

Covid-19 and (Im)Mobility in the Americas

Mexico

October - December 2020

1. **Poverty Rate (defined by unsatisfied basic needs):** 42% of total population.¹
2. **Migration Facts**²
 - a. Sending country: around 12 million Mexicans or 9.5% of the total population reside abroad mainly in the US (97.4%), Canada (0.73%) and Spain (0.45%).
 - b. Destination country: around 1 million immigrants or 0.85% of the total population live in Mexico. The main countries of origin are the US (71.87%), Guatemala (4.16%) and Spain (2.22%).
 - c. Transit country: Due to its geographic location Mexico has been a country of transit for irregularized migrants en route to the US who originate mostly from Central America, but also from South America, the Caribbean, and African, Asian, and the Middle Eastern countries. In particular, the southern states of Mexico are important transit areas for irregularized migrants. Mexican authorities estimate that some 150,000 Central American migrants pass through its territory annually.
 - d. Host country for refugees: In 2017, figures indicate that there were 8,975 people recognized as refugees in Mexico, arriving from El Salvador (37%), Honduras (32.3%), and Venezuela (13.2%). In addition, in 2019 the number of asylum requests rose, reporting 27,033 refugees and 5,815 with complimentary protection.³
3. **State Measures**
 - During the month of October, facing a new caravan of migrants that left Honduras heading north, the governments of Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and mainly Guatemala activated their military and border mechanisms to stop it. Coordinated actions were observed between the countries, such as the suspension of free movement that is supposed to be, according to law, guaranteed throughout the countries of the northern triangle and Nicaragua (among these countries, citizens typically do not need a visa to circulate).

¹<https://www.animalpolitico.com/2019/08/pobreza-mexico-reduccion-anos-chiapas-guerrero-oaxaca-veracruz/>

²<https://datosmacro.expansion.com/paises/chile>
<https://migrantesyrefugiadosven.org/>

<https://www.infobae.com/americas/agencias/2020/04/23/haitianos-puestos-en-cuarentena-en-chile-tras-denuncias-de-racismo/>

³[https://aristeguinoticias.com/0101/mexico/peticion-de-refugio-en-mexico-crecio-125-en-2019-se-registraron-mas-de-66-mil-solicitudes-segob/;](https://aristeguinoticias.com/0101/mexico/peticion-de-refugio-en-mexico-crecio-125-en-2019-se-registraron-mas-de-66-mil-solicitudes-segob/)

https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/550490/ABRIL_2020_4-mayo-2020_.pdf

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- The main arguments employed by governments to stop the caravan revolved around health justifications, thus the Covid-19 pandemic has served as the perfect excuse to undermine the rights of migrants and to cancel the right to international protection. With this, it is also confirmed that these countries carry out actions to stop and return migrant populations as indicated by their role in the externalization of the US borders.
- Mexico threatened that if the October caravan arrived in the country and that if sanitary conditions were not met, they would be subject to the law. The National Migration Institute - INM reminded that: “All civil, military and private authorities that use the INM facilities, such as internment areas in the country, [must comply with health protocols](#). The Federal Penal Code and the penal codes of Chiapas and Tabasco provide penalties of 5 to 10 years in prison for anyone who puts another in danger of contagious health conditions,” according to bulletin 366/2020.
- Discourses emanating from the governments involved are highly contradictory. They are replete with good wishes but in practice apply forms of [violence and constant abuses](#). For example, during October, the Guatemalan government was instrumental in stopping the caravan, stifling the pace of movement through innovative techniques such as cutting off their food and aid supplies.
- During the month of November, abuses against migrants who transit through Mexico continued. According to organizations such as the CDH of Mexico City, in this time the [detentions of migrants have intensified, meanwhile the processes for recognition of refugees have been delayed](#), resulting in the denial of access to the health for migrants.
- The Secretariat of Inclusion and Social Welfare (Sibiso) of Mexico City reported on November 5 through the Official Gazette on the cancellation of the procedures and activities of the “Hospitable City and Human Mobility” program for fiscal year 2020. This program included support for returnees, displaced persons, refugee seekers, and people in transit.
- The month of November was accompanied by [raids and arrests](#) in the south and north of the country by the National Guard of Mexico.
- Despite the fact that the socioeconomic disadvantages of migrants increase their chances of contracting Covid-19, in December [the Mexican and US governments excluded undocumented people from vaccination programs](#), increasing their vulnerability.
- In the wake of storms Iota and Eta in Central America, there is incessant unemployment and the consequent [reduction in remittances](#), which greatly affects the societies of origin. However, the work of migrants in the United States is essential to overcome the onslaught of the pandemic.

4. Migrant Situation Alerts

Migrants in transit and migrant caravans

- During the month of October, a new migrant caravan started from San Pedro Sula, made up of approximately 1,000 people, including women, children, and entire families. These are people who travel on foot and without travel documents.

