



CRUSHED DREAMS:

The First Impacts of the Trump Administration on Migrants

The **Red Pedro Pantoja de Casas y Centros de Derechos Humanos de Migrantes de la Zona Norte (Red Pedro Pantoja)** is a group of 26 migrant houses and human rights centers located in 19 municipalities in the six northern border states of Mexico. With 27 years of experience, the Pedro Pantoja Network seeks to work for the dignity of those who live in the context of human mobility.

The **Hope Border Institute (HOPE)** is a Catholic social teaching-based strategy center for faith leaders pursuing justice at the U.S.-Mexico border. Through a robust program of research, human rights advocacy, leadership development and humanitarian action, HOPE works to build solidarity and the common good across borders.

Derechos Humanos Integrales en Acción (DHIA) is a Ciudad Juárez-based nongovernmental organization committed to the respect, promotion and defense of the human rights of people on the move, working at the intersection of age, gender and diversity.

The **Jesuit Refugee Service Mexico (JRS MX)** is an initiative of the Society of Jesus with presence in Mexico that focuses on human mobility. Our mission is to accompany, serve and defend people in forced mobility so they can heal, learn and determine their own future as political and human agents.

The **Kino Border Initiative** is a binational, non-profit, inclusive, Roman Catholic organization rooted locally in Nogales (Arizona and Sonora, Mexico) on the United States-Mexico border. We work in the dimensions of humanitarian care, education, research and advocacy to respond to the needs of migrants and those in need of international protection with a regional perspective within Central and North America.

The **Casa del Migrante Saltillo** is a non-profit organization, founded in 2003, which promotes and defends the human rights of people on the move in the state of Coahuila (Mexico) through humanitarian, legal, psychosocial and advocacy strategies. It currently has a presence in the cities of Saltillo, Torreón, Piedras Negras and Ciudad Acuña.

The **Centro de Atención al Migrante Exodus (CAME)** is a non-profit civil society organization that assists people in contexts of human mobility in the border city of Agua Prieta, Sonora, recognizing and respecting their dignity. It provides humanitarian, educational and psychosocial services and works under the principles of solidarity, justice, equality and non-discrimination.

The **Centro para Migrantes Jesús Torres 24/7**, located in Torreón, Coahuila, is a non-governmental organization that aims to provide free assistance to migrants passing through the city. It offers humanitarian and comprehensive services, including legal and psychosocial accompaniment to a wide variety of people on the move.

The **Albergue Diocesano “Belén”** is located in Tapachula, Chiapas, on Mexico’s southern border with Guatemala. It was the first shelter in country to focus on humanitarian aid for migrants and asylum seekers.



HOPE



Kino Border Initiative
Iniciativa Kino
para la Frontera



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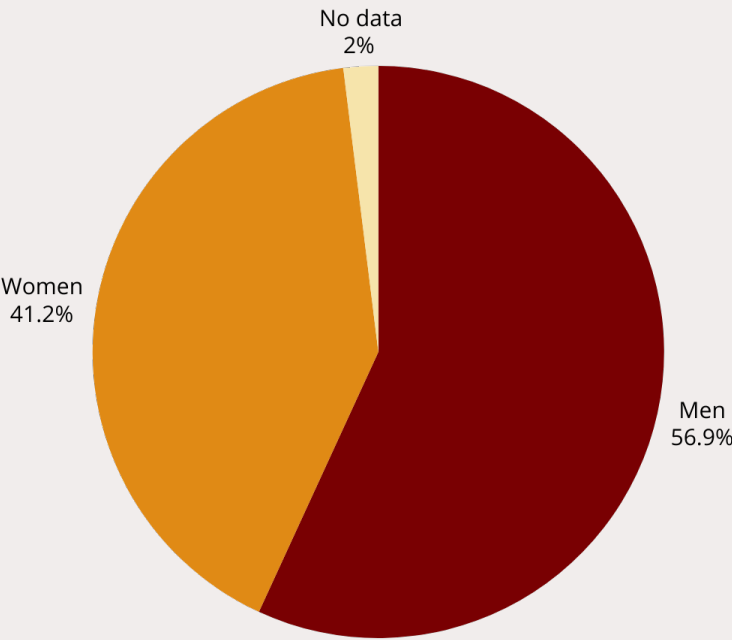
1. INTRODUCTION



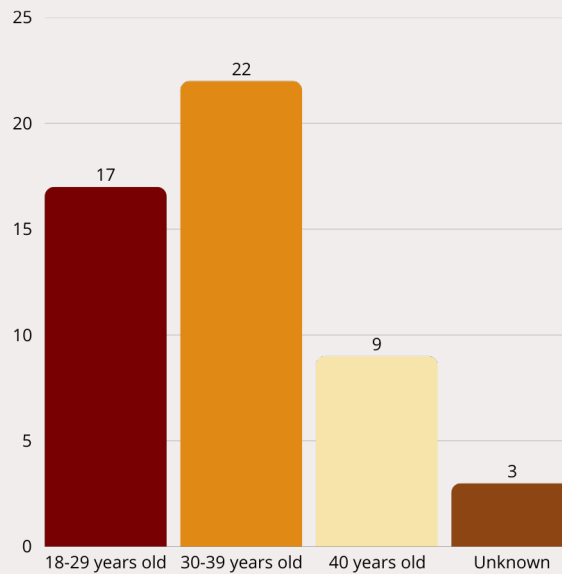
The arrival of President Donald Trump to the White House has brought multiple and rapid immigration policy changes aimed to deny access to asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border, militarizing the border and significantly expanding the number of detentions/deportations—all that crowned with a xenophobic and discriminatory narrative. At the same time, immigration enforcement pressure on Latin American countries has increased, especially for Mexico.

