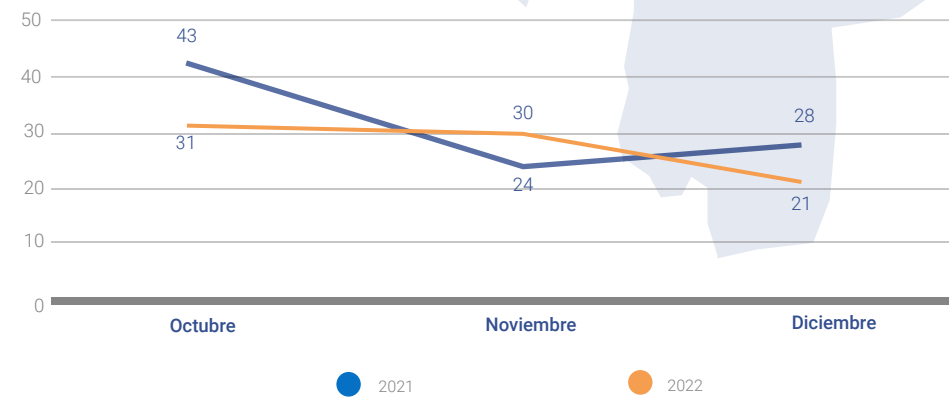
85
femicides



registered between October and December 2022, decreasing by **11.96 per cent compared to the same period in 2021 in which 95 cases were registered.**¹³

Chart prepared in-house based on the official statistics of the [Women's Rights Centre](#).

Comparative: femicides October to December 2021 vs October to December 2022



PROTECTION NEEDS



78,248
Hondurans
were
deported

number of Hondurans
deported until October 2022

The increase in cases is alarming and represents multiple needs for intersectional protection for the migrant population

62%

United States

38%

Mexico

77%

Men

23%

Women

55,5%

Boys

44,5%

Girls

(of total minors)



75,06%

more than the
same period
of the previous
year¹⁵



29,390

Hondurans applied
for asylum in Mexico
until November 2022

In the fourth quarter of 2022, Honduras remains the nationality with the most refugee applications.¹⁴

PROTECTION NEEDS

According to data from the Consular and Migratory Observatory of Honduras CONMIGHO



Between January and December 15, 2022, about 178,330 irregular migrants passed through Honduran territory from four countries: Cuba (70,789), Venezuela (54,215), Ecuador (21,408) and Haiti (10,151).



In Honduras, 94,982 men, 48,798 women, 18,906 boys and 15,794 girls have travelled to the United States from various countries. Seventy-three per cent (73 per cent) of irregular migrants entered Honduras through the municipalities of Danlí (76,517) and Trojes (54,337).



Between 2015 and November 13, 2022, 548,142 people were returned to Honduras, of which 20 per cent were registered in 2019, adding 109,185 Hondurans who were returned to the country.



Between 2013 and October 2022, there was assistance for the relatives of about 2,979 Hondurans who died abroad, that is, an average of 25 monthly, of which 2,213 (74 per cent) are men and 766 (26 per cent) women. Between January and October 2022, requests for assistance to Honduran people who died abroad totalled 258, for an average of 26 monthly or one every 21 hours.¹⁶

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES



Under pressure from international organizations and following its vote in May in the Honduran Congress, in August 2022 the Migration Amnesty was approved, the exception to fine those people in situations of irregularity who entered Honduran territory before December 1, 2022 and who have not regularized their immigration status. Until the adoption of this measure, to avoid the administrative sanction to those who could not pay it, the National Institute of Migration, applied a vulnerability study, that is, an interview of 15 questions that analysed their socioeconomic situation, the abuses suffered, the reasons why they left their country, among others. The concern was that the Amnesty Law would not be expanded. However, the expansion took place, and the Migration Amnesty came into force on December 1, 2022, and will end on June 1, 2023. This allows people in human mobility status not to pay the US\$230 offense for irregular entry into the country.¹⁷



According to the Interagency Commission Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (CICESCT, for its acronym in Spanish), 51 victims of sexual, commercial, and trafficking exploitation have been rescued this 2022 in Honduras.¹⁸

Honduras

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

The most brutal manifestation of violence is homicide, and even though it has declined in 2022, the number of homicides in Honduras remains alarming. The number of homicides accumulated until December 2022 is 3,439, which, compared to the cumulative number of cases in 2021 (3,941), represents a decrease of 12.74 per cent.

Violence against women was also a pressing problem in Honduran society. From January to December 2022, 342 cases were recorded, representing a decrease of 15.15 per cent compared to the same period in 2021 where 297 cases were reported.

One of the most serious problems of perpetuating femicide violence is that there is no continuity in the investigative process: in fact, 95 per cent of the cases of murdered women remain unpunished according to official records and feminist organizations¹⁹. Gender-based violence in relation to hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ population is also an alarming problem. According to the records, between January and December 2022, 46 members of the LGBTQ+ population have been killed²⁰.

PROTECTION NEEDS

Attacks on journalists and human rights defenders

One of the sectors with the highest incidence of helplessness and need for protection in Honduras are environmental defenders. That is, among human rights and environmental defenders there are 120 victims of attacks²¹.

In terms of attacks on communicators and journalists, gender-based violence is one of the main problems. According to interviews conducted by Diario Conexión, women are the most vulnerable and generally do not report because of impunity and the low importance given to the risks faced by women journalists in the exercise of their work. Abuses against women journalists include hate speech, disinformation campaigns and multiple forms of misogyny that threaten them exponentially.²²

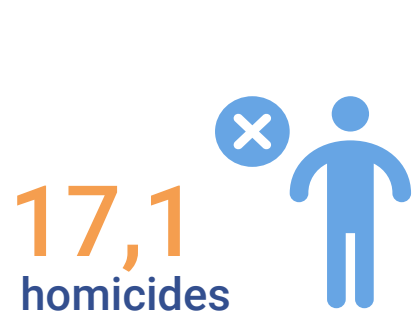
Political Landscape

Elections to the Supreme Court of Justice will be held on January 25, 2023. In October 2022, the Nominating Board, in charge of choosing the candidates, formalized the call for candidates, a process that ended on the 31st of the same month. At that time 185 professionals attended, but after the first toxicological, psychometric filter and knowledge examination, 105 applicants remained. Of the total number of applicants, only 53 were women, and the knowledge filter, in addition to leaving 57 applicants disapproved, was marked by complaints about possible fraud in the filtering of questions.

