

# Nicaragua Situation

1 – 30 November 2019

The asylum system remains suspended in Nicaragua. Due to controls carried out by the national police and paramilitary groups, insecurity has increased when meetings of more than three people are held in public areas (universities, churches, malls, markets, parks). Government supporters are targeting priests and parishioners of the Catholic Church with escalating violence. Freedom from physical attacks and freedom of movement are in question in the streets, especially for university students, and armed robberies carried out by men on motorcycles and vans without license plates continue to increase, all of which a general environment of threat and insecurity exists. Entrepreneurs and private sector are also beginning to be singled out through political pressure.

## Key Figures

**92.745** asylum seekers from Nicaragua btw. Apr-2018 to Nov-2019, of which<sup>1</sup>:

- **67.215** asylum applications registered in North and Central America, mainly in Costa Rica (**52.731**), Panama (**7.838**) and Mexico (**3.383**)<sup>2</sup>
- **8.010** asylum applications registered in Europe, mainly in Spain (**6.760**)<sup>3</sup>
- **Approx. 17.550** persons waiting to formalize their claims in Costa Rica<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Includes registered asylum-seekers and those waiting to formalize their claim.

<sup>2</sup> Based on data provided by Governments as Nov-19.

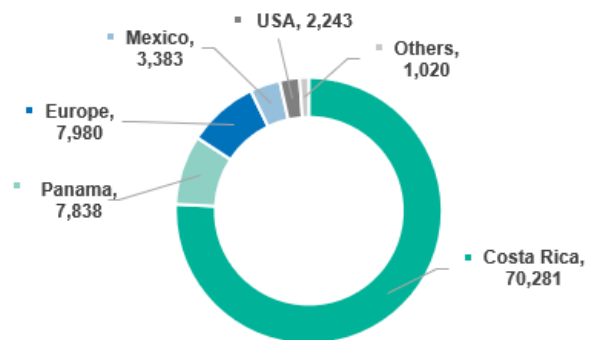
<sup>3</sup> EUROSTAT, first applications, up-to Nov-19.

<sup>4</sup> Data provided by Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería de Costa Rica.

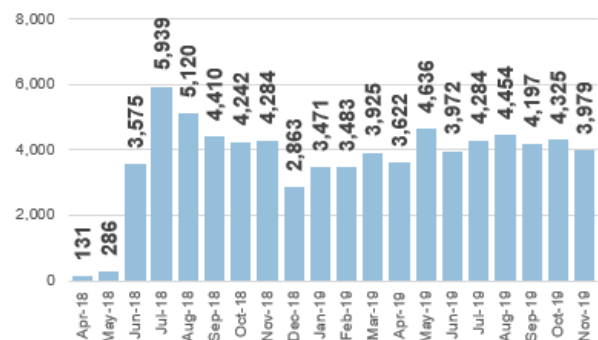
<sup>5</sup> Only includes registered asylum applications.

**825** Refugees, asylum-seekers and others of concern in Nicaragua by Jun-19, based on data provided by CEPAD (UNHCR's implementing partner).

Asylum Seekers from Nicaraguan since Apr-2018<sup>1</sup>



Evolution of Registered Asylum Applications from Nicaraguans<sup>5</sup>



Just below 4.000 new asylum applications from Nicaraguan nationals were registered in the month of November, maintaining the trend of near or above that same number of asylum seekers leaving Nicaragua each month since June. There is now a total of 92.745 Nicaraguan asylum seekers worldwide, with 67.215 in Costa Rica and around 7.800 in Panama.

In Costa Rica, during the month of November, 460 Nicaraguans were recognized as refugees, 432 rejected, and 21 determined to have manifestly unfounded claims. This 50% approval rate for first instance recognition of Nicaraguans is an unprecedented monthly high.

### UNHCR Response

- In Costa Rica, UNHCR has been engaged since October in reviewing cases at the Refugee Unit. In November, UNHCR reviewed 122 cases, with the profiles of the majority of the positive recommendations found on the basis of political opinion as students or other persons who had participated in protests.
- In Panama, according to the Protection Monitoring tool applied by ONPAR with UNHCR support, some asylum seekers have mentioned that they had to move from Costa Rica to Panama fearing persecution from their persecuting agent. UNHCR and partners provided guidance and assistance to 466 asylum seekers and refugees in different areas such as: humanitarian assistance (135), shelter (26), psychological care (102), local integration (37) and legal advice (166).
- In Mexico, up to mid of November 2019, a total of 1,456 Nicaraguans benefitted from Multi-Purpose Cash Grants to meet their basic needs such as: food, household and domestic products, and a contribution towards housing and utility bills, across the Mexico Operation (81 in November 2019). With the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) support, a simplified procedure has been implemented for asylum-seekers from Honduras and El Salvador, which includes a simplified interview, the presumption of inclusion and the application of the Cartagena Definition. This has increased the efficiency of the system, reducing the workload for eligibility officials by 30%. A set of profiles under the 1951 Convention will be developed for the relatively modest number of Nicaraguans who have applied for asylum in Mexico.
- UNHCR's partner in Nicaragua, the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD), continues providing humanitarian assistance. Several results achieved during the reporting period include: the enrolment of three family entrepreneurship businesses; general assistance provided to 285 people of interest including reception of documents and interviews with staff; legal support was provided to 85 people of interest to initiate or continue the regularization procedure for remaining in the country.

### Developments in main countries of asylum

- In Costa Rica, according to official information provided by the Refugee Unit, during the month of November 2019, a total of 2,948 individuals formally filed their asylum claims. These Nicaraguans asylum-seekers receive a provisional document that allows them access to general rights and services, and would be eligible to apply for a work permit in three months.
- In Panama, according to the information provided by ONPAR, during the reporting period, 331 new applications of Nicaraguans were received, 19 cases were unadmitted to the procedure and 115 cases were closed (abandoned or resigned), leaving 7,456 cases still pending. Migration authorities detained 17 Nicaraguans near the border with Costa Rica trying to leave Panama to return to their country. Some of them had overstayed their permits and others were in an irregular condition.
- In Mexico, from January till 30 November 2019, 2,152 Nicaraguans applied for asylum in Mexico, representing 3% of total asylum-claims so far this year (66,915 asylum claims in total in 2019).

### CONTACTS

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