

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Information Bulletin

Central America: Population Movement



Date of issue: 19 January 2021

Date of situation: Ongoing since October 2018

Point of contact: Gonzalo Atxaerandio: Disaster Management Coordinator - Central America and Recovery focal point: gonzalo.atxaerandio@ifrc.org
Katherine Fuentes: Migration Officer for Northern Triangle of Central America: katherine.fuentes@ifrc.org

National Societies currently involved: Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC), Honduran Red Cross Society (HRC), Mexican Red Cross (MRC), Salvadorean Red Cross (SRCS), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC).

N° of other partner organizations involved: International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), NGOs and local governments.

ARO is publishing this special report on population movement in Central America due to the high impact, flows and pre-existing dynamics in the region and the importance of reflecting the joint coordination between NSs and IFRC to meet the needs of populations affected by COVID-19 and Migration.

The situation

From October 2018 to January 2020, "caravans" have become a new modality of migration, on the basis of the hypothesis that mobilization attracts people due to the that offers security to migrants and visibility on the route where many Central American migrants have disappeared or been kidnapped, and a way to evade the high price of hiring a smuggler to aid passage to the United States border. The massive population movements continued this first month of the year, registering a massive movement of an estimate between 7,000 and 9,000 migrants that have crossed into the country since 15 January, including many families and children.

The migrant caravan is heading towards the US to escape an economy battered by the pandemic and hurricanes. They are bound towards Mexico, where the government has already deployed security forces and riot police.

Moreover, migrants have been disproportionately affected by the impact of COVID-19. Many of them have been unable to comply with the preventative measures necessary to keep them healthy and safe during the COVID-19 outbreak, due to limited access to essential services – such as health, water, sanitation and hygiene – as well as poor and unsafe living and working conditions¹.

¹ <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/press-release/red-cross-providing-services-protection-migrants-central-america-humanitarian-imperative/>

COVID-19, together with social exclusion, discrimination, violence, and climate-related disasters happening at the same time, with a magnitude rarely seen before in Central America, poses new humanitarian challenges. Eta and Iota have destroyed livelihoods across a region that was already facing an economic crisis and where the income of thousands of families had already been severely depleted due to the pandemic. People are at risk of resorting to coping strategies such as selling their animals and properties, eating less food, and abandoning their hometowns to look for new ways of generating income².

Regional Impact

- The governments of the United States and Mexico have stopped requests for asylum and refuge since March 2020 due to COVID-19, which has increased the numbers of migrant deportation from the NTCA. Following the recent Migrant Protection Protocols (MPPs), states cannot refuse to receive returned migrants, which has caused difficulties in reception countries due to the lack of epidemiological protocols to attend migrant returnees.
- The migration authorities of Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala have created a tripartite agreement to stop these population movements and provide for their safe return with the support of United Nations organizations.
- The migrants entered by pushing past around 2,000 border security forces. Many were unable to show the negative coronavirus test required to enter.
- Guatemalan immigration authorities said the caravan was heading towards Tecun Uman in southern Mexico.
- The Mexican government said it would not be allowing the entry of the migrants, and deployed 500 immigration officers to the border states of Chiapas and Tabasco.
- The humanitarian gap regarding to protection, inclusion and rights has increased for the migrant population returning to NTCA. The countries keep the traditional push factors as poverty, violence, lack of livelihood, malnutrition, natural disasters and climate change, now are exacerbating due to COVID-19, including the discrimination of the communities of origin towards people coming from outside, while increases the needs of returnees. Unaccompanied migrant children are the focus of attention regard to their vulnerabilities and urgent needs, for example psychosocial support to understand the situation of separation and the pandemic is essential.
- The reception countries are evidencing basic needs in their biosecurity processes and epidemiological protocols for the returning population, health care equipment is necessary, as well as the conditions of the isolation centers, the protection of returnees is a topic that is being left aside.

² <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/press-release/red-cross-providing-services-protection-migrants-central-america-humanitarian-imperative/>

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

National Societies Response



Honduras

Context

- The caravan that began on 13 January 2021 and concluded its call on the morning of 15 January 2021 is composed of people, who mentioned that as a result of hurricanes Eta-lota, lost their material goods, sources of employment and their cultivated land. Therefore, they were forced to close their businesses and decided to leave.
- The call was attended by approximately 6 thousand adults, unaccompanied minors, family groups and single adults. Identifying in turn vulnerable groups such as: elderly, disabled, LGBTIQ and illiterate people. Other groups have been incorporated along the route to reach a total of approximately 9,000 people.
- The route they followed on 13 January 2021 was through the north, Frontera Corinto (Honduras).
- The route of the 14 January 2021 took the unanimous decision to leave passing through the west, with the intention to reach the Frontera Florido route.

