

SPECIAL SITUATION REPORT

NEW U.S. MIGRATION PROCESS FOR VENEZUELAN

FOCUS: COLOMBIA, PANAMA, COSTA RICA AND MEXICO



24,000

CURRENT QUOTA OF ELIGIBLE VENEZUELAN TO ENTER THE UNITED STATES FOR 2 YEARS UNDER THE NEW PROCESS FOR VENEZUELAN

160,000¹

NUMBER OF VENEZUELAN WHO HAVE TRANSITED IRREGULARLY THROUGH COSTA RICA SO FAR IN 2022

NUMBER OF U.S. ENCOUNTERS OF VENEZUELAN

130,511²

JAN-SEP 2022

33,961³

ONLY SEP 2022

NUMBER OF VENEZUELAN CROSSING IRREGULARLY THROUGH THE DARIEN

107,692⁴

JAN-SEP 2022

38,399⁵

ONLY SEP 2022

ESTIMATE OF VENEZUELAN WHO HAVE BEEN EXPELLED FROM THE US BETWEEN 12-25 OCTOBER.

5,343

[1] Source: <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/160-000-migrantes-venezolanos-han-cruzado-las-fronteras-de-costa-rica/>

[2] Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>

[3] Idem

[4] Source: https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2021/pdf/IRREGULARES_POR_DARIEN_SEPTIEMBRE_2022.pdf

[5] Idem

CONTEXT

On 12 October, the U.S. Government announced a new [Migration Process for Venezuelans](#).⁶ Since the announcement, Venezuelans who cross irregularly the United States land border with Mexico are now subject to the provisions of the so-called [Title 42 Order](#) and, upon apprehension, subject to immediate expulsion back to Mexico. In parallel, a new humanitarian parole programme will allow up to 24,000 eligible Venezuelans to enter the United States (U.S.) for a period of 2 years, with the ability to apply for work authorization. The eligibility criteria include, among other requirements, a “qualified supporter” in the U.S. to initiate the application who can demonstrate the ability to provide financial support during the 2-year parole period and who has a lawful status in the U.S.⁷

The U.S. announcement took place at a moment when a record number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela are reported to be moving northward through Central America and Mexico. Owing to visa requirements in place in all Central American countries, coupled with their prohibitive costs and the widespread unavailability of documentation/passports among refugees and migrants from Venezuela, these movements largely occur via irregular routes, including through the perilous Darien Gap between Panama and Colombia, where in September 2022 alone a record 48,204 irregular crossings were registered (a 54% increase from 31,104 in August) – 38,399 of which were Venezuelan nationals (a 62% increase from 23,632 in August). So far in 2022, Venezuelans account for 71% of all arrivals in Panama.⁸

UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF issued a joint statement welcoming new pathways for regular entry to

the U.S. but reiterating concern over restrictions on access to asylum.⁹ [R4V released guidance materials](#)¹⁰ in Spanish and English to explain what is known about this new U.S. policy as it relates to the situation of Venezuelans intending to reach the U.S.

According to an R4V partner survey conducted in 2022,¹¹ 3 out of 10 interviewed Venezuelans mentioned starting their journey from a country other than Venezuela, and 9 out of 10 indicated the U.S. as their intended destination. In addition, according to SENAFRONT data, 14% of all the crossings through the Darien Gap involve children, which is a higher rate than other nationalities crossing the Darien Gap.¹²

Since the introduction of the new Migration Process for Venezuelans, increasing numbers of stranded Venezuelans have been observed requesting information and support for options to addressing their now unclear situation and prospects, including on local integration, readmission to a previous host country or returns to the country of origin.

RESPONSE UPDATE TO THE NEW MIGRATION PROCESS FOR VENEZUELAN

Access to reliable information on the scope and implications of the new Migration Process for Venezuelans and on viable options for affected refugees and migrants, as well as access to basic services, including shelter, WASH, food and basic medical assistance in border areas continue to be the most critical needs identified by R4V partners.

MEXICO

Since 12 October, some 5,343 Venezuelans have been expelled to Mexico at five locations along the U.S./Mexico border (Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, Piedras Negras and Matamoros). While

[6] Source: <https://www.uscis.gov/venezuela>

[7] Source: For more information on the Program, please see the information provided by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services: <https://www.uscis.gov/venezuela>. The R4V Platform provides regular updates to [its FAQ document relating to practical aspects of the situation for affected Venezuelans](#).