In this report, we document the human impact of the first five weeks of the Trump administration on the migrant population stranded, expelled or deported from the United States to Mexico. The report is based on:

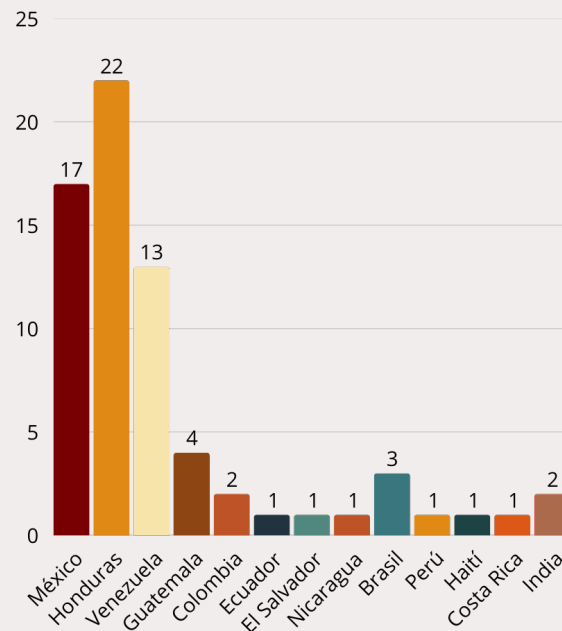
- 51 interviews with migrants along Mexico’s northern region in the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila and Sonora, as well as along Mexico’s southern border in Tapachula, documented from January 31 to March 14, 2025.
- Four focus groups with humanitarian workers and people accompanying migrants in the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sonora and Chiapas.
- Monitoring of open sources, as well as governmental documentation from Mexico and the United States.



Graphic 1. Interviewees Sex

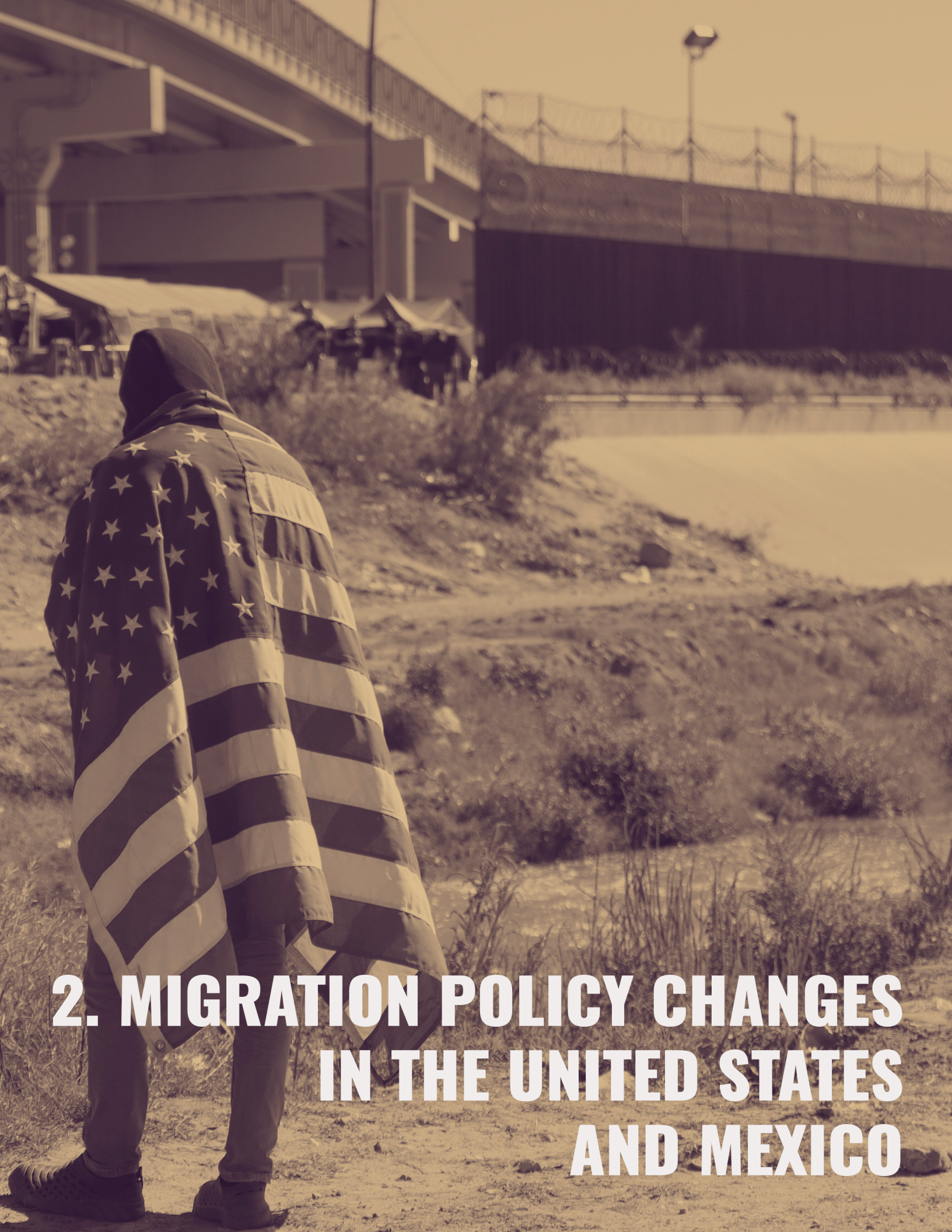


Graphic 2: Interviewees' group ages



Graphic 3. Interviewees nationalities.

In the first section, the report breaks down the changes in migration policy under the new Trump administration and the government of President Sheinbaum. Then the main impacts of these policies are presented, highlighting new trends, continuities and testimonies of impacted individuals and families. The report concludes with urgent recommendations for the United States, Mexico, international organizations and the Catholic Church so that the safety and dignity of people, especially those in need of international protection, are safeguarded.