At the end of 2022, the controversy surrounding this election intensified. On December 30th, 2022, the Nominating Board reported that 61 applicants had been the subject of complaints, however, some were dismissed, and the number of people unable to access the interview phase was reduced to 54.



PERVASIVE VIOLENCE



per 100,000 inhabitants as of December 2022. It presented an increase of 4 per cent relative to the rate of December 2021.²³



from causes associated with criminal acts from January to December 2022. It showed an increase of 3.23 per cent compared to the same period of the previous year.²⁴



from January to December 2022 an increase of 9.91 per cent compared to the same period of the previous year.²⁵



of which 44 per cent were deactivated Number of activated and deactivated Alba-Keneth Alerts, January to December 2022.²⁶

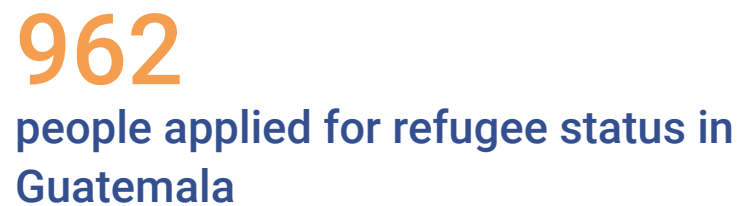


from January to December 2022. It showed a decrease of 2.56 per cent compared to the same period of the previous year. Isabel-Claudina alerts activated, January to December 2022.²⁷



carried out by the National Institute of Forensic Sciences from January to December 2022 of which 91 per cent were performed on women and girls.²⁸

PROTECTION NEEDS



from January to December 2022, 92 fewer than in 2021. Forty-nine per cent of the requests were from men, 47 per cent women and 4 per cent from the LGBTIQ+ population.²⁹



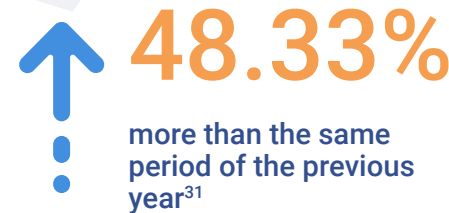
from January to December 2022. It showed an increase of 586 per cent compared to the previous year, when 37 people were recognized as refugees.³⁰

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

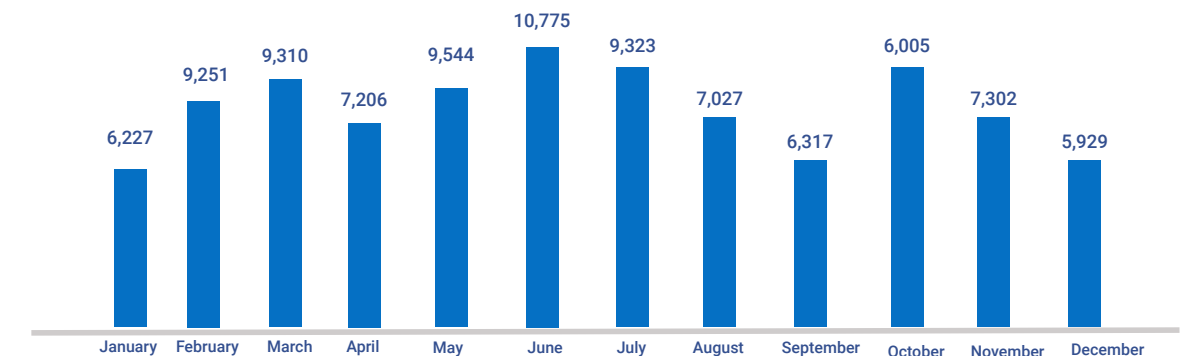


from January to December 2022

43%
United States
57%
Mexico



Deported persons, January to December 2022



Source: prepared in-house based on data from the Public Information Unit of the IGM, IGM-UIP Resolution.0053-2023

Guatemala

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

2022 closed with a rate of 17.29 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. For 2021 it was 16.30 and 2020 15.37, showing a sustained increase in violence in the country³². The National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF, for its acronym in Spanish) reported 4,327 violent deaths associated with criminal acts in December, of which 84 per cent of the victims were men and 16 per cent were women. 58 per cent were caused by firearms and 8 per cent by stab wounds.³³

In relation to violence against women, during 2022, 52,314 women filed a complaint for violence in the Public Prosecutor's Office³⁴. INACIF carried out 2,378 medical evaluations for injuries compatible with mistreatment of women, of which 27 per cent were girls and adolescents under the age of 19. It also carried out 7,456 medical examinations for sexual offences against women, 74 per cent of which were for girls and adolescents under the age of 19³⁵. In addition, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Wellbeing reported 61,801 pregnancies in girls and adolescents under 19 years of age, of which 1,910 should be considered crimes of sexual violence because they were perpetrated against girls under 14 years of age.³⁶

This year, 345 boys and girls (under the age of 19) were victims of homicide with a firearm, 34 by knife, 47 by hanging and 21 by strangulation. In addition, 1,083 medical evaluations were carried out for injuries compatible with mistreatment of children and adolescents, 18 per cent less than the previous year.³⁷

PROTECTION NEEDS

According to the Global Humanitarian Overview 2023, there are 5 million people in Guatemala with humanitarian needs. They highlight food and nutrition insecurity, natural disasters, violence, and human mobility. The year ended with approximately 4.6 million food insecure people, 1.9 million acutely malnourished. 46.5 per cent of children suffer from chronic malnutrition.³⁸