[8] Source: https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2021/pdf/IRREGULARES_POR_DARIEN_SEPTIEMBRE_2022.pdf

[9] Source: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2022/10/63497be44/unhcr-iom-and-unicef-welcome-new-pathways-for-regular-entry-to-the-us-reiterate.html>

[10] Source: [Frequently Asked Questions on the U.S. announcement regarding the “New Migration Process for Venezuelans”](#). <https://www.r4v.info/en/FAQ-new-US-migration-process>

[11] Source: <https://www.r4v.info/en/document/safety-risks-darien-gap>

[12] Source: https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2021/pdf/IRREGULARES_POR_DARIEN_SEPTIEMBRE_2022.pdf

the majority are single men and women, families are also being expelled. With a view to regularizing the situation of Venezuelans in Mexico, some 1,311 registration appointments from Venezuelan nationals (corresponding to 1,999 individuals) were issued by the Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid (COMAR) in Tapachula between 12 to 24 October.

During a joint meeting with the Mexican Government, representatives of IOM, UNHCR and COMAR called for also exploring regular stay arrangements, to facilitate integration for those staying in the country¹³. On 19 October, some local migration institutes began issuing a humanitarian visa with validity for 180 days, on a case-by-case basis (it is not a national policy). In parallel, an increasing number of Venezuelans have sought support for leaving Mexico (including readmission to a previous host country and to return to their country of origin).

While the Government of Mexico has established a working group with UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF and the ICRC to enhance coordination among stakeholders, R4V partners have been providing support to shelters, distributing core-relief items in key reception locations, disseminating updated information on the applicable procedures and providing legal orientation and counselling, as well as psychosocial support. As shelters, managed by government and humanitarian partners, across the country reach or exceed capacities, Venezuelans in Ciudad Juárez and Tapachula have resorted to sleeping on the streets.

According to National Migration Institute (INM) and monitoring visits by R4V partners, Venezuelans are also being transferred to migration detention centres along the northern border with the U.S. and in cities across the country, including Mexico City, Aguascalientes, Mexicali, Pachuca and Villahermosa. In parallel, new arrivals of refugees and migrants from Venezuela continue to reach Mexico's southern border, heading northward, regardless of the announcement of the new policy. Approximately 250 Venezuelans remain at the Terminal del Norte bus station in Mexico City, most of them are families with small children.

In response to requests by some Venezuelans to return to their country of origin, on 25 October the authorities of Mexico facilitated a first collective return flight for some 200 Venezuelans, at the cost of some USD 200 per person.¹⁴

COSTA RICA

In Costa Rica, an increasing number of Venezuelans are reported attempting to move south to reach Panama. On 22-23 October, at least 500 people were identified attempting to leave La Cruz (border with Nicaragua) by bus towards Panama.

On 14 October, the national migration authority (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, DGME) announced that Venezuelans intending to request asylum, would now be required to schedule appointments via a call centre, a paid service (3-4 USD/per 4 minutes). Since the start of this requirement, it is estimated that over 1,200 appointments to register asylum claims by Venezuelans have been made. In the nine months that preceded the adoption of the New Migration Process for Venezuelans, some 1,768 asylum claims had been registered. With the enforcement of Title 42 by the U.S. government, some Venezuelans who crossed into Honduras over the weekend with initial intentions to continue their journey northward consequently have gone back to Costa Rica, many planning to seek asylum there.

On 21 October, the Government of Costa Rica initiated a plan to facilitate the transit of Venezuelans from the southern border with Panama to the northern border with Nicaragua, with a new land-route established for bus companies to transport refugees and migrants from Venezuela, avoiding stops/transfers in San José. It is expected that many refugees and migrants have heightened needs, including health and protection, while lacking resources and information, including the visa requirements needed, both administrative and financial, to cross into Nicaragua.