2. MIGRATION POLICY CHANGES IN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

The new Trump administration in the United States and the Sheinbaum administration in Mexico have undertaken major immigration policy changes. The following tables collect the main policy changes at the executive branch level in each of the countries, contrasting the immigration policies at the end of President Biden’s term with the new measures implemented by President Trump until mid-March 2025, as well as the policies implemented during the six-year term of President López Obrador and the new measures announced by President Sheinbaum. Both tables focus on measures related to access to international protection, immigration enforcement (including border enforcement), deportations and returns, legal migration pathways, and strategies to combat the root causes of migration.

Please note that in the United States some of these measures have been taken to court and that the following table describes a general summary of the main policy changes implemented.

United States

Policy	Biden	Trump
Asylum at ports of entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Access through CBP One’s 1450 daily border-wide appointments.Exceptions to the use of CBP One based on urgency (very rare).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Declaration of <i>invasion</i>¹: suspension of entry and access to asylum in all parts of the border to all persons who are part of the <i>invasion</i>.
Asylum between ports of entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General presumption of ineligibility for asylum.Authority to suspend entry of persons when border encounters exceeded 2,500 for 7 consecutive days. Suspension of entry could be revoked when encounters decreased to 1,500 or fewer for 28 consecutive days (exceptions for unaccompanied minors and other cases of proven urgency).To obtain a fear screening, individuals needed to manifest fear instead of agents asking about fear to individuals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Declaration of <i>invasion</i>: suspension of entry and access to asylum in all parts of the border to all persons who are part of the <i>invasion</i>.

¹ Please note that the January 20, 2025 Proclamation “Guaranteeing the States Protection Against Invasion” does not define what is considered an invasion and defines the targeted population as “[migrants] engaged in the invasion across the southern border [of the United States].”

Border enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension of border wall construction (except for some sections in 2024 where Congress had assigned funds for wall construction under the first Trump administration, as indicated by the administration) • Deployment of cameras and other surveillance technology. • Operation Lone Star in Texas: installation of barbed wire and concertina wire along 100 miles of the Texas-Mexico border; use of force against migrant families, children and other vulnerable individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactivation of border wall construction and intention to build a wall along the entire U.S.-Mexico border. • Order to review policies regarding the use of force against migrants, “prioritizing the safety of agents”.
Deployment of the military at the border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment of about 1,500 agents for surveillance functions. • Operation Lone Star in Texas: Deployment of Texas National Guard agents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment of more than 9,000 agents by mid-March 2025 for surveillance, construction of physical barriers, and logistical support to immigration enforcement agents.
Border Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parole for individuals with CBP One appointments. • Expedited removal proceedings for individuals crossing between ports of entry. • Expedited removal proceedings for some families under the Family Expedited Removal Management Process (FERM). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedited removal proceedings for all persons crossing at and between ports of entry without U.S. government authorization. • Reinstatement of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP or “Remain in Mexico”).
Detention at the border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detention of single adults in CBP custody (sometimes longer than allowed) or ICE facilities. • If detention capacity was exceeded, usual release with a Notice to Appear or under alternatives to detention programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indefinite detention for all single adults (end of “catch and release”). • Resumption of family detention. • Detention of mostly Venezuelan nationals at the Naval Operations Center at Guantanamo Bay. • Consideration of the use of military bases for immigration detention.

Agreements to remove third-country nationals to Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement with Mexico in May 2023 to return up to 30,000 nationals from Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela (CNHV) per-month. • Informal returns of Central American nationals to Mexico. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of agreement to return nationals from Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela to Mexico. • Removal of Central American nationals to Mexico.
Agreements to remove/detain persons to third countries other than Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension of asylum cooperative agreements with El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement with El Salvador to remove and detain Venezuelan nationals. First two flights under the Alien Enemies Act with Venezuelan nationals to a high-security detention center in El Salvador on March 15, 2025. • Agreement with Guatemala to deport third-country nationals. • Agreement with Panama and Costa Rica to deport third-country nationals. Deportation of nationals from Asia, Africa and the Middle East in February 2025.
Parole programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parole programs for Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela (CNHV) nationals. Admission of approximately 530,000 people. ² • Family reunification parole program for Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Colombia nationals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of the CNHV and family reunification parole programs. • Termination of parole status for persons who entered under parole programs during the Biden administration.

² Customs and Border Protection, [CBP Releases December 2024 Monthly Update, CNHV Parole Processes](#) (January 14, 2025).

Safe migration pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of Safe Mobility Offices in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Colombia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elimination of Safe Mobility Offices. Consideration of travel bans for nationals of 43 countries, mainly from Africa and Muslim-majority countries, and also including others such as Venezuela and Cuba.
Root Causes of Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy to Address the Root Causes of Migration in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Commitment to invest \$5.2 billion from private funds or in public concert in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freezing of all foreign aid. End of the Root Causes Strategy.

