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Information Bulletin no. 2 Central America: Migrant Caravan

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Information Bulletin N° 2	Date of issue: 23 July 2019
Date of disaster: Ongoing since October 2018	Point of contact: Gonzalo Atxaerandio: Disaster Management Coordinator - Central America and Recovery focal point: gonzalo.atxaerandio@ifrc.org
N° of National Societies currently involved: International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and the national societies of the Mexican Red Cross, the Honduran Red Cross, the Red Cross of El Salvador, the Red Cross of Guatemala and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).	
N° of other partner organizations involved: International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR), NGOs and local governments.	

This bulletin is being issued for information only; it reflects the current situation and details available at this time.

The situation

People from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador have been displaced from their homes through a combination of gang violence, extreme drought, high unemployment and economic hardship.

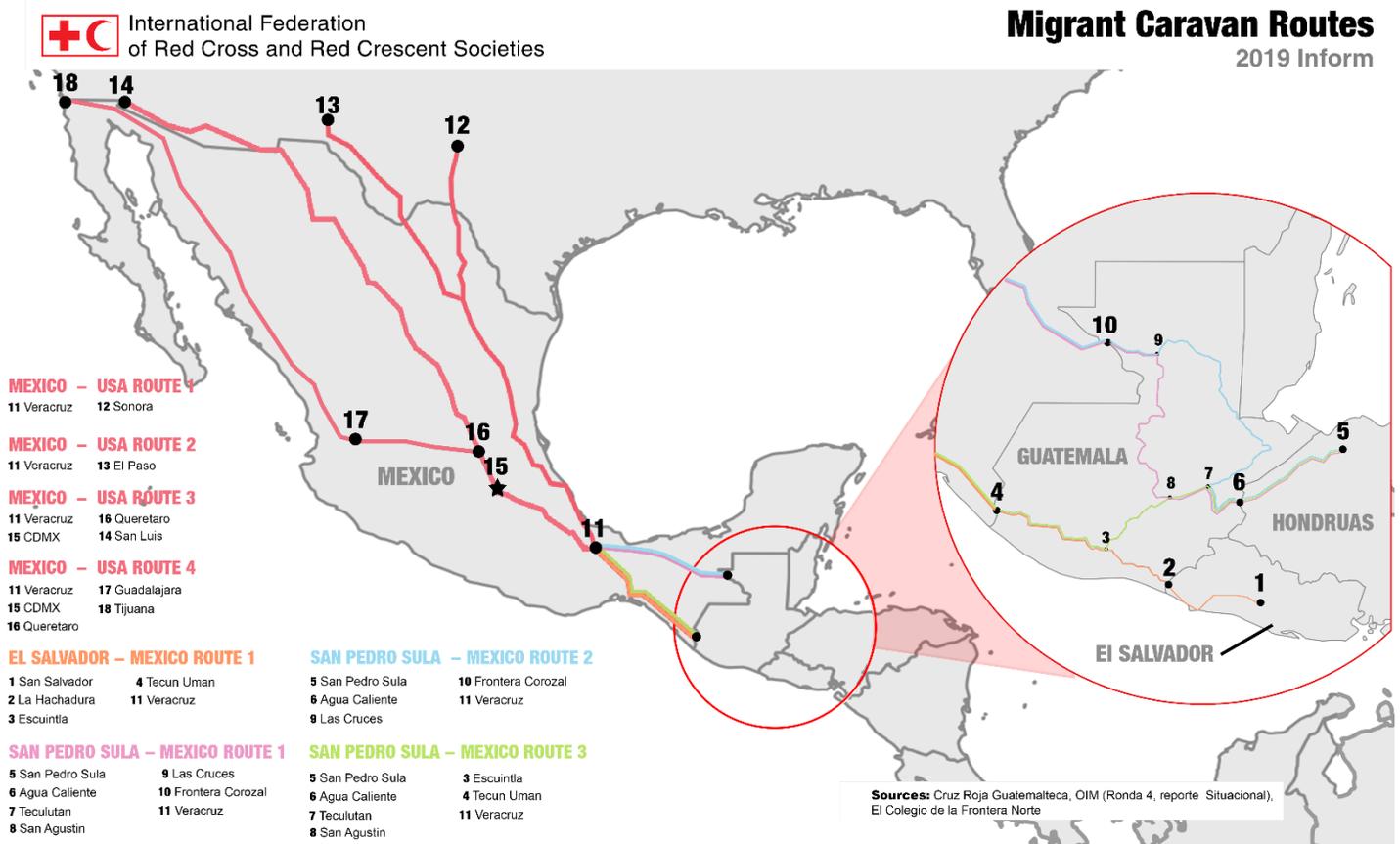
Since mid-October 2018, several organized groups of migrants known as "caravans" left northern Central America, mainly from Honduras and El Salvador, making their way north, to the United States (US) increasing the transit rates of migrants in Guatemala, with unsuitable conditions and severe dangers of violence and discrimination.

