



## Situation Report: Honduran Migrants Returned at Corinto Border

October 2, 2021

**As the numbers of Honduran returned migrants from the U.S. soar to 33% higher than in 2020, hundreds of migrants, primarily women and children, are arriving at the Corinto Border each night have no access to food, water, or sanitation services.**

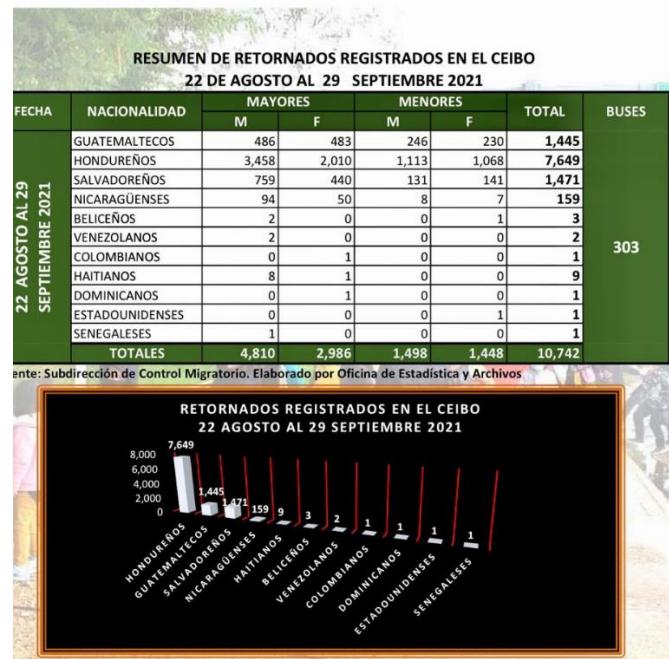
### SITUATION BACKGROUND

At the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, the United States Government (USG) instituted a little-known policy that allows the USG border officials to deport migrants without a hearing or other processing. Since its inception, in mid-2020, the U.S. has deported over 940,000 Title 42 returnees (as the migrants are called, referring to the name of the legal statute). While the legality of the policy is being litigated in U.S. courts, in the last 9 months, 37,000 Honduras have been returned to Honduras in these “express deportations.” Per the agreements made by the U.S., Mexico, and the governments of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), the migrants are to be returned on planes, with proper PCR testing. For the past 60 nights, contrary to this agreement, the Government of Mexico has begun returning 150 to 300 Title 42 migrants, primarily women and young children, by buses, leaving them in a forest 800 meters from the Honduran side of the Corinto Border, which has no medical, bathroom, food, rest, transportation, or other facilities for the migrants.

While the Government of Honduras engages the Government of Mexico in diplomatic talks on the issue, hundreds of primarily women and children are stranded in the middle of the night at the border point, without water, food, or means to get home.

Statistics in Figure 1 from the Guatemalan Border Authorities, which is tracking Honduran returned migrants in route to the Corinto Border, report 7,649 Honduran returned migrants transiting through the El Ceibo border point from the August 22 to September 29, an

average of 196 migrants per night, including nearly 30% children, many of them traveling with only their mothers.



### Priority Needs

Meetings with the IOM National Operations Director and the UNICEF National Emergency Coordinator, confirm that the Government of Honduras is not providing any services to the returnees. The returnees are dropped off from their buses on the Guatemalan side of the border and instructed to walk 800 meters to the Honduran side of the border. The Corinto Border is one of the least transited and most remote, with only a border patrols station and limited vendors. However, the buses with the returned migrants arrive at 10 p.m., 1 a.m., 2 a.m., or 3 a.m., when the immigration office is closed. Returnees are left stranded. Reports

from IOM and UNICEF confirm that the migrants, who have been in transit sometimes for weeks or months, arrive at Corinto, sick with the respiratory, gastrointestinal, and eye infections. On the buses, the migrants are only provided a sandwiches and water during the 27-hour journey. There are no shelters or rest areas available for the migrants; although there is a Catholic Church in the area that could be a possible rest point. Bathrooms are not available. UNICEF has recently set up 3 portable latrines, which are insufficient for the high numbers of returned migrants arriving nightly. Hygiene kits, dignity kits, and diapers are the most requested items by the migrants, after food and water. Migrants also request cell phone minutes to call their family members. Transportation back to their hometowns is an urgent need, but the logistics are not yet in place to transport the migrants to the nearest large city, San Pedro City, and then provide them with cash assistance for bus tickets and food.

Currently, under IOM and UNICEF leadership, with funding from USAID, a small group of local NGOs are beginning to organize a response, coordinated through the Northern Honduras Protection Working Group, led by UNHCR. CRS has been invited to join the group and provide support in any of the following areas: coordination leadership, reception site coordination, in-kind support for the above needs, cash support to the returned migrants, or funding to local organizations for direct response.



Figure 2: Honduran Returned Migrants in Guatemala Migration Checkpoint, en route to Corinto Border Point. Photo Credit: IOM



Figure 3: Honduran returned migrants at Guatemalan border point, being processed to continue onwards to Corinto, Honduras. Photo Credit: IOM Report

#### NEXT STEPS

- CRS will conduct a rapid assessment focused on the analysis of: the priority needs of the affected persons; activities planned by other actors and a gap analysis; alignment with CRS and partner capacities; and security and other risks.
- CRS Honduras is coordinating an international TDY to: engage in coordination mechanisms, including the UNHCR Protection Cluster; local partners working in the sector and area, such as the Scalabrinian Sisters, FUNADEH, Caritas San Pedro Sula, and Caritas Honduras; and visit the Corinto Border to assess the situation; the organizations responding, and the appropriate CRS response.

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