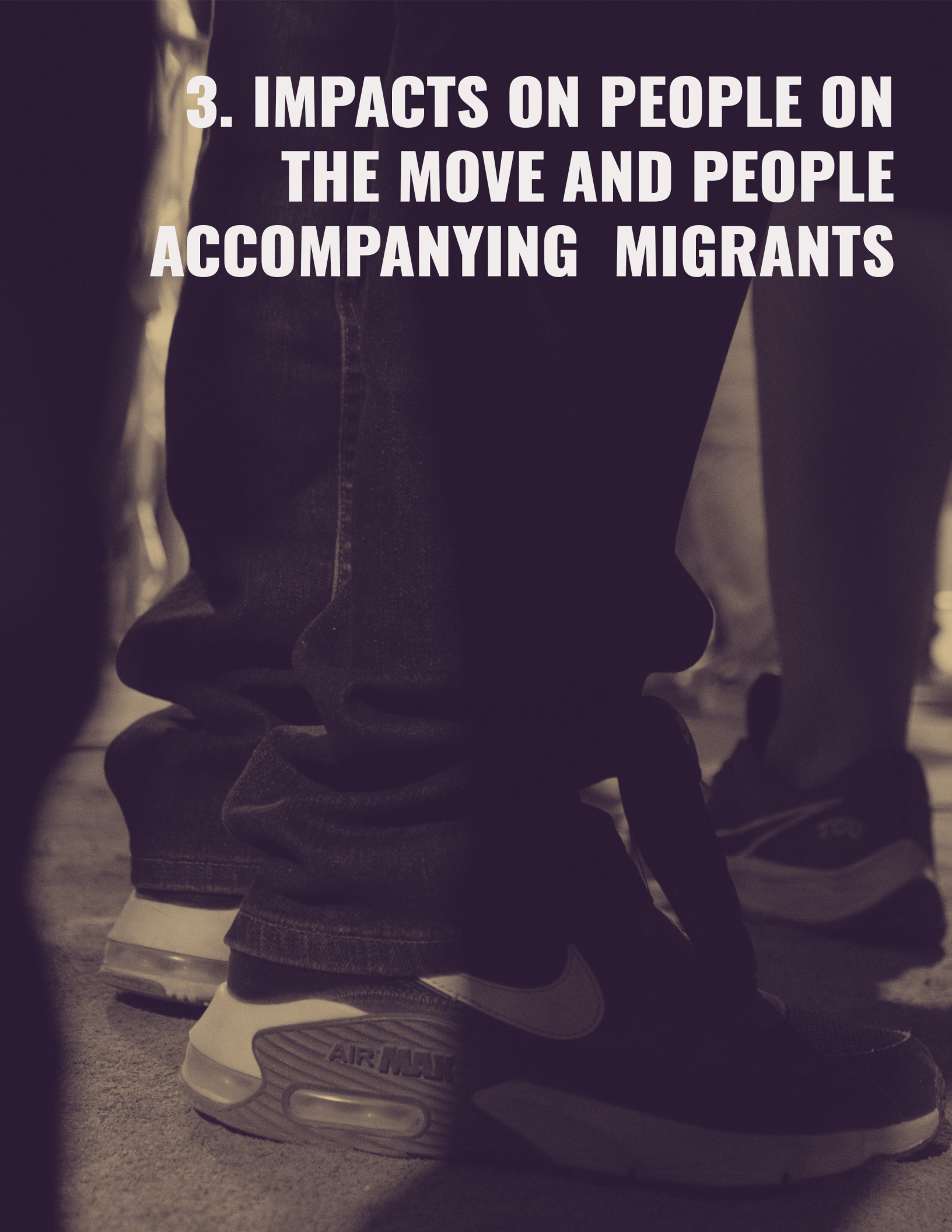
Mexico

Policy	López Obrador	Sheinbaum Pardo
Migration and refuge	<p>“New Migration Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2019: Emerging Program for the Issuance of Visitor Cards for Humanitarian Reasons (TVHR for its acronym in Spanish). In 2019, Francisco Garduño Yáñez takes over as National Migration Institute (INM for its acronym in Spanish) commissioner, with a focus on immigration enforcement. 2024: Decrease in the number of humanitarian visitor cards issued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nomination of new INM’s leadership with Sergio Salomón Céspedes. Continuity of Francisco Garduño Yáñez as commissioner of the INM until May 2025. Repatriation strategy Mexico te abraza (“Mexico embraces/hugs you”) for returned nationals, with the reception of 19,846 Mexican nationals until March 2025. Reception of 4,567 foreigners from the U.S. until March 2025.
Border enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Guard deployed for immigration control tasks at the northern and southern borders; immigration enforcement check-points and immigration detention centers. 2019: Adhesion to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated operations between federal and local authorities for the removal of migrant informal encampments on public roads in Mexico City and Chihuahua. Continuity of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of Memorandum of Understanding between the border states of Texas and Chihuahua with emphasis on security and migration.³ 	
Military Deployment at the Border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed Forces operations mirroring Texas's operations on Mexico's northern border. • Deployment of 36,000 Armed Forces agents to Mexico's southern border. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment of 10,000 National Guard agents to the northern border to stop trafficking of substances and people, in the context of the imposition of US tariffs on Mexico. • Mexican Army shoots migrants, killing six, claiming persecution by traffickers, in Chiapas.
Asylum and international protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid (COMAR, for its acronym in Spanish) reported around 452,056 refugee applications between 2018 and 2024, which delayed procedures and primarily led to the stranding of applicants in the south of the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMAR offices in Tapachula, Chiapas, and Naucalpan, State of Mexico, are overwhelmed due to an increase in refugee applications following the cancellation of CBP One. Increase in delays and waiting times.
Immigration detention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,720,412 people presented before an immigration authority between 2018 and 2024. • Secretary of National Defense (Defensa), Navy and National Guard apprehended 256,325 people, 85% of them at the southern border. • Internal relocation of migrants for administrative procedures from the northern border to the "Concentration Office"/Migratory Station in Villahermosa, Tabasco. • Maximum immigration detention time of 36 hours according to the law. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No official statistics on persons apprehended in irregular status; in January, Grupo Beta of INM reports 1,045 rounds carried out providing information/support to migrants, as well as 9,716 migrants receiving social assistance.

Agreements to accept third-country nationals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of deported, returned or expelled people under MPP, Title 42 and MPP 2.0. • Agreement to receive up to 30,000 persons a month from Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti and Venezuela. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official refusal to accept people under MPP, but reception of foreign populations for “humanitarian reasons.” • Opposition to signing a safe third country agreement with the United States.
Agreements to deport people to countries other than their own	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement between the United States and Mexico in 2023 to depressurize the country’s northern border through the return of third-country nationals to their communities of origin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception of foreign nationals for humanitarian reasons, some of them in the process of a voluntary return to their communities of origin.
Safe Migration Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergent Program for Issuance of TVHR ends in 2019. • INM gradually decreases the number of TVRH issued by 2024, obstructing their delivery. • Issuance of Border Worker and Regional Visitor Cards in southern states. • In 2019 delivery of Regional Visitor Cards to Salvadorans and Hondurans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mexican nationals can obtain official identification and access to economic resources in Mexico te abraza centers. These centers are not open to third-country nationals who have been removed from the U.S.
Root causes of migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of <i>Sembrando Vida</i> and <i>Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro</i> programs to El Salvador and Honduras. • Increased forced displacement in Chiapas, with some going to Guatemala in search of protection (south-south migration). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Law to Prevent, Attend to and Comprehensively Repair Forced Internal Displacement has been stalled in the Senate Mexico since 2020. • Proposal for G20: allocate 1% of war spending to reforestation programs; continued support to Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala with <i>Sembrando Vida</i>.