The migratory route from Guatemala to the northern border between Mexico and the US has for years been one of the most dangerous, violent and violating steps of migrants' rights.

From October 2018 to date, "caravans" have become a new modality of migration that attracts people due to the hypothesis 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.

People who have decided to move in these caravans have presented needs along the routes, which had to be treated by different organizations mostly in the border region of Mexico. Some governments and international agencies have organized shelters and medical tents, but the health of those in the caravan has deteriorated. According to local aid groups, there has been a rise in conjunctivitis, respiratory illness, fever, and diarrhea as well as people traveling presenting dehydration, sunburn, blisters and swollen feet from walking dozens of miles a day without proper footwear.

The UN Refugee Agency estimated that up to 7,000 people or more have traveled in 2018. UNICEF estimated that at least 2,300 children were among the group.¹



The Mexican government intercepted a new caravan of about 500 migrants who had crossed the border with Guatemala and were traveling to the United States on June 5, 2019. Some 132,887 people were arrested in Mexico in May after entering illegally, 32% more than in April 2019.²

Some of the migrants mobilizing have failed to reach the planned destination or have decided to stay in some of the transit countries facing different scenarios. Up to 28 February, 2019, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), International Organization of Migration (IOM), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reports 9,506 people deported from the US, Mexico and Central America, including 1,421 Honduran children and assisted 1,168 voluntary returns.³

Regional Impact

- These *caravans* have had an impact on the reactions of the US government, which, consequently, has put a lot of pressure on the Mexican government to dismantle these massive movements. In May 2019, according to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) recorded the most substantial increase in undocumented apprehensions in the last 13 years. Due to this, the US Government is considering implementing further limits on asylum seekers, ending birthright citizenship, and closing ports of entry at the Mexican border.

¹ [The Migrant Caravan: What to Know About the Thousands Traveling North](#). 26 October 2018. The New York Times.

² [México intercepta en la frontera sur una nueva caravana de migrantes centroamericanos](#). 6 June 2019. El País España.

³ [Flujos migratorios mixtos desde el norte de Centroamérica](#). February 2019. UNHCR, OIM & UNICEF.

- The US government suspension of aid payments to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to pressure their governments to stop migration into the US.⁴
- The government of Mexico announced on June 2019 that will deploy 6,000 National Guard troops on the southern border of the country with Guatemala, reaching an agreement with the US to avoid imposing tariffs on the products made in Mexico.⁵
- Unlike the mobilizations of previous migrants, these large groups do not try to elude the authorities to make their way to the US, but rather, many of them look for the guards to surrender and request asylum.⁶
- A phenomenon that has seen significant growth in recent months is the detention of adults with minors in their custody, which the CBP calls "family units". While in January 24,198 family units were arrested, by March that number doubled to 53,208 and in May 2019 it reached a record of 84,542. Bringing a child is a strategy that has been exploited in recent months to get a case of asylum open after reaching the border.⁷