On the other hand, there has been an increase in the flows of people in a situation of mobility that transit through Guatemala that, on many occasions, enter the country irregularly. As a reference, from January to September, UNHCR and its partners provided care to 83,312 people in transit, an increase of approximately 57 per cent over 2023³⁹. On the other hand, authorities of the Guatemalan Migration Institute reported that from September to November 2022, 10,310 people were identified and expelled for entering the country illegally, of whom 65 per cent were Venezuelan, 12 per cent Ecuadorian, 6 per cent Cuban, 5 per cent Honduran and 3 per cent Haitian⁴⁰. In other sources, it was reported that from January to September 13,284 people who entered the country illegally were identified and expelled.⁴¹

This situation is due to the migration policies that have been implemented in Guatemala to curb irregular migration⁴². One of the strategies adopted by the authorities of the Guatemalan Migration Institute and the National Civil Police is the installation of checkpoints on the main routes through which people on the move travel⁴³. These actions complicate the transit of people, who are regularly forced to take more dangerous routes or hire human traffickers to transit the country⁴⁴. In addition, they are exposed to extortion by the National Civil Police.⁴⁵

Similarly, Mexican authorities are returning or expelling foreigners to Guatemalan borders⁴⁶. Faced with this situation, many remain stranded in the country, where they face difficulties in meeting their basic needs and in many cases in street condition, most of them originating from Venezuela⁴⁷.

Therefore, 90 per cent of applications for refugee status in Guatemala during 2022 were people from Honduras (308), El Salvador (263), Nicaragua (174) and Venezuela (129). It should be noted that requests from Venezuelans increased 98 per cent compared to the previous year⁴⁸.

In another issue, according to the Inter-American Press Association in its ranking on freedom of the press and expression in the Americas, Guatemala is in a category of high restriction on freedom of the press and expression occupying position 19 of 23⁴⁹. The Guatemalan Association of Journalists recorded 105 attacks on freedom of expression.⁵⁰



PERVASIVE VIOLENCE



10,841

Homicides

Registered in the fourth quarter of 2022. (2% reduction regarding the previous quarter).



247

Feminicides

Registered in the fourth quarter of 2022. (7% increase regarding the previous quarter).



2,472

extortions

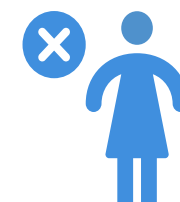
registered in the fourth quarter of 2022. (21% reduction regarding the previous quarter).



6,999

Registries for crimes against personal freedom

In the fourth quarter of 2022. (3% increase regarding the previous quarter).



23,301

Registries of sexual and gender-based violence

In the fourth quarter of 2022. (13% reduction regarding the previous quarter).

PROTECTION NEEDS

3,411

Internally displaced persons

In the fourth quarter of 2022. (348% increase regarding the previous quarter) only corresponding to July.

214

Deaths and disappearances

Of migrants in the Migration routes during the fourth quarter of 2022. (18% decrease regarding the previous quarter)

85,309

Assistances to migrants

by Beta Groups during the fourth quarter of 2022. (2% increase regarding the previous quarter).

57,384

Repatriation events of Mexican people

Where support from federal programs was accepted during the fourth quarter of 2022. (9% decrease regarding the previous quarter).

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

In the United States



631,796

Apprehensions of migrant people

In the southern border with Mexico in the fourth quarter of 2022. (9% decrease than previous quarter).

In Mexico



61,657

repatriations of Mexican people from the US in the fourth quarter of 2022. (20% reduction regarding the previous quarter)

27,979

Requests for refugee status in México

24,976

Deportations of foreigners By the Migration authority in the fourth quarter of 2022. (16% reduction regarding the previous quarter).



118,539

Presentations of foreign people to the Migration authority During the fourth quarter of 2022. (25% increase regarding the previous quarter).

In NCA



33,866

Returnees to NCA from Mexico and the US

in the fourth quarter. (20% reduction from the previous quarter).

226,667

Expulsions due to Title 42

Corresponding to 36% of general apprehensions (25% decrease regarding the previous quarter).

405,129

Withdrawal due to Title 8

Corresponding to 64% of general apprehensions (6% increase regarding the previous quarter).

Mexico

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

According to data from the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (SESNSP), October was the most violent month in Mexico reporting 2,481 intentional homicides, surpassing May which was in first place with 2,472, and recording a daily average of 80 homicides. This represents an increase of 6.5 per cent compared to September when 2,329 homicides were recorded.⁵¹ For November, the figure dropped to 2,019 homicides⁵², according to Mexico's government, making November the month with the fewest homicides in six years.⁵³ However, for December the number of intentional homicides in Mexico rebounded around 12 per cent after the considerable drop in the previous month.⁵⁴

By the end of 2022, there were 30,968 intentional homicides in Mexico, of which almost half were concentrated in only six states that, together, concentrate 49 per cent of this crime: Guanajuato (3,260), Baja California (2,728), State of Mexico (2,604), Michoacán (2,423), Jalisco (2,071) and Chihuahua (1,974). Among the most violent cities were Tijuana, Baja California (1,816), Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua (864), León, Guanajuato (616), Cajeme, Sonora (502), Celaya, Guanajuato (450) and Acapulco, Guerrero (437)⁵⁵.

For its part, Human Rights Watch notes in its 2022 Report that "human rights violations - including torture, enforced disappearances, abuses against migrants, extrajudicial executions, gender-based violence and attacks against independent journalists and human rights defenders - have continued;" emphasizing that these events often go unpunished⁵⁶. Meanwhile, between September and October, the Mexican Congress approved two reforms to the National Guard that allow the Armed Forces to take control of this previously civilian police force, confirming the progress of militarization in the country⁵⁷. Faced with this situation, the United States government has expressed concern.⁵⁸

On the other hand, according to the NGO Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH, for its acronym in Spanish), from September 29 an internal displacement event was unleashed in Chenalhó, Chiapas. According to the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Centre, it was provoked by armed attacks related to an agrarian land conflict. According to some sources, the event affected around 129 indigenous people who took refuge in camps in the municipalities of Polhó and Atzamilho. Media also mentioned 244 people displaced during the month, at least 36 girls, boys, and adolescents, and 100 burned homes, in addition to several missing and murdered people.

