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La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados



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## Internal Displacement

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) was the agency historically first called upon by the General Assembly and ECOSOC to protect and assist [internally displaced people](#) in 1971. Since then, it is UNHCR's role to support and complement the efforts of states, who hold the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting the displaced within their borders. In Mexico, **UNHCR has been working since 2019** at the request of the authorities to provide technical assistance and strengthen existing prevention and response mechanisms to protect internally displaced people. In addition, the governments of Chiapas, Guerrero and Michoacán, to name only a few, have also requested the UN Refugee Agency's support to enhance protection for internally displaced people.

### Who is an internally displaced person?

According to the [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), internally displaced people are:

- **Individuals or groups of people who have been forced to flee their homes** as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters, and **who have not crossed any internationally recognized state borders**.

Internal displacement can cause multiple violations of human rights. Often displaced people face concrete legal or factual barriers that prevent them from accessing their rights.

### Lines of Work of UNHCR



Capacity-building and technical support to develop laws and public policies



Technical support to provide protection during emergencies and mass internal displacement events



Promotion of a coordinated response



Information management and methodologies for data production on internal displacement



Support to facilitate durable solutions for internally displaced people



Actions for community-based protection and the effective participation of internally displaced people

## Internal Displacement in Mexico

The national census counted more than **262,400 individuals displaced** between 2015 and 2020 because of public insecurity and violence, but this number is widely recognized as an underestimate of the true magnitude of internal displacement in the country. More recently, the [National Victimization Survey \(ENVIPE\)](#) conducted by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) estimated that over **320,000 households** changed homes in 2023 alone as a means of protecting themselves from crime, an increase of over **40 per cent** compared to the annual average of preceding years, underscoring the growing impact of crime and insecurity on human mobility within the country.

### Legislation

**At the national level**, a general law on internal displacement has been pending Senate approval since 2020. **At the state level**, there are four laws in Chiapas, Guerrero, Sinaloa, and Zacatecas. Additionally, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Sinaloa, and Sonora have criminalized arbitrary displacement. There are also coordination platforms in Chiapas, Chihuahua, Michoacán, and Sinaloa.



## Responses for the protection of internally displaced people



**At the federal level**, in collaboration with the Migration Policy, Registration, and Identity Unit, UNHCR worked on a guide for registering internally displaced people to aid in their identification and case management. Additionally, a legal and public policy analysis was conducted at the federal level while a specific general law is being approved. With the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNHCR coordinated the development of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation's [Manual on Internal Displacement](#) to provide protection tools. In 2023 alone, UNHCR provided technical assistance to develop over **20 instruments** in this area.

In collaboration with INEGI and the National Population Council (CONAPO), UNHCR proposed incorporating questions into the 2025 Intercensal Survey to identify internally displaced people, aiming to obtain official national data.

**At the state level**, the [Report on the Internal Displacement Characterization Exercise in Chihuahua](#) was published, the first of its kind in Mexico, with the support of over **20 stakeholders**. This tool provides key data to understand the context of internal displacement in the state and the needs of those experiencing it. In this context, INEGI conducted the country's first specific survey on internal displacement ([ECADEFI-CHIH 2021](#)).

In **Michoacán**, authorities responded within 48 hours to mass internal displacement events in Apatzingán, thanks to technical meetings organized with the Secretariat of Migration, the Apatzingán City Council, and civil society actors, with the support of UNHCR. Previously, coordination mechanisms for an immediate response had not been activated.

In **Sinaloa**, UNHCR collaborates with the Secretariat of Welfare and Sustainable Development (SEBIDES) and the Autonomous University of the West to strengthen the State Registry of Internally Displaced People. UNHCR also supported SEBIDES in developing the regulations for the internal displacement law and a care program.

The agency provided its methodology to guide the development of laws and policies on internal displacement to the authorities in **Chiapas**, enabling them to strengthen the specific law in that state and create its regulations. In **Oaxaca**, this methodology was also used to consult with internally displaced people on a proposed law in this area.

In **Guerrero**, UNHCR supported civil society with training in mental health and psychosocial support, legal guidance tools, and supplies. Additionally, it provided technical assistance to the government to develop protection measures for individuals at risk of displacement following the impact of Hurricane Otis, benefiting more than 10,000 people.

**For more information:** [UNHCR Mexico Webpage](#); [Global Focus Mexico](#); [Data Portal Mexico](#); [Global Appeal 2024](#); [Twitter](#); [UNHCR Mexico Newsletter](#).

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