3. IMPACTS ON PEOPLE ON THE MOVE AND PEOPLE ACCOMPANYING MIGRANTS



1. End of CBP One: people with appointments detained at the border and thousands of people stranded

On January 20, after taking office, the Trump administration canceled CBP One and revoked all appointments already scheduled. In Sonora, a volunteer at a shelter described the day as “dark and cold.” People with CBP One appointments who showed up at ports of entry for processing on January 20 were unable to claim asylum and faced mixed results.

In Nogales, Arizona, 25 individuals with CBP One appointments were processed during the morning of January 20 and placed in detention. Subsequently, they were transferred to the detention center in Eloy, Arizona, with no way to follow up on each of the cases. Their whereabouts remain uncertain and there is no information on their eventual deportation or release. In contrast, in the afternoon of that date, another group of 25 individuals with CBP One appointments for January 20 showed up at the same port of entry, where US agents told them that the appointments were no longer valid and instructed them to leave.

Estimates indicate that at least 30,000 people with CBP One appointments already scheduled and more than 270,000 registered in CBP One were stranded in Mexico⁴. According to our monitoring, cases include:

- **Two families** who had traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border with appointments scheduled for January 21 and 29, respectively, learned of their cancellation on January 20, leaving them in a situation of despair and anguish.
- **Roxana***, a single mother, and her two minor daughters, one of whom has severe epileptic seizures, fled violent situations in Venezuela. During their passage through the Darien Gap, they were abused. Later, in Ciudad Hidalgo, Chiapas, they were kidnapped. While in captivity, the daughter suffered an epileptic seizure, being released and living in the streets for a month in Tapachula, Chiapas. They tried to apply for a CBP One appointment; however, the mobile application was cancelled before they had success.
- **María Elena***, a single mother, fled Venezuela, her country of origin, with her minor son. They were assaulted in Colombia and in the Darien Gap. Upon arrival in Mexico, the CBP One application no longer existed; the family was unable to seek asylum in the United States.
- In the Darien Gap, a Peruvian family was assaulted and was later kidnapped at the Guatemala-Mexico border. After these events, the family tried to get an appointment through CBP One for more than six months. After the cancellation of the application, the family has no way to access asylum in the United States and **Sofía***, now pregnant, cannot continue the journey to the north of Mexico.

4 Thomas Graham, [US asylum seekers in despair after Trump cancels CBP One app: ‘Start from zero again’](#) (January 23, 2025). The Guardian.

- A **community leader working in Agua Prieta**, Sonora, bordering Arizona, reported that some of the migrants arriving at her shelter had been trying for months to get a CBP One appointment, all without success.
- One **large family** from Honduras with at least three adults was forcibly displaced from their community due to threats and a lack of government protection. In Mexico, they were kidnapped, and, after being released, they attempted to apply for a CBP One appointment for at least three months. The mobile application was cancelled before any results were obtained.

2. “There is no asylum anymore”: Denial of access to asylum at the border, including for Mexicans

The ban on entry and asylum access at the U.S. southern border is resulting in a systematic violation of human rights. As under the Biden administration, agents stationed at border ports of entry continue to say that “there is no asylum,” “no more asylum,” “asylum is over,” or “asylum is closed,” according to testimonies of humanitarian workers who have accompanied people being deported or expelled to Mexico. Similarly, monitoring at the Douglas and Nogales ports of entry in Arizona confirms that U.S. agents, sometimes located in the middle of the bridges at ports of entry, are refusing entry to anyone who does not present a visa, eliminating the possibility of seeking asylum or international protection.

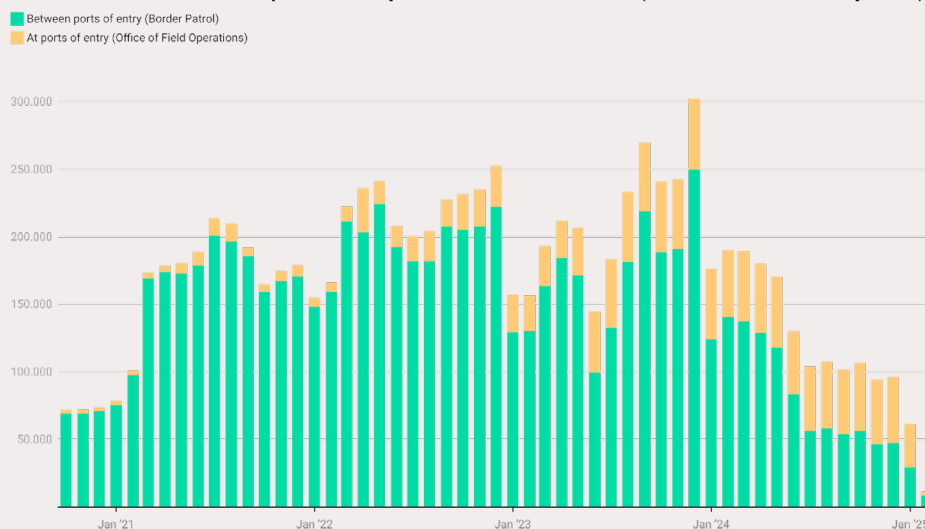
Among these people is **Enrique***, originally from Sinaloa, who is approximately 50 years old. He arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border with the intention of requesting asylum, but upon arriving at the port of entry in Nogales, Arizona, the agents of the Office of Field Operations (OFO) told him that “there was no more asylum” and that he should return to Mexico to ask Mexican immigration officials. Enrique was unable to apply for asylum and was forced to walk back to the country he was fleeing.

