Throughout October, the mixed movements in Darien shifted substantially. Authorities registered the highest number of irregular entries ever in Panama, with over 4,000 persons crossing daily. Within a period of 15 days, after the United States announced on 12 October, a new policy for Venezuelans\(^1\), these numbers decreased as low as 400 people crossing daily, one of the lowest rates in the last three months\(^2\).

Nevertheless, in October alone, almost 60,000 people entered irregularly through Darien. As of 31 October, the number of entries in 2022 amounted to 211,355\(^3\). Even though Venezuelans represent some 70 per cent (148, 285)\(^4\) of the total population on the move, the DHS announcement triggered a drastic change with the number of daily arrivals of Ecuadorians and Haitians surpassing those from Venezuela. The latest UNHCR monthly protection monitoring exercise\(^5\) evidenced that 47 per cent of those interviewed left their country of origin due to personal or family threats, as well as generalized violence, and around 36 per cent fled due to fear of violence and general insecurity in their country, reflecting a change in the trends.

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

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

**PROTECTION**

**UNHCR’s Response**

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

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

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

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1. Available at: https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/10/12/dhs-announces-new-migration-enforcement-process-venezuelans
2. Ministry of Public Security
3. National Migration Service
4. ídem
5. Available at: https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/96920
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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

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

Key Achievements

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

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