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Information Bulletin No. 1

Human Mobility along the Chilean- Bolivian borders

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Situation Report N° 1	Date of issue: 9 February 2021
Start of situation: 4 February 2021	<p>Focal point for Chile: Ruth Romero, Programs and Operation Coordinator- Chile</p> <p>Focal point for Bolivia: Guillermo Fernandez, Programs and Operations senior officer- Bolivia</p> <p>Focal point at Regional Office: José Felix Rodriguez, Migration, Social Inclusion and Non-Violence Coordinator</p>
National Societies currently involved: Chilean Red Cross (ChRC), Bolivian Red Cross (BRC)	
N° of other partner organizations involved: The International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and local governments.	

This bulletin is being issued for informative purposes and reflects the current situation and details available at publication. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is seeking funding from donors for the migration operation in Chile and Bolivia through the Emergency Appeal Americas: Population Movement ([MDR42004](#)), which has a CHF 4.3 million funding gap and has been recently extended until 30 June 2021.

The situation

An increasing number of migrants are using irregular paths to cross the land border into Chile from Bolivia. In late January, up to 800 migrants are crossing daily, which is a 530% increase of the 150 people crossing in November 2020.

Faced with this increased irregular migration, the Chilean Government has announced the establishment of four more check points, controlled by the police and military forces on the border in the Tarapacá province, specifically near Colchane commune and Pisiga in



Photo 1: Migrants have set up makeshift coverage in public areas in to protect themselves from the cold. Source: infobae.com

Oruro department in Bolivia¹. The Colchane commune is located at 3,730 metres above sea level.

As a protective measure against the spread of COVID-19, the Government of Chile closed its land, maritime and air borders in mid-March 2020. It only opened its air borders in November 2020. As of 7 January 2021, all people entering the country require a negative PCR test, as well as be in compulsory quarantine for 10 days.

As of 3 February 2021, there are more than 1,500 migrants located outdoors in Colchane's main square. Few measures against the possible spread of COVID-19 can be implemented due to the overcrowding, lack of access to water and hygiene items, as well as the saturation of local services. Most of the migrants lack personal protection equipment (PPE) or use deteriorated masks. There is a high risk of COVID-19 contagion among the migrant and concerns over local health capacities to attend to COVID-19 cases of the local and migrant populations. Additionally, different health conditions include dehydration, hypothermia, pneumonia, hypertension, malnutrition, and diabetes².



Photo 2: Venezuelan citizens requiring assistance at the Chilean Border with Bolivia. Source: [Emol Noticias](#)

While most of the people crossing are migrants from Venezuela, Peruvians and Bolivians are also using these irregular paths, located in extreme weather and geographical conditions with temperatures dropping to -5° Celsius at night and reaching up to 30° Celsius during the day.

The highland winter season, which includes heavy rain, hailstorm, floods, and lower temperatures, starts in February which might increase the vulnerabilities of the migrant population. Two migrants - a Venezuelan and a Colombian - died because of the low temperatures in the area.

In the Tarapaca region, the presence of actors that work directly with the migrant population is very limited. Since November 2020, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been providing food and winter kits to migrants. Around 200 servings of food are provided daily. The IOM team is currently the only humanitarian actor in the field.

Local basic services, particularly health, water, and sanitation, which are already challenged due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have stretched resources to attend to the current number of migrants in the area. The Municipality of Colchane has reinforced its normal two-doctor team with six additional professionals. In the last week of January, local authorities established emergency medical care in a community gymnasium to offer treatment for dehydration, hunger, and hypoxia due to the altitude.

Local actors and authorities have the capacity to provide food to approximately 25 per cent of the people in this border region. Highland winter rains have been forecast for this week and next. Due the lack of shelters, people are sleeping outside in the main square and other central locations. This has provoked sunburn during the day and hypothermia from the sub-zero temperatures at night. The authorities plan to set up a tent that will provide emergency shelter to 200 to 250 people. The most urgent needs involve the provision of relief assistance (food boxes, winter kits, shelter kits, hygiene kits, personal protection equipment, water) as well as primary health care.

¹ [Info Defensa - Carabineros and the Chilean Army install new border control points.](#)

² [DW - The fatal toll of the humanitarian crisis - January 2021](#)

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Chilean Red Cross



**CRUZ ROJA
CHILENA**

• Context	Chilean Red Cross interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On October 2020, 100 migrants were crossing daily through the border with Bolivia. In Huará, the nearest town with Colchane, 500 migrants were sheltering in the square and in the streets.• On November 2020, 150 migrants were crossing the border with Bolivia. Approximately 30% of the people were children. More than 1,000 migrants were displaced to Iquique, so they can do the mandatory quarantine in sanitary residences.• In February 2021, between 500 and 800 migrants are crossing the border daily.• As of 5 February, 1800 migrants are in Colchane.• Prior to this situation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had announced that it would conduct a mission in early February to the affected area.• There is expected of a raised number of COVID-19 cases among the migrants and local population.• There is a high risk of floods, heavy rain, lower temperatures, hailstorms, landslides, and possible snow.• The Government has already launched a bidding process for 15 flights to deport specifically migrants who have entered through irregular points entries. News: December 2020 and February 2021.• The mayor of Colchane has publicly requested the intervention of the Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technical and strategic meetings are being held to make an analysis of the situation and is planning a field mission to make an assessment to prepare the response plan.• Agreements with JetSmart and Airbnb are being activated for possible assistance and personnel mobilization. There could be approximately more than 900 kgs that could be displaced in EPP and other humanitarian assistance supplies.• The National Society is making the current warehouse inventory to determine the resources available to displace them next week after an assessment done by the field mission.• The NS is evaluating the availability of volunteers in the northern regions.• Looking for possible resources for humanitarian assistance as well as transport, food and lodging for the volunteers.• There are coordination meetings with the policies authorities and military forces.• The NS has satellite phones available in case there is need based on the field assessment.• There are two basic tents in the Chilean Red Cross HQ that could be displaced to the area to provide assistance.

Cross, which was broadcast on national television.

Bolivian Red Cross



Actions

- The Bolivian Red Cross, through its Oruro branch, is carrying out field evaluations and coordinating with headquarters for a possible intervention.
- The isolation centres opened in customs facilities for COVID-19 that were administered by BRC are now closed, so other options for assistance are being evaluated.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent



Actions

- Some of the RC actions are supported by the Population Movement Project in Chile, which is part of the IFRC Emergency Appeal operation Americas: Population Movement (MDR42004). This project is partially funded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Follow-up and support from CCSTs Southern Cone, Andean Countries and Americas Regional Office.
- IFRC is working on the mobilization of resources to provide humanitarian assistance in the Tarapacá region along with the Chilean Red Cross.
- IFRC is monitoring the situation alongside actions by the Bolivian Red Cross and Chilean Red Cross in their respective national headquarters and in local branches. SMCC is activated, ICRC providing security guidance. Will provide communication support for reactive lines, and activation of RFL program if needed.
- Operations, Shelter, Health and Migration in constant communication with Chilean Red Cross providing advice and support.

- Close monitoring of the situation through constant communication with local branches and implementing partners in the most affected cities in Chile and with national headquarters of the Bolivian Red Cross.
- Coordination team supporting the Chilean Red Cross.
- IFRC staff ready for deployment if required.

Contact information

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

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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.