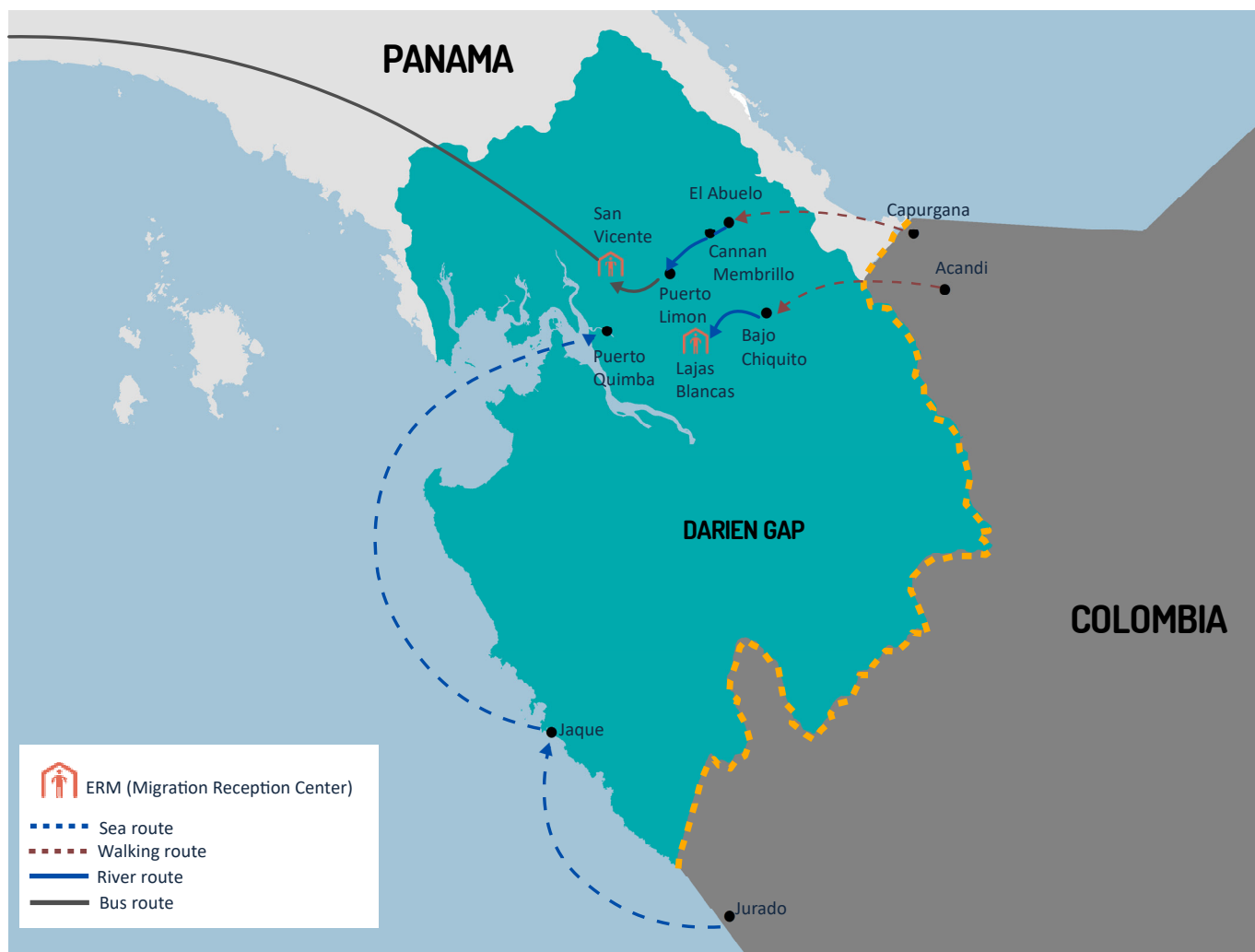
As an increasing number of Venezuelans find themselves stranded in Costa Rica. On 25 October alone, R4V partners reported 415 people entering via Tablillas from Nicaragua, of whom 85% are estimated

[13] Source: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/gobierno-de-mexico-y-organismos-internacionales-acuerdan-grupo-de-accion-humanitaria-para-personas-venezolanas>

[14] Source: <https://aristeginoticias.com/2510/mexico/primer-vuelo-de-repatriacion-de-migrantes-venezolanos-en-mexico-parte-hacia-caracas/>

to be Venezuelans who went back from Mexico and Guatemala. R4V partners have been providing core relief items (including personal hygiene items, soap, blankets, rain jackets, masks and cleaning supplies) in San José, and conducted field operations at the

Ciudad Neily and Paso Canoas terminals to assist vulnerable families, including with counselling and meals. In coordination with the Professional Migration Police (PPM), many were referred to the EMIBISUR (a collective shelter station run by national authorities).



