Mixed Movements Darien and Chiriquí

OCTOBER 2024

Key Figures

286,210
People crossed the Darien Jungle as of October 2024.

22,914
People in October.

47 per cent
Of those interviewed by UNHCR and UNICEF left their country due to threats, attacks or generalized violence.

Context

As of October, the number of people crossing the Darien jungle decreased by over 170,000 compared to the same period in 2023, maintaining a 36 per cent reduction rate.

The Government issued Executive Decree No.194 of 25 October, outlining penalties for foreigners who enter the country bypassing immigration control points. This decree adds to measures to curb irregular entries. Since 2008, regulations have included fines ranging from USD 1,000 to USD 5,000 for migratory violations not covered under the Migration Decree's specific provisions. These fines now apply to those violating land, air, or maritime control points. Individuals must pay them before leaving the territory; otherwise, they will be deported. For those entering irregularly through Darien, penalties are set at USD 300 for the first offense, USD 600 for the second, USD 900 for the third, and USD 1,000 for subsequent offenses.

The US has allocated USD 1,140,846 to support Panama's repatriation plan as part of its joint Memorandum of Understanding. By the end of October, the Government had conducted 23 repatriation flights and expelled or deported approximately 900 people, primarily those with criminal records.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has re-launched its operation in Darien.

UNHCR's response

UNHCR supports the Government's response at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRMs in its Spanish acronym) and to host communities in Darien and Chiriquí. With the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNHCR offers legal support to people with international protection needs and refers individuals requiring specialized assistance to relevant institutions. UNHCR and NRC also provide information on the asylum system in Panama and assist with refugee status applications. Through HIAS, UNHCR provides Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and provides people in transit with information on the risks of the route through informative sessions. Through the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), UNHCR delivers primary health care to refugees and migrants at the Government's ETRMs.

The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) Director General visited Darien to assess the mixed movements and further coordinate the humanitarian response. For more information on UNHCR's work in Panama, click here.

Key achievements

5,251
people informed about the risks of the journey

3,497
people received counselling and information on asylum

835
people assisted with primary health care

119
Mosquito nets, blankets, tarps, and sleeping mats distributed to the government and host communities

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UNHCR's initiatives in Darien and Chiriquí

UNHCR, the University of Panama in Darien, and the Ministry of Environment visited Bajo Chiquito to identify suitable terrain in the community for establishing a nursery garden, a facility to process organic waste, and a location to place a solid waste compaction machine. The mission was part of the efforts to further develop UNHCR's innovation project on waste management.

As part of its communication with communities strategy, UNHCR interviewed 60 refugees and migrants at the ETRM Lajas Blancas to identify their information needs and the most relevant communication channels for decision-making before crossing the Darien jungle.

UNHCR accompanied a United States mission to Darien, which included representatives from the Homeland Security Department (DHS) and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) to monitor protection interventions.

In Chiriquí, UNHCR and NRC monitored the Rio Sereno border area to identify people in need of international protection, including those at risk of statelessness. The Agency trained 25 National Border Service (SENAFRONT) officials on international protection and UNHCR's mandate.

Other achievements

UNHCR's Help Page registered 9,273 visits in October. For more information on international protection and asylum, please contact us by scanning our QR.

UNHCR with UNICEF, interviewed 572 refugees and migrants during its monthly mixed movements monitoring exercise in Darien and Chiriquí.

UNHCR, through HIAS, assisted 65 people with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) related to traumatic experiences crossing the jungle.

Confía en el Tucán released 10 new social media posts. In October, the campaign reached 2,982,639 visualizations on TikTok and Facebook, with 221,190 engagements.

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