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- The INM in Mexico has done questionable work, showing negligence, and acting without addressing the sanitary conditions that affect migrants in detention stations. It is reported that INM continues to detain migrants, exposing them to conditions of risk of contracting the disease since within the migratory stations there are no minimum conditions to avoid contagion.
- Through the month of October, there were more than [130 thousand refugee requests](#), most of them from Honduras. For the month of November, the delay in immigration procedures continues, the State through COMAR and international organizations (UNHCR, IOM) keep them in limbo without clarifying the situation in southern Mexico.
- There are no records, [the INM does not report the situation in the immigration stations](#) and migrants report feeling hostility and abandonment from the authorities.
- The representative in Mexico of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN-DH), Guillermo Fernández-Maldonado has indicated that due to covid-19, the health measures that are necessary to combat the pandemic are excessive and cruel in relation to migrants.
- Father Rolando Maldonado Salas, Director of the San Luis Potosí Migrant House, [died of covid-19](#). The institution reported that 17 people with the disease were detected in the House.
- [Father Pantoja also died in the city of Saltillo in December](#), due to an outbreak of the virus in the shelter under his charge. Faced with this, the shelter had to temporarily close, leaving dozens of migrants unprotected, who decided to camp on the sidewalk and organize night patrols to protect themselves from threats from organized crime networks.
- Other shelters such as “La 72”, located in the city of Tenosique, Tabasco, were also forced to close their doors since the end of November, due to an outbreak of coronavirus.
- Civil organizations reported that, since the beginning of the pandemic, until November 29, 2020, 3,078 were infected with Covid-19 in 18 entities in Mexico. The highest number of cases occurred in Mexico City (200), followed by Nuevo León (83) and Chihuahua (55), while the highest percentage (37.5%) of deaths occurred in the states of Baja California and Quintana Roo. Despite this, the Mexican government refuses to vaccinate them.
- Already in the month of December, the report “[In the mouth of the wolf](#),” prepared by several organizations, gives an account of migrants who are stranded on the northern border (68,392 from December 2018 to October 2020). In addition to abuses of power, both by the INM and the Federal Police, and the National Guard, there are acts of extortion, kidnapping, sexual crimes, forced disappearance, robberies and murders by organized crime; all this within the context indifference by the State.
- La migración centroamericana no cesa, a inicios del mes de diciembre, cientos de hondureños integraron la [cuarta caravana de 2020](#), pero ésta fue disuelta el 10 de diciembre por la propia policía de su país en la frontera con Guatemala.

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- El año cierra con una [disminución general de apoyo](#) de los gobiernos (tanto el de Estados Unidos como el mexicano), así como de las donaciones para los albergues que reciben población migrante en tránsito.

Deportation of migrants in transit

- The deportations that Mexico carries out upon migrants from Central American countries continue, mainly to Honduras. Through controls, these people are captured and returned in large groups under the euphemistic concept of “assisted return.”

Girls, boys, and adolescents

- In the United States, [boys and girls of Mexican origin who were separated from their parents continue to be unable to locate them](#). The way in which the separation was carried out, without paying attention to the identities and verifying the information, meant that several of them could not contact their parents.
- The group Aldea-Centro de Justicia para la Gente and other organizations in the United States denounced that [28 migrant children and their families have spent more than a year and a half in detention](#) in Texas and Pennsylvania without addressing their situation, especially considering that several of them have been ill from the pandemic. Thanks to all these pressures, a Federal Judge decided to [block the expulsions of unaccompanied minors](#) detained in the southern United States.

5. Social Responses

- *Migrant resistance*
 - o The different caravans are the clearest collective response to forced immobility and migration control. The importance of the use of social networks such as WhatsApp and Facebook is highlighted. Connectivity is essential to plan trips, to organize routes, avoid dangers, find allies and, finally, try to complete your migration projects..
 - o In November, migrants in southern Mexico, who were waiting for their approval of their refugee applications, [pressured UNHCR to comply with and deliver promised economic aid](#), which comes from international funds and should be directed toward the survival of migrants while they wait for their situation to be defined.
 - o Migrants also continue to [denounce the lack of health measures](#) in immigration stations, pressing for substantial improvements.
- *Solidarity networks*

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- o During the month of October and one month before the presidential elections, complaints, and protests against the Trump government for its immigration policies increased.
 - o Various organizations, including the CNDH, have denounced the INM's lack of transparency, who have systematically refused to provide information about people infected with Covid 19 at immigration stations.
 - o In a report by the World Food Program (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), governments are urged to take action in the face of [the evident increase in food insecurity](#) associated with migrants and displaced persons. The Report indicates that the crisis caused by Covid especially affects these populations.
 - o Non-governmental organizations: Foundation for Justice and the Democratic State of Law (FJED), the Institute for Women in Migration (Imumi), Asylum Access Mexico and the Washington Office for Latin American Affairs (WOLA, for its acronym in English), presented [the “In the mouth of the wolf” report](#) in which they denounce the context of risk and human rights violations of people subject to the “Stay in Mexico” program, which have worsened with the pandemic.
- *Xenophobia*
- o Xenophobic outbreaks increase, especially at the borders, where migrants are associated with the spread of the virus. Communities in the Mexican state of Chiapas, for example, [expel migrants](#), prevent them from renting homes or their children from receiving any kind of benefit or school counseling.

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