PANAMA

In Panama, since the announcement of the New Migration Process for Venezuelans, the number of Venezuelans arriving at the Darien reception facilities (Canaan Membrillo and Bajo Chiquito) from Colombia has dropped from an average of 1,280 daily arrivals in September, to 208 daily arrivals between 25 to 27 October.¹⁵ This also marks the first time since the beginning of the year that Venezuelans were not the main nationality of arrivals, according to the National Border Service (SENAFRONT) - superseded by Ecuadorians.

In response to the new situation, the national Ombudsman's Office is establishing two mobile units to provide information to refugees and migrants, while R4V partners and the Ministry of Health have been scaling up safe spaces for medical attention. On 17-20 October, R4V partners provided information to 105 individuals on access to asylum and regularization, risks incurred along irregular routes, and on the new Migration Process for Venezuelans in the U.S. Also, partners provided psychological attention to Venezuelans severely affected by traumatic experiences during the crossing of the Darien Gap and referred them to appropriate health services. On 19 October, R4V partners facilitated a workshop for 19 humanitarian workers, members

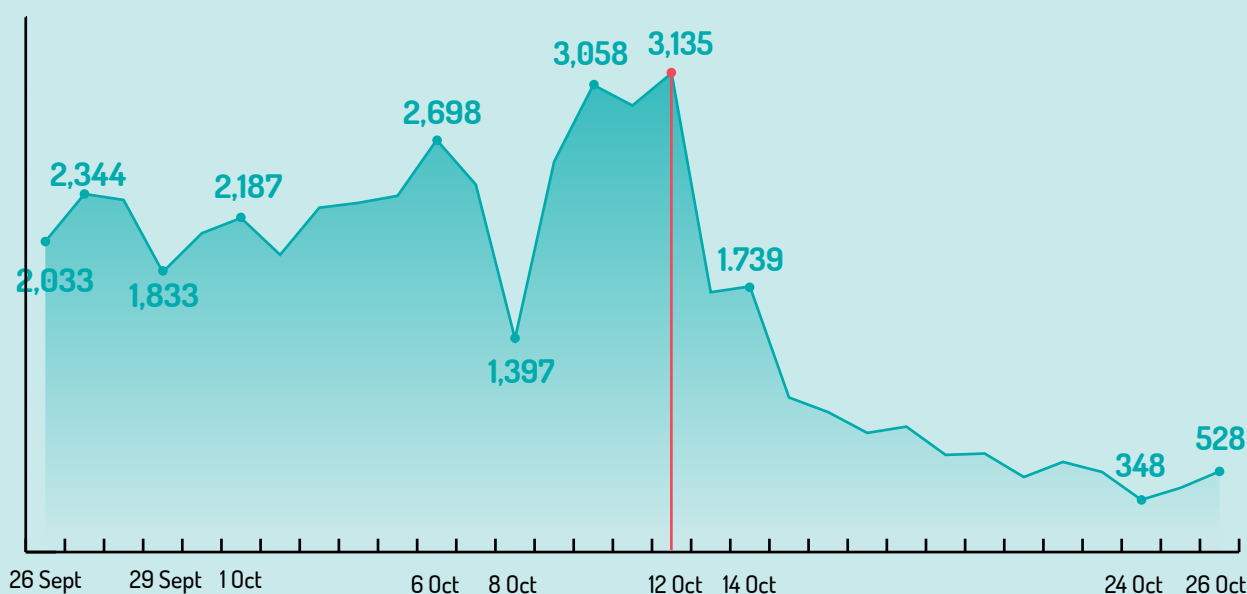
[15] Source: https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2021/pdf/IRREGULARES_POR_DARIEN_SEPTIEMBRE_2022.pdf and official communication by the National Migration Service of 28 October 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CkQl1XzuvFc/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY%3D>

of the local Protection Group in Darien, to agree on a response framework for protection cases, including those related to international protection, gender-based violence (GBV), unaccompanied children, people living with HIV/AIDS, and others.