In October, five members of the council of Penjamillo, in the north of the state of Michoacán, were forced to move with their families after being threatened and beaten by armed people. The facts would be related to questions made by the members of the council about financial irregularities in the city council, since the aggressors indicated

that they should comply with the indications of the mayor of the municipality. Although the displaced persons reported the facts to the State Attorney General's Office, they were told that the complaint was not appropriate.

In November, the National Guard detained 16 people after a clash with organized crime groups in Jerez, Zacatecas. Organized crime groups blamed residents for reporting them to authorities and launched a series of large-caliber gun and grenade attacks against villagers, causing disappearances, deaths, and the displacement of about 496 people to the municipal main city and elsewhere in the state. According to authorities, only four people did not move.

PROTECTION NEEDS

With regard to migrants and those in need of international protection, in December, Venezuelans, Ecuadorians, Haitians and Central Americans asked the Government of Mexico and, in particular, the National Institute of Migration (INM), to allow them to leave Chiapas and continue their journey to the United States⁵⁹. A month earlier, dozens of migrants from Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba mutinied at the Siglo XXI Migration Station in Tapachula, Chiapas, to demand their release and the delivery of documents to transit through the country⁶⁰.

Likewise, people continue to travel overcrowded and in precarious conditions. In November, a group of 116 migrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti, Ecuador, and Cuba were rescued by INM agents after being abandoned inside a truck in the state of Veracruz⁶¹. In addition, at least 10 migrants drowned in Tijuana, Baja California, while trying to swim across to the United States.⁶²

In early December, at least two migrants died and 20 were injured after the cargo truck in which they were traveling overturned, also in Veracruz⁶³. Subsequently, in the middle of the same month, three migrant women died and nine others from Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua were injured in a traffic accident in the state of Coahuila⁶⁴. Even on Mexico's northern border, the risks faced by migrants and those in need of international protection do not end, facing hunger and cold as they await responses from authorities⁶⁵, or as they attempt to cross the desert or river⁶⁶.

According to media reports, as of September 2022, there were between 700 and 800 migrants who died on their way through both Mexico and the United States, making this year the deadliest according to data from the U.S. Border Patrol⁶⁷. In this context, the Border Project, led by the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, reported that it has managed to identify the remains of more than 280 people who died on their migratory journey on the border of Mexico and the United States⁶⁸.

Finally, given the restriction imposed by the United States authorities regarding the restriction of entry to people from Venezuela to its territory, about 300 of them settled in a camp on the banks of the Rio Grande, on the northern border of Mexico, waiting for



Fotografía por: NRC

An update on the protection crisis

some change in the restriction⁶⁹, while hundreds more people were stranded in bus stations, as in the case of the Central de Autobuses del Norte in Mexico City⁷⁰. Faced with this situation⁷¹ and despair,⁷² some requested support from the Mexican authorities to return to their country of origin⁷³.

On the other hand, in October, Border Patrol agents of El Paso, Texas, fired rubber bullets at Venezuelan migrants to deter a protest in which they demanded, peacefully, their entry into the United States⁷⁴. U.S. Customs and Border Protection said the agents reacted after one of them was injured.⁷⁵ However, the actions of U.S. immigration authorities have prompted at least a couple of investigations, including the confiscation of passports and documents from migrants when their rules state they must return them unless there are indications that they are fraudulent⁷⁶, as well as the subjecting of about 90 migrant women to unnecessary surgical procedures while in detention in Georgia⁷⁷.

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

In October, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced a new process for Venezuelans with sponsors in the United States to travel by air to the country and apply for a work permit. Excluding those who have received deportation orders in the last five years and those who enter the country through the border with Mexico outside a port of entry, who will be returned to Mexico under the Title 42 policy.

According to US authorities, the program will accept 24,000 Venezuelans. It is important to note that in August 2022 alone, more than 25,000 Venezuelans arrived in the United States, so human rights defenders have pointed out that the program creates limited opportunity to the detriment of those who do not have sponsors.

In November, DHS announced that TPS recipients from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Nepal, Haiti, and Sudan would retain temporary protected status (TPS) and that their documentation, including work permits, would remain in effect until June 30, 2024. They had previously stipulated that it would expire on December 31, 2022. While advocates recognized these steps as a positive step, they reiterated the need to grant permanent residency to people with TPS, some of whom have been in that status for decades⁷⁸.

Also in mid-November, a federal court granted the U.S. government a five-week period to prepare before the suspension of Title 42.⁷⁹ A couple of weeks later, the United States Supreme Court blocked the lifting of that Title⁸⁰. However, the initial announcement of suspension incentivized the flow on the southern border of Mexico⁸¹, to which the Mexican authorities reinforced their checkpoints and increased their operations⁸².

In this context, hundreds of migrants who had entered irregularly in recent weeks and remained in the city of Tapachula, announced the formation of a caravan to advance to the United States⁸³. People from the National Guard (GN) and the INM dismantled it through an operation in the central park of Tapachula, where people were invited to surrender with the promise of regularizing their migratory status⁸⁴. By December, other caravans were formed that were also dispersed by the authorities⁸⁵. One of these operations left a balance of more than 300 people under the protection of the authorities and wounded agents⁸⁶.

