UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

BORDER REPORT CHIRIQUI-DARIEN

MARCH 2025

As of March

1,090 people received legal counselling and information on asylum

400 in border areas received core relief items, including blankets and mosquito nets.

170 government officials trained in international protection and UNHCR's mandate.

Miramar, Colon

Situation

By the end of March, the President announced a 97 per cent decrease in the number of people entering through Darien, with only 194 arrivals during the month.

In previous weeks, Mulino disclosed the phased closure of the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRMs) and noted the gradual increase in north-south movements, with over 2,000 people involved.

In contrast, news reports claim that 4,000 people in these north-south movements have arrived in the community of Miramar in Colon province, at a rate of 40 to 50 per day. This situation leads to overcrowding, as many lack the funds to cover the boat costs to Colombia.

From the 299 US deportees that arrived in February, Mulino reported that only two remained in the ETRM Lajas Blancas, while church organizations have sheltered the remaining. The media mentioned that 187 of the 299 returned to their home countries voluntarily.

The Government authorized a 30-day humanitarian permit, extendable to 90 days, for 107 people from this group. The Minister of Public Security stated that these permits allow those who did not choose voluntary return to regularize their status while awaiting acceptance by another country.

Following a habeas corpus petition related to this matter, the Court ruled it inadmissible, dismissing a request to evaluate their potential removal.

Highlights

- UNHCR, UNICEF, and RET conducted a protection monitoring exercise in the Miramar community of Colón province to analyze the situation and needs of people in the reverse flow north-south. The Agency interviewed 38 people, assessing a total of 59 family members. Most interviewed (89 per cent) were Venezuelans. Thirty-four per cent of the total left their country of origin due to attacks, threats, and general insecurity.

- In Boquerón, Chiriquí, UNHCR participated in the Ministry of Women's “Pilot Project: Communities United Against Domestic Violence” workshop to develop a campaign strategy. The session outlined activities and engaged key government focal points to improve community access to protection services. Participants included officials from the National Assembly, local councils, the Judicial branch, and the Universidad Autónoma de Chiriquí (UNACHI).

- Following the transfer of US deportees to Panama City, UNHCR and NRC held information sessions on access to the asylum system in Panama for individuals staying at the Fe y Alegría shelter and for groups of individuals approaching the organizations’ offices.

  At the request of the Government, which ensures the security and protection of these deportees, UNHCR supports with essential humanitarian assistance and interpretation services for the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR), the authority responsible for conducting refugee admissibility screenings for those claiming asylum.

Operational overview

UNHCR assists refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people, and other vulnerable groups to ensure they access protection mechanisms, fundamental rights, and life-saving services in Panama. The Agency supports the Government’s humanitarian response at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRMs) and local communities hosting refugees and asylum seekers in Darien and Chiriquí and provides technical assistance to ONPAR.

In collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNHCR provides information on the asylum system, offers legal support to people with international protection needs, refers those requiring specialized assistance to relevant institutions, and assists asylum-seekers with obtaining refugee status. Together with HIAS, UNHCR delivers mental health and psychosocial support services, information on protection rights, and access to essential services. Through the Panamanian Red Cross, UNHCR provides primary health care at ETRMs. The Agency works with Emberá-Wounaán host communities, supporting the development of shelter spaces and infrastructure, and facilitating integration programmes for community members, asylum-seekers, and refugees.

Since mid-January 2025, an increasing number of people have started moving in reverse flow from the US. In Palenque and Miramar communities in Colon province, people board small boats headed to Colombia. /©UNHCR

UNHCR met with over 350 women leaders from the Emberá-Wounaán Indigenous territory. The event aimed to promote women's role in community leadership and share protection information with local members. The Minister of Women Affairs, UN Women, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), HIAS, the Ombudsperson Office, and the Governor of the Emberá-Wounaán Comarca also attended./©UNHCR

Life saving information

Access to life-saving information is crucial for forcibly displaced people, helping them make informed, safer decisions.

Confía en el Tucán and the UNHCR HELP Page counter misinformation, providing accurate and up-to-date information on the Darien dangers, how to access essential services, and international protection mechanisms in Panama.

UNHCR's Help Page registered 13,659 visits in February 2025.

UNHCR's Confía en el Tucán campaign reached 162,054 visualizations on TikTok and Facebook, with 4,029 engagements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CLICK HERE

UNHCR's Multi-Country Office in Panama is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by donors who have contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding.

Australian Aid · Belgium partner in development · in partnership with Canada · Co-funded by the European Union · german humanitarian assistance · Irish Aid An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha Department of Foreign Affairs · Kingdom of the Netherlands · KOREA Sharing Hope Sharing Future · Cooperación Española · Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC · UKaid from the British people · UNAIDS

We also thank the contribution of our private donor in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Spain.

UNHCR ACNUR La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados comité español · NATIONALE POSTCODE LOTERIJ

FOR MORE UPDATES VISIT THE DATA PORTAL **BY CLICKING HERE**

FOLLOW US ON OUR **SOCIAL MEDIA** **BY CLICKING HERE**

For more information
Margarida Loureiro, Deputy Representative at **loureirm@unhcr.org**
Benedetta Pignatti, External Relations Officer at **pignattb@unhcr.org**

For media interviews:
panpamedia@unhcr.org