Honduran Red Cross (HRC)

- The HRC has an updated and appropriate action plan for the response of the caravan on 14 January.
- The HRC prepared to serve a maximum of 6000 people.
- Activation of 8 branches located in transit areas
- 3 ambulances available to provide pre-hospital services.
- Activation of the MICR “Migration Round-table”.
- A Humanitarian Service Point for migrants was activated at the bus station in San Pedro Sula, with a total of 13 volunteers.
- The coordination and execution of the Action Plan established for this intervention is maintained, within Movement coordination partners involved. Likewise, there is support from the Eta and Iota operation team in the country.

Results

No.	Description	Quantity
1	Calls	4
2	Pre-hospital Care	38
3	Socialization of RFL services to journalists and other organizations	16
4	Self-care messages	303
5	Need assessment analysis	1

ATENCIÓNES BRINDADAS POR LA REGIÓN 3 DE LA CRUZ ROJA HONDUREÑA ANTE LAS CARAVANAS DE MIGRANTES HONDUREÑOS



Cruz Roja Hondureña

EL 15 Y 16 DE ENERO DE 2021.

Alrededor de

6,000
personas

sallieron desde San Pedro Sula hacia la frontera "El Florido" en Copán frontera con Guatemala.



ATENCIÓNES BRINDADAS

265 Llamadas	3940 Difusión de Servicios RCF y guía AC
460 Atenciónes Pre-hospitalarias	1430 Mascarillas
768 Mensajes de autocuidado	660 Sueros Orales
10 Kits de Atención RCF para respuesta proporcionado en los consejos de ruta migratoria	4500 Unidades de agua
5 Evaluaciones de necesidades	20 Carga de Baterías
46 Voluntarios participantes en la operación	98 Servicios de Conectividad

Guatemala

Context

- On 17 January, the Government of Guatemala placed security forces on its borders (El Salvador and Honduras), which at this time has generated situations and incidents of confrontation between the migrant population and the security forces. Similarly, the government of Mexico has placed security forces in its border areas with Guatemala.
- Confrontations between migrants and the police continued.
- As of 18 January 2021, there are 3 registration posts of the Combined Security Forces on the migratory route, from Frontera El Florido to Guatemala City and then Frontera Tecún Umán.
- About 6,000 migrants are stranded in Vado Hondo, Chiquimula and it is known that they will be evicted today.

Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC)

- The Guatemalan Red Cross has an updated action plan appropriate to the response of the 14 January caravan.
- Activation of 7 branches located in places of transit of the migrant population.
- Activation of the MICR "table on migration".
- The National Society is prepared to support approximately 7000 people with 1000 services.
- The National Society has 10 Humanitarian Assistance Points for migrants along possible migration routes.
- The National Society has uploaded a GO report on the IFRC GO Platform;
<https://go.ifrc.org/emergencies/5068#details>

Services provided:



Actions

- Activation of the Communication Mechanism
- Support for the implementation of National Society action plans
- Communication coverage by IFRC staff in Honduras and in coordination with ARO
- Publication of [regional and international press release](#) in coordination with HRC, GRC and ICRC
- Publication of video bulletins ([ESP](#) - [ING](#)) and micro video testimonials on the [reasons for migration](#) and the [risks on the route](#)
- [Video and story gathering](#) along the route and at the Shelter for Returned People in Omoa, Cortés, Hond.
- Management of media inquiries and follow-up to [press publications](#)
- IFRC Regional Migration Program in GRC and HRC for humanitarian assistance allocated in close coordination with ICRC to ensure close coordination and complementation of the financial contributions.
- Movement meetings at the regional level and according to each National Society's plans.

Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

In the IFRC Americas Regional Office:

- Gonzalo Atxaerandio: Disaster Management Coordinator - Central America and Recovery focal point; phone: +507 317 3050; email: gonzalo.atxaerandio@ifrc.org
- José Felix Rodriguez, Migration, Social Inclusion and Non-Violence Coordinator; phone: +507 317 3050; email: JoseFelix.RODRIGUEZ@ifrc.org

In IFRC Geneva:

- Antoine Belair, Senior Officer, Operations Coordination; Disaster and Crisis (Prevention, Response and Recovery); email: antoine.belair@ifrc.org

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.