3. Increasing number and diversity of people stranded in Mexico, facing greater challenges

Although the number of encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border decreased during the second half of 2024 and early 2025, the elimination of the CBP One application and the suspension of asylum access have posed significant challenges for humanitarian workers, host communities in Mexico and even more for migrants, now trapped between borders.

5 Human Rights First, Hope Border Institute, Immigrant Defenders Law Center, Kino Border Initiative, Raíces, Refugees International, [*“Don’t tell me about your fear”: Elimination of longstanding safeguard leads to systematic violations of Refugee Law*](#) (August 2024).

Encounters at and between ports of entry at the US-Mexico border (October 2020-February 2025)



Fuente: Nationwide encounters CBP Dataset (last updated on March 2025).

Following the cancellation of CBP One, reports from workers at migrant shelters and the media indicate that refugee applications in Mexico have started to increase. For example, the Kino Border Initiative helped process six asylum applications in Mexico during the first weeks of the Trump administration, compared to a maximum of 20 in the entire previous year. In Ciudad Juárez, the Jesuit Refugee Service processed 21 applications in January, compared to 9 applications processed for the entire 2024. Meanwhile, DHIA supported 16 asylum application processes from January to April this year, compared to seven in 2024. In some cases, lawyers had to make a specific legal argument to request asylum on behalf of their clients because they had exceeded the 30-day period to claim asylum established in Mexican refugee law. Between 2021 and 2024, COMAR, the refugee agency in Mexico, received asylum applications from 468,205 people, but there is still no official data for 2025.⁶

There has also been a diversification of migrants' communities of origin in Mexico, with more varied nationalities from those generally observed in transit through the country. Citizens from Brazil and India stand out among those interviewed. The trend, in general, marks new profiles seeking protection in the region, with people from Africa, Asia and the Middle East, as well as Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Stranded, returned or expelled people on the move face a variety of challenges in Mexico, including moving within the country, security, protection, access to asylum, integration and employability.

Exposure to violence and crime is frequent in communities of origin, transit countries and throughout Mexico. Crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, extortion, widespread corruption and injuries are recurrently reported in the testimonies we heard, committed by authorities, organized crime, common delinquents and employers.

⁶ [Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados \(COMAR\), *La COMAR en números, Cierre de diciembre 2024*. Last accessed on March 20, 2025.](#)

In addition, **humanitarian workers in Sonora** have reported an increase in the number of military road-blocks from northern Mexico to the south following the end of CBP One. At these checkpoints, those migrants heading towards Mexico City or other areas of Mexico in search of better job opportunities are more likely to be stopped, extorted, or detained. President Sheinbaum has also deployed 10,000 National Guard agents in northern Mexico for drug detection functions at checkpoints and other locations. So far, humanitarian workers interviewed do not report detentions of migrants by these newly-deployed agents.

Similarly, there have been reports of authorities' malpractice, both in Mexico and in the United States, resulting in misinformation or erroneous information provided to migrants, prolonged land transfers from one point to another in Mexico; exposure to security risks when being returned through ports of entry far from urban areas -referred to in expulsions carried out in Chihuahua-; physical and verbal mistreatment, as well as the refusal to provide basic services.

When trying to access asylum in Mexico, numerous people report complications with the responsible agency, COMAR, as well as delays in the processing of their applications.

Some cases of stranded people facing difficulties in accessing asylum and legal and social protection in Mexico are:

- **Jasleen* y Amrit***, two people from Punjab, India, declared having left their country of origin because of insecurity. In Ciudad Juárez, they reported being victims of abuse and kidnapping. Cases of kidnapping were reported on at least fourteen other occasions in Ciudad Juárez and other Mexican cities.
- **Yarelis***, from Venezuela, stated that immigration agents in Mexico verbally and physically abused her during her transit through Mexico, requiring her to pay extortion. Yarelis did not report the abuses to the authorities "because it was the same authority [committing them]". Like Yarelis*, the right to free transit is violated on multiple occasions by Mexican authorities, who frequently extort or rob migrants to allow them to continue their journeys. Humanitarian workers in northern Mexico also note an increase in roadblocks, with testimonies from people interviewed indicating that they are instructed by commercial bus drivers when to get off the bus and where to walk, in order to avoid checks by immigration authorities. This increases the likelihood of falling into the hands of actors with bad intentions.
- **Gerardo***, from **Costa Rica**, explained that he suffered abuses along with his travel group, including extortion and robbery by Mexican authorities, who colluded with transportation personnel.

"They robbed us, they left us naked, they put us in a sugar cane plantation. From there, we left for the town and walked for four days. Then, we were caught by "migration." They had us in the 21st Century [a migrant detention center], and they gave us a permit to stay in Tapachula. From there, we could move and we took a bus to Tuxtla, Gutiérrez. That is when the police robbed us on the bus. The bus stopped and the driver told the police [...] to stop us in dark areas [...]. They took all our money, they robbed us, they did it twice on the same bus. After the robberies, as they [police] knew that we no longer had any money, the bus stopped at a migration checkpoint and handed us over. We spent 15 hours inside a truck at the checkpoint. They took us to Tuxtla, Chiapas, and they left my companions locked up; one was left for two days and the other for three, while they released me instantly."

- **Alejandra***, from Venezuela, shared that one of her biggest concerns was the lack of access to work. She is by herself and without support networks to help her. The shelter where she is in Ciudad Juárez limits her hours out of the facility and there is no response to her asylum process in Mexico. All these circumstances distress her and generate anxiety, exhausting her hopes of being able to build a safe and comfortable future. “Hope is leaving us.”
- **Mario*** and his four children lost **Carmen***, his wife and mother, three years ago in a tragic accident in Honduras. Mario opened a small store but the gangs began to extort him. Fearing for his life, Mario fled to Mexico with all his children. When they arrived in southern Mexico in September 2024, they attempted to schedule a CBP One appointment while also beginning a process with COMAR to obtain temporary humanitarian protection in Mexico. After the end of CBP One, they decided to continue with their case in Mexico. To date, they are still waiting for a resolution from COMAR.