In the north of the country, about 1,500 migrants entered the United States through the border of El Paso, Texas in the first days of December, in what is considered one of the largest mass crossings of recent times, after reaching Ciudad Juarez in a caravan of 20 buses escorted by the GN and the Chihuahua State Police⁸⁷. In the next few days, about 7,300 migrants continued to cross and limit the capacity of shelters in El Paso⁸⁸. By the end of the year, hundreds of Nicaraguans, Honduran, Ecuadorian and Venezuelan migrants continued to be out in the open next to the wall that divides Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, from El Paso, Texas, in order for authorities to process their asylum requests.⁸⁹

Finally, due to these situations, the Texas government announced that it would deploy armoured military vehicles along its border with Mexico, as part of its plan to “repel” migrants who try to enter the United States irregularly, in addition to continuing to send hundreds of people on buses to cities in the interior of the country⁹⁰, despite criticism from the authorities who estimate the arrival of 18,000 migrants.⁹¹ This, authorities say, has left cities like Denver in a “state of emergency”⁹² and others like New York facing “an unprecedented humanitarian crisis” that is expected to surpass 100,000 people by 2023.⁹³

BALANCE DE LAS POLÍTICAS MIGRATORIAS



96,702

migrants in an irregular situation in transit through the Darien between October and December 2022⁹⁴

representing a decrease of 5.3 per cent compared to the figure for the third quarter (102,130).

Data from The National Migration Service



593

593 applications for refugee status⁹⁷

were registered between January and October 2022.

Data from The National Office for Refugee Care



248,284

284 migrants in an irregular situation passed through the Darien

representing an 85.6 per cent increase compared to the total migration flow in 2021. Eighty-three point seven (83.7) per cent of the population with human mobility in 2022 were adults and 16.3 per cent were children and adolescents.⁹⁵

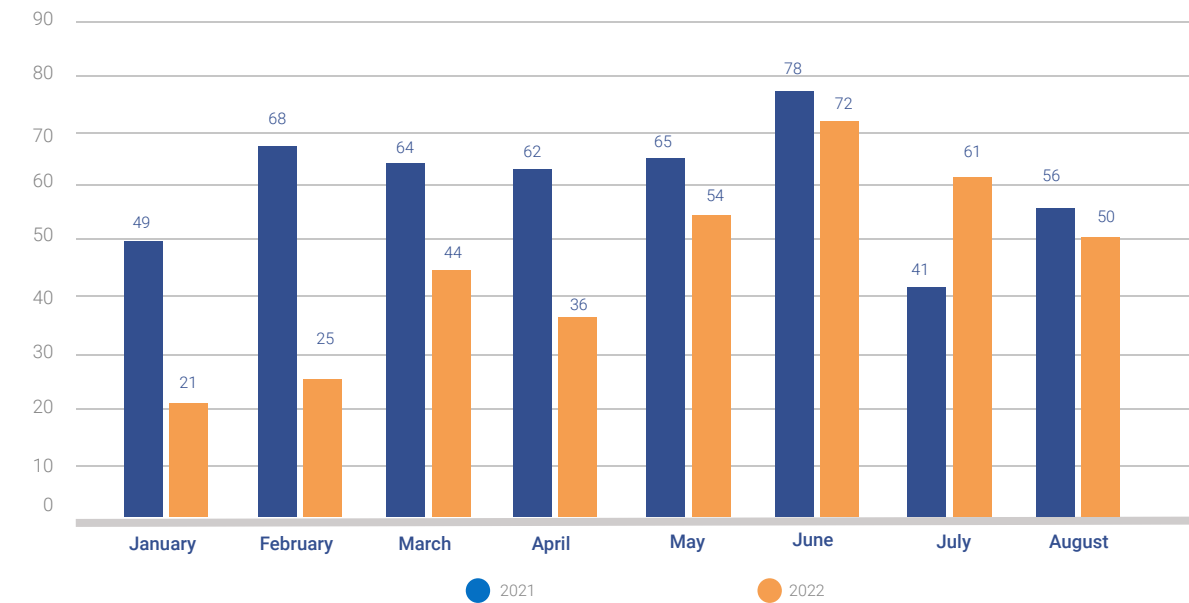
Countries of origin

Regarding nationalities, approximately 60.5 per cent were Venezuelan, 11.8 per cent Ecuadorian, 9 per cent Haitian, 2.4 per cent Cuban and 2 per cent Colombian.⁹⁶

Data from The National Migration Service

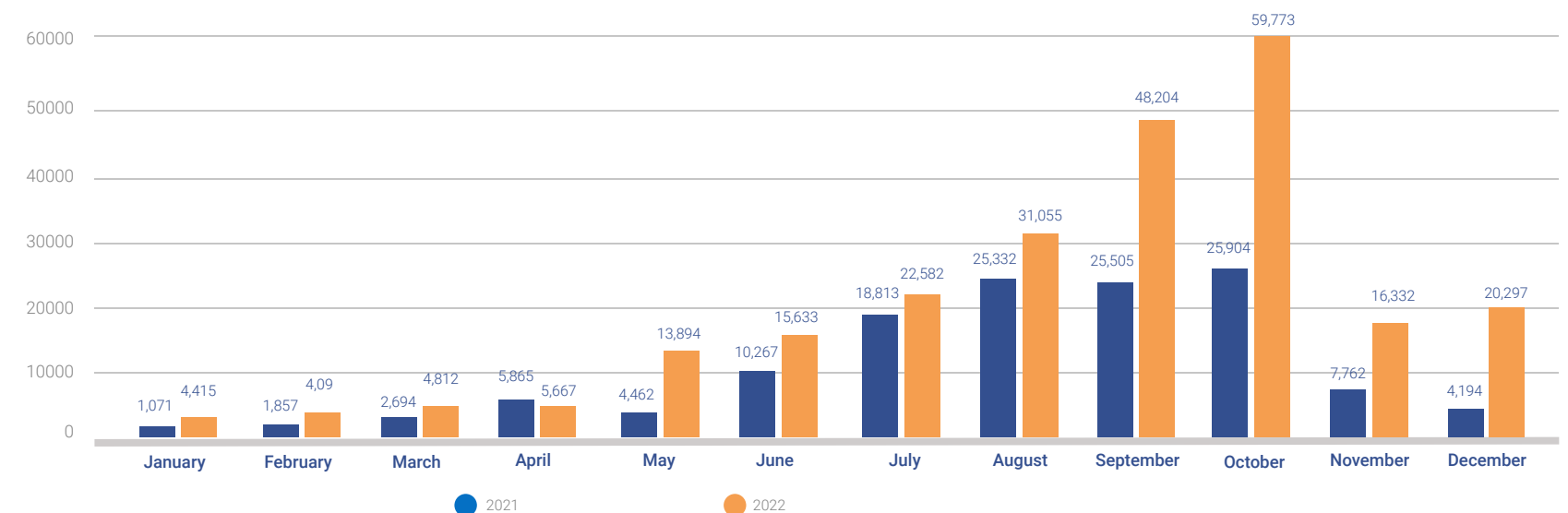
Refugee status applications - January to August 2022 Vs January to August 2021