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

National Societies actions



Honduras

Context	Honduran Red Cross
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So far this year, more than 27,000 Hondurans have been deported from Mexico and US, according to the Consular and Migratory Observatory of Honduras (Conmigho), of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Until June 7, 2019, 27,255 Hondurans have been deported, of which 13,930 are men, 4,525 women, 5,229 children, and 3,571 girls.⁸ • The departure of more migrant caravans from Honduras is still expected despite the Honduran government's implementation of its migratory programmes, due to the ongoing civil unrest situation, corruption, poverty and crime. • In April 2019, a new caravan of migrants was organized in Honduras and about 1,000 people gathered at the bus terminal after the news spread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to now, the Honduran Red Cross has attended 3,050 people in transit with at least one service. • On April 10, 2019, monitoring and accompaniment of a group of approximately 300 people was conducted by mobilizing volunteers and two ambulances with supplies needed to provide first aid care, self-care and Restoring Family Links (RFL). • During the night of April 11, monitoring was carried out at the San Pedro Sula bus station, where no type of migrant population mobilization was registered. • Constant communication with the NS is maintained to ensure regular monitoring demonstrations or caravans (IFRC - SN). • Go report published on January 14, 2019.

⁴ [Migrant caravan: Hundreds of Hondurans leave on new trek](#). 13 June 2019. BBC News

⁵ [Migrant caravan: Hundreds of Hondurans leave on new trek](#). 13 June 2019. BBC News

⁶ [Migrant caravan: Hundreds of Hondurans leave on new trek](#). 13 June 2019. BBC News

⁷ [Migrant caravan: Hundreds of Hondurans leave on new trek](#). 13 June 2019. BBC News

⁸ [México ha deportado a más 27 mil hondureños en 2019](#). 16 June 2019. Criterio HN.



Context	Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Guatemalan Migration Institute announced that more than 26,000 Guatemalans had been deported by air from the United States in 2019⁹ so far.• May was the month that registered the highest number of returnees after having been arrested while trying to enter the United States irregularly.¹⁰• The United States and Guatemala had a meeting on June 26 to discuss a safe third country agreement as part of an effort to curb U.S-bound migrants. Under a safe third country agreement, Guatemala would be obliged to process asylum claims from migrants who entered its territory first while in route to another country. That could apply to US - bound Honduran or Salvadoran migrants passing through Guatemala.¹¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The GRC provided on April 2019, various services to people on transit: first aid and pre-hospital care, telephone calls, self-care messages, snack, leisure kits for children, safe water, telephone charging station, guidance on the migratory route to prevent risks.• GRC registered a total of 137 people at the Esquipulas Chiquimula Agua Caliente border and 48 in the Corinto border, which shows that people continue to use the Agua Caliente border as the central passage, including other irregular pathways.• The GRC with the support of the IFRC launched a DREF Operation MDRGT014 Guatemala - Population Movement on October 2018, reaching 21,268 people (adults and children) with pre-hospital care, psychological support, distribution of safe water and delivery of personal hygiene kits.• Go report published on October 22, 2018.

⁹ [Retornos al Triángulo Norte de C.A. Iniciativa de Gestión de Información de Movilidad Humana en el Triángulo Norte](#). January - March 2019. IOM.

¹⁰ [Más de 26 mil guatemaltecos han sido deportados en 2019](#). 18 June 2019. Publinews Guatemala.

¹¹ [Trump: U.S., Guatemala close to a safe third country deal on migrants](#). 26 June 2019. Reuters News Agency.



Context	Salvadorean Red Cross Society (SRCS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• According to information from the IOM, until March 2019, 42,313 people have returned to El Salvador from Mexico and the United States.• In June, a young man and daughter from El Salvador died near the Mexican city of Matamoros trying to cross the Rio Grande caused a high media impact.¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through the <i>Monarch Butterfly Programme</i>, the SRCS has initiated a strategic line of work to provide care for migrants (in addition to the Restoring of Family Links), where they work with communities with high rates of forced internal displacement due to violence and high migration rates.• As of September 2018, to date, more than 589 differentiated hygiene kits have been provided for children, girls, women, and men returned and victims of forced displacement, through strategic alliances with civil society and state organizations that provide direct attention to migrants and displaced persons.• The SRCS provides humanitarian assistance to victims forced to internal displacement through the Unit of Psychosocial Care for Victims of Social Violence. During 2017 - 2018, the National Society, through this unit, attended 72 cases of violence, with a total of 340 people, 298 adults, and 42 children.• To the people mobilizing in the caravans, it has provided services of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Health:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mobilization of ambulances and lifeguards to migrant departure areas.▪ First aid care, mainly to Honduran migrants.▪ Distribution of hygiene kits, with support from the <i>Monarch Butterfly Programme</i>.○ WASH:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Safe water for consumption. Route Orientation• Go report published on October 31, 2018.