4. Denial of protection in the United States and Mexico has forced people to consider other destinations, including their countries of origin

One of the hardships experienced by the foreign population in Mexico is the failure of the immigration authorities to provide documentation that allows them to travel safely, such as the Visitor’s Card for Humanitarian Reasons (TVRH for its acronym in Spanish) or even to obtain a temporary Unique Population Registry Code (CURP for its acronym in Spanish), which allows access to employment or basic services (health and education, for example). As shown, those who have applied for refuge in Mexico through the Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid (COMAR) often face long waiting times. Access to documentation fosters community integration by maintaining a minimum level playing field between the local and host population.

Testimonies show that mental health tends to be more stable in people with documentation or who are waiting for it, showing apparent calmness in the face of the possibility of achieving stability. For example, **Priscila***, originally from Honduras and belonging to the LGTBQ+ collective, affirmed that access to humanitarian documents in Mexico provided her with enough peace of mind to focus on her future, overcoming the experience of being kidnapped at the Mexican-Guatemalan border. On the other hand, some individuals reported sadness, confusion, despair and frustration at being stranded in the country. In some other cases, they reported respiratory, skin and stomach diseases, generally associated with their transit through the Darien Gap as well.

Faced with the impossibility of accessing protection in the United States or Mexico (or at least regularizing their situation), some people have decided to leave Mexico and opt for other destinations, including returning to their countries of origin. This is despite the fact that the root causes that led people to leave their communities in the first place often persist.

- **Sofía***, a pregnant woman who fled persecution in Peru with her husband and children and who had been requesting a CBP One appointment for six months, tried to initiate proceedings with COMAR in southern Mexico without success. Due to her advanced pregnancy and lack of access to protection, Sofia has requested assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to return to her country, even if she faces the persecution she fled.
- **Edgar***, a Venezuelan national in his 30s, reports that he has applied for asylum in Mexico, with no response. Edgar alleges that he has grown tired of the process and is desperate because he has no financial support and no help with completing the paperwork.

In Tapachula, Edgar has requested help to return to Venezuela, which he left due to instability.

- A **worker at the Nogales/Sonora** border stated that he had received between 60 and 80 Mexican nationals who had been removed from the United States, as well as many others from other nationalities. Most foreigners, particularly Venezuelans, hope to regularize their status so they can remain in Mexico and move to Mexico City. Other foreigners, particularly Nicaraguans and Salvadorans, have expressed a wish to return to their countries due to a lack of access to protection and are waiting to learn about IOM's voluntary return flights.

5. Detentions in the interior of the United States and deportations to Mexico of third-country nationals with minimal protections

Under an agreement between the government of Mexico and the United States from May 2023, Mexico agreed to receive up to 30,000 nationals from Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua returned by the United States every month. Data obtained by the Institute for Women in Migration (IMUMI) reveals that Mexico has also accepted the return of other nationals, especially from Central American countries such as Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador⁷. These returns generally occurred after the individuals were apprehended at the border, not in the interior of the United States.

Our monitoring reveals that the U.S.-Mexico agreement to return third-country nationals continues to be in effect, with the novelty that more of these foreign nationals are now returned to Mexico after being apprehended in the interior of the United States. Detained third-country nationals are being returned to Mexico via U.S.-Mexico border land crossings –from where INM directly buses them to southern Mexico–, as well as direct flights from the U.S. to southern Mexico.

In Ciudad Juárez, during the first three days of expulsions and deportations of foreign nationals to Mexico from the United States, ten men reported having been deported without receiving explicit information about their status. Among the profiles identified were people who had entered the United States irregularly and were placed in detention, people who had entered the U.S. with CBP One appointments before January 20 and who had been detained, and some cases of people who had been living in the United States for a long time. Only one Mexican person with a visa and work permit was identified.

Mexican nationals are received under the Mexico Te Abrazo plan. The Mexican Government has set up tents in the northern border to receive up to 2,000 and 2,500 people in each of the cities where the program works. Cities such as Agua Prieta, with only a few returned people, have spaces of these dimensions. Access to the tents varies from city to city. In cities like Nogales, Sonora, some humanitarian organizations have had access to these tents, while in others, such as Ciudad Juárez, access is restricted to government institutions only.

7 IMUMI, [*Deportación y retorno de personas no mexicanas de Estados Unidos a México*](#) (junio de 2024).



Photograph: DHIA, Ciudad Juárez, reception event for repatriated migrants. On the left, the commissioner of the Instituto Nacional de Migración, on the right, the municipal president of Ciudad Juárez.

On many occasions, after being processed in the tents and receiving a card with 2,000 pesos, returned Mexicans often leave without further support and remain in the streets, according to a humanitarian worker in Sonora. Those who go through this program are also pressured to relocate to their communities of origin or other places, without solid information that would allow them to create a new life plan.

Documented cases in this regard include:

- **Luis***, a father from Guatemala who had been working in the United States undocumented for more than 16 years, was detained and sent to Mexico in early February 2025. In his deportation proceedings, a judge told him that he could either be deported now or wait longer in detention until he was deported. Faced with this possibility, Luis agreed to be deported as soon as possible and was sent to Tapachula in southern Mexico.
- **Fernando* and his four siblings**, all from Venezuela, applied for asylum in the United States in mid-2024. At least one of them had a credible fear interview, but the resolution was negative because the officer claimed “we were part of the Tren de Aragua,” without any evidence to support this. At the ICE detention center, they report being beaten and placed in solitary confinement. All were given papers to sign that they did not understand and at no time were they provided with an interpreter or a copy in Spanish. They were all returned by bus to Mexico, where INM took them to Tapachula by land.