Chart prepared in-house based on official statistics of the National Office for Refugee Care



Total population in a situation of human mobility through the Darién - January to December 2021 Vs January to December 2022

Chart prepared in-house based on official statistics of the National Migration Service



Panama

An update on the protection crisis

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

248,284 people in a situation of human mobility crossed the Darien border between January and December 2022, representing an increase of 85.6 per cent compared to the total flow recorded in 2021⁹⁸.

It should be noted that the number of Venezuelan migrants who crossed the Darien in 2022 was the highest historical amount recorded from the same country (150,327), being higher than the total migratory flow of 2021 (133,726).⁹⁹

The historical figures of migration in transit in 2022 are the result of multiple factors, including deteriorating economic and social conditions in countries of origin and throughout Latin America, coupled with levels of widespread violence, insecurity, and lack of socio-economic opportunities¹⁰⁰.

The number of migrant children and adolescents in transit through the Darien increased by 37 per cent in 2022 compared to 2021, however, their relative weight was lower than could be expected, representing 16 per cent of the total migration flow compared to 22 per cent¹⁰¹. In this regard, as part of the allocation to Panama of the Pro Tempore Presidency of the Regional Conference on Migration since December 1, senior officials of the Panamanian government reiterated their commitment to continue working and coordinating inter-institutionally to “ensure the protection of the rights of migrant children and adolescents, mainly those who have been separated from their parents during the journey through the Darien jungle¹⁰².”

Although the monthly entry of migrants of Venezuelan nationality for this border crossing was reduced by 97 per cent in December compared to October, this decrease has been mainly due to the application of the new process for Venezuelans and is not due to an improvement in their socioeconomic situation in the countries of the region where they reside.

ANALYSIS OF THE POPULATION IN A SITUATION OF HUMAN MOBILITY THROUGH THE DARIEN

Venezuelan, Ecuadorian, and Haitian nationalities are the three main ones representing migrants who made the journey through Darien during 2022. However, the migratory flows of each of them have followed different trends: the number of migrants of Venezuelan nationality increased by 105 per cent from November to December 2022. During the same period, the number of migrants of Haitian nationality increased by 18 per cent and that of migrants of Ecuadorian nationality increased by 24 per cent.

It should be noted the remarkable relevance of migration of Ecuadorian nationality. This is a novel phenomenon: only in October 2022 more Ecuadorian migrants (8,487) transited than, in the last decade, showing an increase of 227 per cent compared to September of that same year.

From 2010 to December 31, 2022, it is estimated that 30,045 Ecuadorian migrants passed through the Darien. Ninety-eight (98) per cent of this migratory flow was concentrated in 2022.

According to some press releases, Ecuadorian migrants take buses in Ipiales, Colombia, on the border with Ecuador, which lead them to the municipality of Necoclí, in the department of Antioquia, from where they take boats to cross the Caribbean in the Gulf of Urabá, and then begin the dangerous adventure through the Darien jungle.¹⁰³

The establishment of visas, the lack of formal employment and the high levels of poverty, violence and insecurity could explain the increase in the flow of migrants of Ecuadorian nationality in transit through the Darien.

According to an analysis recently conducted by the *International Crisis Group*, Ecuador's proximity to major cocaine producers, its dollarized economy, its corruption-prone state institutions, and the impact of Covid-19 have made Ecuador the latest epicentre of drug trafficking and other violent crime in Latin America¹⁰⁴.

On the other hand, illicit activities linked to Mexican cartels such as Sinaloa, Los Lobos, and Los Lagartos, as well as extortion and drug trafficking also appear to be exerting a significant weight on Ecuadorians' decision to migrate¹⁰⁵. Likewise, the cost of the basic family basket in May 2022 stood at US\$735.15. However, the average monthly income of Ecuadorian households was US\$793.33. This implies a theoretical surplus for families of US\$58.19¹⁰⁶.

The implementation of visas for Ecuadorian nationals in Mexico and the United States has led them to seek new routes to reach the United States, which are longer: Ecuador, Colombia, Panama and then all of Central America. Or, perhaps, a direct flight to Honduras or El Salvador to continue north. The other route is to go through the Caribbean: Ecuador, Panama, Bahamas. Another factor that explains this increase in Ecuadorian migration in an irregular situation is, precisely, the increasing action of the networks of illicit trafficking of migrants. The latest figures provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility to BBC Mundo indicate that 43.5 per cent of migrants leave Azuay, 24.17 per cent leave Azogues, and further back is Chimborazo, with 9.06 per cent.¹⁰⁷



Regional analysis

An update on the protection crisis

PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

El Salvador recorded 496 homicides in 2022, representing a 57 per cent decrease compared to those recorded in 2021. However, the positive impact of this reduction is conditioned by the means in which it has taken place. While the 2022 homicide figure is the lowest since 2019.