In response to requests by some Venezuelans to return to their country of origin, since 24 October the Panamanian National Migration Service (SNM) has commenced facilitating daily return flights for up to 420 people (paid for by the returning Venezuelans).

This service has been provided for family groups without financial means and follows a vulnerability screening and an interview conducted by SNM officials. According to the SNM, since 21 October, some 900 Venezuelans entered irregularly through the Darien Gap and in-transit through Panama, have returned to their country of origin via charter flights.¹⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SNM, and the Venezuelan embassy in Panama are coordinating these collective returns.

NUMBER OF PERSONS CROSSING REPORTED BY TRANSPORT COMPANIES IN NECOCLÍ



COLOMBIA

In Colombia, prior to the announcement, the National R4V Platform in Colombia (GIFMM) observed a continuation of [increasing numbers of refugees and migrants reaching Necoclí, en route towards Panama](#). However, since the announcement of the New Migration Process for Venezuelans a strong drop in the number of people crossing from Necoclí to the Darien has been noted. According to figures from maritime transport companies, since 12 October, 9,856 people from various nationalities left from Necoclí to Acandí/Capurganá (until 24 October). Based on figures shared by the management of the Northern Bus Terminal in Medellín, from 20 - 25 October, an average of 205 people/day were registered leaving towards Necoclí, down from an

average of 1,157 persons/day during the previous week. R4V partners also observed substantial reverse flows from Necoclí towards other locations in Colombia, particularly to Medellín, to which more than 3,700 persons departed between 13 - 17 October alone. Others have been observed walking towards Turbo, Apartadó and Chigorodó. Based on initial surveys, reported intentions by Venezuelans to move from Norte de Santander to Medellín reduced from 13% to 4% between the week before and after the U.S. announcement. Due to the fluid situation, official information on arrivals/departures is yet to be shared.

Despite the new Migration Process for Venezuelans, many of those already in Necoclí maintain their intention to move north to the U.S. Based on interviews with a group of 300 refugees and migrants

[16] Source: <https://efectococuyo.com/venezuela-migrante/900-migrantes-venezolanos-varados-en-panama-regresan-al-pais/>





from Venezuela in Necoclí on 18 and 19 October, 45% stated their wish to continue their journey to the U.S., stating that they have family and/or friends who would receive them in the U.S. Concerning those reconsidering/changing their intentions, their plans were yet unclear, whether to go back to previous host countries (such as Ecuador and Peru) or remain in Colombia. Many of those interviewed noted that their onward journey to the U.S. started in Chile and Peru and was motivated by a lack of integration and economic opportunities.

Across the country, R4V partners have provided information and orientation services,¹⁷ and provided humanitarian transportation to more than 50 Venezuelans mainly to the cities of Bogotá, Manizales, Valledupar, Tunja and Palmira. Discussions are ongoing regarding the need to reinforce the current response, complementing local government efforts

in Necoclí. Also in Necoclí, Migración Colombia posted three officials to monitor the beaches and the docks, respond to questions from refugees and migrants, and coordinate with response actors and the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF). The ICBF deployed four officials who have identified cases of vulnerable families and activated protection pathways. Nutritional supplements for children and adolescents have been delivered and refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations were referred to R4V partners for humanitarian transportation.

To better monitor and characterize needs and trends for those still located at the Necoclí beach (previous large-scale departing point for the movement through the Darien Gap), and to define corresponding intervention strategies, on 19 October, R4V partners and officials from the Mayor's Office in Necoclí finalized the development of an assessment tool.

PLATFORM COORDINATORS

REGIONAL PLATFORM <i>See response:</i>	COLOMBIA <i>See response:</i>	SUB-REGIONAL PLATFORM <i>See response:</i>
		
Philippe Sacher	Peter Janssen	Helene Songe
sacher@unhcr.org	janssen@unhcr.org	songe@unhcr.org
Zachary Thomas	Jean Francois Ruel	Livia Manente
zthomas@iom.int	jruel@iom.int	lmanente@iom.int
 RMRP.R4V.INFO/		

[17] Source: <https://www.r4v.info/es/document/gifmm-colombia-alerta-no-3-de-situacion-refugiados-y-migrantes-en-transito-en-necocli>