Under the Trump administration, three of the brothers decided to attempt to cross the border again and reapply for asylum. All three were detained without the possibility of seeking asylum, with one of them eventually being returned to Tapachula under a “voluntary return”.

- A **humanitarian worker in Torreon, Coahuila**, has welcomed deported people of third countries, mainly from Venezuela, who were first detained in the interior of the United States, identifying New York and Houston as two of such cases. The return to Mexico occurred through a port of entry near Ciudad Juárez, possibly through the port of Santa Teresa or another port in the Chihuahuan Desert area.
- “If you are working, doing good, why do they send you back? (...) I don’t want the American dream anymore” - said **Eduardo***, 44 years old, from Venezuela, who was detained in Texas after a couple of months of living and working in carpentry. He was deported to Villahermosa, Mexico, in November 2024, still under the Biden administration. He was unable to apply for asylum in the United States and he is now in northern Mexico because he cannot go back to Venezuela.

6. U.S. foreign aid freeze and increasing desperation impacting migrant shelters in Mexico

The run-up to the official freeze on international aid was particularly concerning for the humanitarian workers interviewed in Mexico. Many shelters remained in a desperate limbo, unsure of what might happen. One worker from northern Mexico mentioned that any cut in aid, either private or public, could affect them profoundly. The suspension of foreign aid has particularly impacted shelters working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations and major international nonprofits.

Consequently, small organizations and shelters have had to level up their work. For example, **an organization in Saltillo** has had to expand its activities at the U.S.-Mexico border because large international organizations have lost funding and had to close their programs. With scarce resources, this organization has stationed a social worker and a lawyer in the border area to support migrants. Despite the presence of some local volunteers and parishes, ongoing and predictable support for migrants is scarce, further testing the sustainability of shelters.

Although the number of people in shelters has dropped on the U.S.-Mexico border, many of the migrants still there are also frustrated and, among other impacts, they have stopped eating. Those working in the migrant shelters have had to redouble their efforts to make these spaces welcoming, so that guests can live as normal a life as possible under these circumstances. **“They need accompaniment of all kinds,”** said a worker at one migrant shelter.

Two workers from migrant shelters reported that, on the other hand, their centers have taken advantage of the low arrival of people to prepare themselves, starting self-help and emotional support workshops for their teams.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS



The first weeks of the Trump's new immigration policy have already resulted in numerous violations of fundamental human rights such as access to asylum, respect for due process or protection against return to places where people may face persecution or harm. On the other hand, Mexico has continued its immigration enforcement operation and faces significant challenges in ensuring protection for people stranded after the end of CBP One or for Mexicans and third-country nationals returned to the north and south of the country.

Given this reality, it is urgent that both countries and international organizations take measures to ensure the safety and protect the lives of people on the move. Therefore, we recommend:

To the United States

- To the Trump administration, unfreeze international aid funds earmarked in budgets prior to his arrival in the White House.
- To the Trump administration, cease using agreements to remove people to third countries, often without due process or adequate humanitarian protections.
- To the Department of Homeland Security, publish the policy by which they are conducting deportations of third-party nationals to Mexico and what are the credible fear monitoring and humanitarian protection mechanisms prior to these deportations.
- To the U.S. Congress, guarantee the provision of international aid for migrant aid organizations and shelters in the upcoming budget negotiation process, supporting people removed to Mexico and other countries, as well as addressing the root causes of migration.
- To the U.S. Congress, create a commission to monitor the implementation of the Refugee Act of 1980 to ensure access to asylum at the US Southern border, especially after the end of CBP One and the new suspensions of entry and access to asylum.
- To embassies and consulates in the United States expand their monitoring work in detention centers to guarantee the protection of the rights of their nationals, as well as to reach agreements between countries to provide joint assistance to nationals of other countries.

To Mexico

- To the Mexican Senate, resume the analysis and expeditious approval of the General Law to Prevent, Attend and Comprehensively Repair Forced Internal Displacement, which has been stalled since 2020.
- To the Mexican Senate and the Government of Mexico, channel funds to multilateral organizations for the humanitarian protection of people on the move in the face of the decrease in international financial support, especially as a result of the freezing of foreign aid from the United States.
- To COMAR, consider as a justified reason for the admission of asylum requests those that were presented 30 days after entering Mexico in cases where the persons were registered or had a CBP One appointment. The end of CBP One and the consequent situation of defenselessness should be considered a cause beyond the applicants' control and, therefore, a valid reason for admission of asylum applications.

- To the Mexican Congress, the INM and the Office of President Sheinbaum, implement the amparo in review 388/22 of the Mexican Supreme Court to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations that serve migrants in Mexico and publish the protocols for the reception of foreign nationals returned from the United States to Mexico.
- To the INM and COMAR, issue the appropriate humanitarian protection documentation and work permits to which people are entitled, thereby facilitating integration and regularization of their status.
- To all competent authorities, ensure that Mexican returned nationals can return to their communities of origin under certain security conditions, or be relocated outside the risk zone they had to abandon initially.

To international organizations

- To the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, activate precautionary measures when possible to prevent the violation of the principle of non-refoulement from the United States to Mexico, as well as initiate a mission to verify access to international protection at the U.S.-Mexico border.
- To the International Organization for Migration, expand protection mechanisms for persons who have requested voluntary returns to their countries, so that it can be verified whether they have faced risks or persecution upon such return.

To the Catholic Church

- Support with human resources and frequent visits by bishops, people in charge of migration services and priests to migrant shelters and organizations that continue to provide essential services for people on the move who are trapped and returned to Mexico.
- Through the Mexico Bishops Conference's Human Mobility Section, train clergy, seminarians and parish members in Catholic social teaching, including the Church's teachings in migration, to foster a solid and synodal humanitarian response to migrants and returnees.
- Coordinate actions between the Bishops Conference of Mexico and the United States, as well as with other conferences in the Americas, to raise a single voice in defense of migrants' human rights.
- Promote a national collection on World Day of Migrants and Refugees to benefit shelters and centers that care for migrants.