Since the end of March 2022, the country has been under an exception regime that has left more than 60,800 people in detention. This exception regime has been criticized by organizations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Cristosal, who have recommended that the government end this measure, as it suspends constitutional rights, such as the defence and inviolability of telecommunications, in addition to the administrative detention that goes from three days to a maximum of 15 days. A report by these organizations indicates that during the exception regime there have been more than 90 deaths in the custody of State security forces and cases of “torture and ill-treatment”¹⁰⁸.

In Honduras, 3,435 homicides were recorded, representing a decrease of 12.8 per cent (506 fewer victims), which places 2022 with a homicide rate of 35.8 per 100,000 inhabitants, the lowest in the last decade. It should also be noted that last year ended with the lowest rate of violent deaths of women per 100,000 inhabitants in the 2013-2022 period. Perhaps the most positive news is the increase in the number of homicides under investigation, since 2022 ended with 40 per cent of homicides under investigation, assuming an increase of 17 per cent in these cases compared to 2021¹⁰⁹.

In contrast, in Guatemala there were 3,004 homicides in 2022, representing an increase of 6 per cent compared to the previous year. It should be noted that up to 20.6 per cent of these homicides were concentrated in the capital of Guatemala. However, up to nine municipalities located in rural areas and with a population of less than 100,000 inhabitants reduced their homicide rate. There has also been an increase in the number of violent deaths of women.¹¹⁰

Finally, in 2022, 31,936 victims were registered in Mexico nationwide, a figure 7 per cent lower than the same period in 2021 (+0.2 per cent for female victims and -8 per cent for male victims). A daily average of 87 intentional homicides and femicides occurred and more than 2,000 monthly homicides and femicides continued to be recorded since 2016. The impact of extortion should also be highlighted. There were 11,038 victims nationwide in 2022, 17 per cent more compared to 2021. Specifically, the expression of this crime in the state of Mexico that concentrated 40 per cent of the total victims reported in the country (with 4,411) is worrying. Eight municipalities of this entity are among the 10 that nationwide have more research folders. In addition, 276,071 investigations for family and gender-based violence were initiated in 2022 at the national level, presenting an increase of 7 per cent compared to 2021.¹¹¹

PROTECTION NEEDS

Inflation levels in El Salvador and Honduras increased in 2022 and are expected to remain at high levels until January 2023, limiting the purchasing power and access to food of poorer households not yet recovering from the economic and climatic adverse events of recent years. It is also expected that fuel, service, and food prices will remain high, despite government subsidies. In the case of basic grain prices, white corn prices are expected to remain high in the two countries until January 2023, with values up to 71 per cent above the average of the last five years. Likewise, red bean prices in the two countries are projected to be high throughout the perspective, reaching up to 77 per cent above average¹¹².

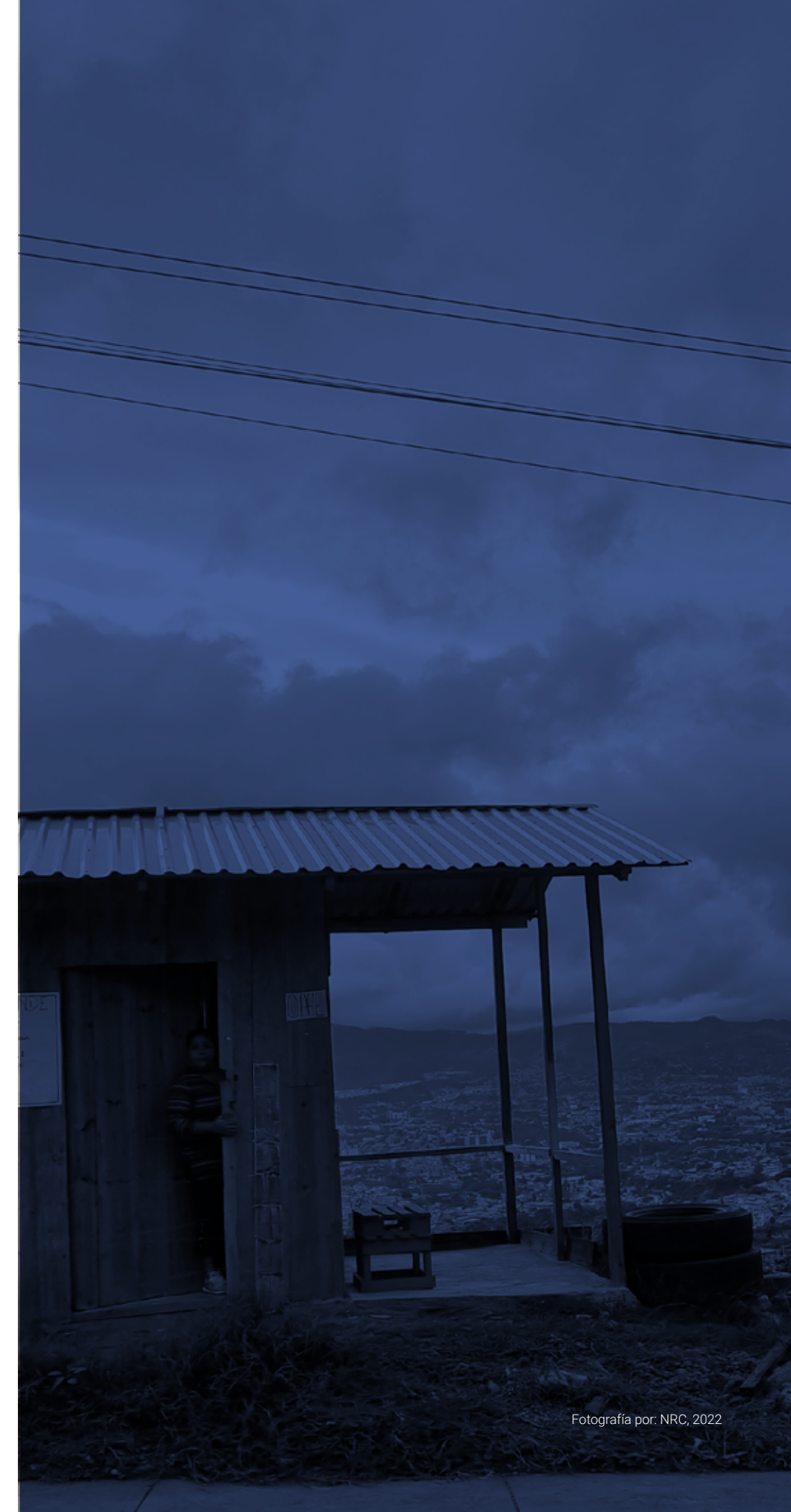
For its part, in Guatemala the damage caused by storm Julia in October 2022 continues to impact the country. Although the seasonal improvement in incomes has allowed households to reclassify under stress (Phase 2, CIF), allowing to improve household reserves and incomes to facilitate better access to food, high food prices and transport reduce the purchasing power of households so they will remain under stress (Phase 2, CIF) until January 2023. Starting in February, as sources of temporary employment decrease, the proportion of households that will need to step up the use of negative coping strategies to meet their food needs will increase.¹¹³