¹² [Valeria y su papá: el drama de los migrantes centroamericanos, en una sola foto](#). 25 June 2019. El Confidencial España.

Context	Mexican Red Cross
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the current context, the Mexican government has declared that any person wishing to enter that country must have travel documents and a visa granted by the government of Mexico through the consular network of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Mexican government declared in June 2019, an immigration emergency produced by 144,000 migrants who entered the country through the Ministry of the Interior (Segob, by its Spanish acronym). The number of migrants tripled compared to previous years, where there was an average of 30 to 40 thousand migrants registered.¹³ 11,922 people from Central America are waiting for asylum from the US government at border points in Tijuana, Mexicali and Chihuahua.¹⁴ Mexico has just over 40 days to reduce the number of migrants trying to reach the United States. Otherwise that American government could impose tariffs of 5% on all Mexican products.¹⁵ According to the information provided by the Mexican National Institute of Migration, the number of unaccompanied minors has increased by 263% compared to 2018, mainly from Honduras (57%).¹⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some shelters have been created and managed jointly by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Mexican Red Cross (MRC), where shelter, primary health services, and food are offered, as well as information, legal advice, and psychosocial support to the migrant and refugee population. In 2018, 100,000 calls were provided through the RFL program to migrants from 62 points operated by migrant homes and the MRC; 26,000 migrants received health support from part of the MRC and the ICRC; and 56 amputee migrants received assistance for physical rehabilitation, as well as orthoses and/or prosthesis with support from the MRC.

Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response to the first actions of the national societies to the emergency has been supported by with the Monarch Butterfly Programme thanks to the contributions of the Swedish Red Cross. The Migration Plan of ARO has a programmatic model that responds to the different scenarios of migration in the region, as well as the needs of migrants according to each context. This model is the Monarch Butterfly Programme (or Migration Programme of the Americas - IFRC). Currently is being implemented since 2018 jointly in Guatemala, Honduras y El Salvador aiming to reach 5,862 direct people and indirectly 27,586 people with 339,554 Swiss francs for phase one.

¹³ [Emergencia migratoria en México fue detonada por 144 mil extranjeros: Segob](#). 12 June 2019. El Universal Mexico.

¹⁴ [Informe sobre internaciones de centroamericanos a territorio mexicano en espera de la resolución de su trámite de asilo en Estados Unidos](#). 12 June 2019. Gobierno de México.

¹⁵ [Emergencia migratoria en México fue detonada por 144 mil extranjeros: Segob](#). 12 June 2019. El Universal Mexico.

¹⁶ [Estadística reciente de niñas, niños y adolescentes \(0-17 años\) acompañados y no acompañados presentados ante la autoridad migratoria](#). April 2019. Secretaría de Gobernación - Instituto Nacional de Migración.

- Conversations have been initiated for the creation of a sub-regional network of National Societies of the North Central American Triangle to manage information better and address this type of crisis.
- Coordination between the IFRC's Disaster and Crisis Department and country clusters.
- Continuous monitoring by the regional disaster management (DM) coordinator for Central America, the regional coordinator of migration projects, based in Guatemala and the IFRC's Country Cluster Support Team (CCST) in Honduras.
- Sending of informational messages by the DM focal points.
- Coordination with the movement's partners is maintained.
- Direct contact is maintained with the migration focal points of the National Societies involved.
- ARO is maintaining close communication and coordinating actions jointly with the ICRC's office in Panama.

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
- Iñigo Barrena, Head of the Disaster and Crisis Department for the Americas Region; phone: +507 317 3050; email: ci.barrena@ifrc.org
- Felipe del Cid, Continental Operations Coordinator; phone: +507 317 3050; email: felipe.delcid@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.