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## Internal Displacement

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency has been committed to serving and protecting internally displaced people for over fifty years, a responsibility reinforced by resolutions of the General Assembly. At the request of the Mexican authorities, **UNHCR has been working since 2019 to protect internally displaced people**, providing technical assistance and strengthening the prevention and response capacities of both the government and civil society. In addition, several state governments have also requested UNHCR's support to strengthen comprehensive assistance for internally displaced people, as they bear the primary responsibility for their protection.

### 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** changed homes 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 more than **320,000 families** changed homes in 2023 alone as a means of protecting themselves from crime, an increase of more than **40 per cent** compared to the annual average of preceding years. Organizations such as the [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#) and the Human Rights Program of the Iberoamerican University estimate that between **26,000** and **28,000 people** were internally displaced in 2024 due to mass violence-related events, an increase of more than **120 per cent** compared to 2023.



## Legislation

At the **national level**, there is no comprehensive legislation on internal displacement. However, the National Development Plan (2025–2030) includes a strategy to address emerging needs, provide legal assistance, and facilitate documentation for indigenous and Afro-Mexican displaced people. **At the state level**, there are four laws in Chiapas, Guerrero, Sinaloa, and Zacatecas. Also, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Sinaloa, and Sonora have criminalized arbitrary displacement. There are also specific coordination mechanisms 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 (UPMRIP), UNHCR worked on a guide for registering internally displaced people to aid in their identification and case management. UPMRIP and UNHCR conducted a legal and public policy analysis at the federal level to activate responses while a general law is being approved. The first National Meeting on best practices and opportunities for interinstitutional coordination in addressing internal displacement in Mexico was also organized, with the participation of more than **28 federal and local institutions**. With the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNHCR coordinated the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation's [Manual on Internal Displacement](#) to provide protection tools. In 2024 alone, UNHCR provided technical assistance to develop more than **35 laws, policies and tools** 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 Profiling Exercise in Chihuahua](#) was published, the first of its kind in Mexico, with the support of more than **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 Ministry 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. This experience led to the adoption of the first municipal-level regulation for responding to internal displacement emergencies in the Americas.

In **Sinaloa**, UNHCR collaborates with the Ministry of Welfare and Sustainable Development (SEBIDES) and the Autonomous University of the West to strengthen the State Registry of Internally Displaced People. UNHCR and partner Vía Educación also support displaced and host communities to promote their meaningful participation in the search for durable solutions.

UNHCR 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 carry out more than **50 consultations** with internally displaced people to develop a legislative initiative.

In **Guerrero**, UNHCR supported civil society with capacity-building sessions on mental health and psychosocial support, legal guidance tools and supplies. Also, technical assistance was provided 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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