BALANCE OF MIGRATION POLICIES

Deportations from the United States and Mexico

197,216 people were deported to the countries of Northern Central America between January and December 2022, representing an increase of 57.4 per cent compared to the same period last year. Regarding the socio-demographic characterization of this deported population, 82 per cent were adults and 18 per cent were children and adolescents. Within the adult population, 74.5 per cent were men and 26.5 per cent were women. Among the population under the age of 18, 58 per cent were boys and 42 per cent were girls.¹¹⁴

In addition, 54 per cent of the population was deported from Mexico and 46 per cent from the United States. The largest percentage increase in the deported population compared to the same time interval in 2021 has been experienced by El Salvador with 70.2 per cent, followed by Honduras (67.2 per cent) and Guatemala (47.6 per cent).¹¹⁵



Title 42

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a five-judge versus four-judge decision, agreed to a request from prosecutors in 19 states to freeze the suspension of Title 42 while the case is decided in lower court. This court ruling accepts, at least temporarily, a petition from 19 states that alleged they would be overwhelmed by the arrival of migrants if the so-called Title 42 rule were lifted, and the border opened.¹¹⁶

The application of this measure is immediate, it does not allow legal recourse and does not contemplate the automatic return to the country of origin of migrants. Only a few exceptions are provided for certain nationalities (such as Ukrainians since the conflict began in their country), or for unaccompanied minors. Activists and human rights experts have called the move a violation of international law by preventing a potential asylum seeker from applying. According to these organizations, the current asylum system only allows migrants as an option to cross the border irregularly and take increasing risks to reach the United States through jungles, deserts, and rivers where they put their lives at risk.¹¹⁷

According to the official announcement, the program will allow the entry of a total of 30,000 migrants on a monthly basis between the four countries. In addition, it will be combined with a monthly expulsion to Mexico of 30,000 migrants from these countries who try to cross the border irregularly. The requirements that must be met to qualify for this program are to have a financial sponsor in the United States who can financially support the eligible person and pass the security requirements if approved. After that, you will be able to travel to the United States by plane and live and work legally in the country for two years. According to U.S. government officials, the program launched for migrants of Venezuelan nationality in October 2022 reduced the number of Venezuelans who arrived at the border by 90 per cent.¹¹⁸ As of December 2022, according to official data, only 24,000 people of Venezuelan nationality had benefited from this program. Only in December 2022, 8,166 migrants of Venezuelan nationality entered irregularly through the southern border.¹¹⁹

Requirements to qualify for the New Immigration Control Process for Venezuelans, Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans

1. Have a sponsor in the United States to provide financial and other support.
2. Approve rigorous national security and public safety biometric and biographic checks and screenings.
3. Complete vaccination and other public health requirements.

* Venezuelans approved through this process will be authorized, on a case-by-case basis, to travel to the United States by air directly to an inland port of entry, thereby relieving pressure at the border. Once in the United States, they will be eligible to apply for employment authorization.

Individuals will not be eligible if they:

- Were deported from the United States in the last five years.
- Have crossed without authorization through ports of entry after the date of this announcement (October 12, 2022).
- Have entered Mexico or Panama irregularly after October 12, 2022, or are permanent residents or dual citizens of any country other than Venezuela, or currently have refugee status in any other country.
- Have not completed vaccinations and other public health requirements.

Asylum applications in Mexico

According to official figures available until November last year, it is estimated that 111,257 people requested refugee status in Mexico in 2022. The main nationalities of asylum seekers are Honduran (26.4 per cent), Cuban (15.7 per cent), Haitian (14 per cent), Venezuelan (12 per cent), Nicaraguan (8 per cent), Salvadoran (6.7 per cent), Guatemalan (4.5 per cent) and Brazilian (2 per cent).¹²⁰

Risks to the protection of persons in situations of human mobility

According to the Missing Migrants Project of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 41 migrants disappeared and died in the Darien in 2022. Since this project collected data in 2014, 207 disappearances and deaths of migrants have been recorded at this border crossing. It should be noted that in 2021 there was the highest number of disappearances and deaths of migrant minors since the project began.¹²¹

Recently the director of the Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (IMELCF, for its acronym in Spanish) of Panama, Vicente Pachar, warned about the critical situation of the morgue of the province of Darien, located in La Palma, in which 62 bodies of migrants who have died during the crossing through the Darien jungle have been received. Most of the bodies are unidentified, as they were located on the routes used by the migrants and did not carry documentation.¹²²

IMELCF is working with the International Committee of the Red Cross to build a humanitarian cemetery to bury migrants who die during the crossing of the Darien jungle. In addition, this institution is also working on the creation of a DNA bank of migrants to identify the bodies that have been located in the jungle and whose relatives want to know their whereabouts.¹²³



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