



KEY PRIORITIES

248,000

PEOPLE CROSSING
TO HONDURAS FROM
JANUARY–AUGUST 2023

High risk

OF DISEASE OUTBREAK
AND RED ALERT FOR
DROUGHT IN SEVERAL
MUNICIPALITIES

4.9 (high)

INFORM CLIMATE
CHANGE RISK SCORE

FUNDING AND
RESPONSE CAPACITY

• UN agencies
(UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM)

• INGOs
(NRC, DRC, WVI,
Plan International)

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

Since March 2022, the number of people entering Honduras has significantly increased, with some transiting through the country to reach North America and others remaining in Honduras. According to National Migration Institute statistics, more than 248,000 people entered the country from January–August 2023. Not all people are registered, meaning actual numbers are likely higher. The majority of those recorded crossing into Honduras are from Venezuela (45%), Ecuador (12%), Cuba (11%), and Haiti (9%) (INM accessed 02/08/2023; UN 31/08/2023). The reasons for leaving their countries include poverty, limited access to employment, violence and insecurity, and food insecurity (UNHCR 18/08/2023; INM accessed 02/08/2023).

The recent spike in arrivals is most affecting the municipalities of Danlí and Trojes, in the department of El Paraíso, located on the southern border between Honduras and Nicaragua. 92.9% of arrivals in Honduras are through these municipalities (SWI 22/08/2023; IOM 27/06/2023). Many enter without the required documentation and are in need of assistance across all sectors (UN 31/08/2023). People on the move face high protections risks, as there are at least eight criminal structures involved in human smuggling and trafficking in Honduras, many of which work in El Paraíso (La Tribuna 04/09/2023).

The number of people recorded in cross-border movement between January–August 2023 was 24% higher than the number recorded during all of 2022 (INM accessed 02/08/2023).

Anticipated scope and scale

Since 2021, there has been a steady annual increase in the number of people arriving in or passing through Honduras in mixed migration movements. As the humanitarian, political, or economic situation in many of the countries of origin is deteriorating, the number of people crossing through Honduras is likely to continue increasing (UNHCR 18/08/2023; INM accessed 02/08/2023).

After the termination of Title 42 pandemic migration restrictions, the US introduced a new asylum ineligibility rule requiring people to seek asylum

in the countries they pass through or make an appointment online for a US asylum hearing with US Customs and Border Protection (NBC 23/08/2023; WOLA 09/05/2023). Failure to comply leads to immediate deportation from the US, likely increasing the number of asylum seekers in Central American countries such as Honduras, particularly from Venezuela and Cuba, which have been facing political instability (UNHCR accessed 03/09/2023; NIF 09/02/2023).

Many people in mixed movement often lack identification documents after leaving their countries of origin in a rush or lose them during their journey. This can lead to extortion by corrupt officials and smugglers. The lack of documentation is also likely to reduce people's access to services. The risk of crimes involving violence, such as robbery, sexual abuse, and murder, has also increased in Honduras because of the presence of gangs and criminal organisations putting people at risk as they travel north (WOLA 22/02/2023; HRW accessed 03/09/2023; AAH 19/10/2022; UNHCR 18/08/2023).

Humanitarian constraints

The Honduran Government declared a state of emergency in November 2022, extended until October 2023, to decrease instances of gang violence and organised crime across the country. The state of emergency has imposed certain limitations on the freedom of movement and assembly of citizens, however, restricting their access to humanitarian assistance. There has also been an increase in militarisation, searches and arrests without warranty by security forces, and preventive detentions. The subsequent rise in insecurity and movement restrictions have increased access constraints for humanitarian workers. As a result, it has become difficult to provide assistance to the people affected by violence and displacement and ensure the continuity of the response (OCHA 29/06/2023; Crisis24 06/04/2023; WOLA 22/02/2023).

Flood-prone road networks are hindering humanitarian access, leading to increased reliance on air transport for aid delivery. The combined effects of the rainy season (mid-April to October) and hurricane season (June–October) are expected to worsen humanitarian access (OCHA 29/06/2023; FEWS NET accessed 03/09/2023).

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Food insecurity

Between June–August 2023, around 2.4 million people (25% of the analysed population in Honduras) were anticipated to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food insecurity levels. This figure included 351,000 people facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels, of which 26,000 people in the department of El Paraíso, home to the municipalities of Danlí and Trojes (the worst affected by the recent spike in arrivals). The causes of food insecurity include high food prices and the impact of natural hazards on people's livelihoods. The number of people in need of food assistance in El Paraíso is likely to increase considering the arrival of migrants and asylum seekers, who are also likely in need of food assistance (IPC 26/05/2023; FEWS NET 01/09/2023; UNHCR 30/08/2023).

Shelter

The shortage of shelter is a significant problem that people who are transiting Danlí and Trojes face. The high number of new arrivals is placing extra pressure on the provision of shelters in these municipalities. The shelters available are often overcrowded, exceeding their capacity tenfold (AAH et al. 30/01/2023; OCHA 21/07/2023). The exact number of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in need of shelter is unclear, but it remains a critical need.

Protection

People in mixed movement face high protection risks, particularly because smugglers often sell people to human trafficking networks, organ trafficking syndicates, or armed groups. There are also reports of complicity between smugglers and government officials (La Tribuna 04/09/2023; Tiempo 13/07/2023). Women and children are particularly vulnerable to protection risks. Women travelling through Honduras are at high risk of gender-based violence because of the presence of gangs and smugglers. The World Bank reported in June 2023 cases of gender-based violence, such as sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, experienced by people in mixed migration flows through Central America, including when travelling through Honduras (Ramage et al. 02/09/2023; WB 06/06/2023). The risk of sexual abuse during migration forces women and girls to use long-term contraceptives to prevent pregnancy, but this does not guarantee protection from sexually transmitted diseases. Data on sexual abuse of people on the move in Honduras is limited and the cases are likely to be underreported (France24 05/08/2023; EL País 05/03/2023). People with no valid identification documents also have limited access to protection assistance.

Health

In April 2023, MSF reported an increase in the number of people with various health issues arriving in Honduras. These issues included respiratory and skin infections and gastrointestinal problems. Many also experienced physical exhaustion or injuries from crossing the Darién jungle, as well as sexual gender-based violence by the criminal groups who control the migratory routes of the Darién Gap. Women (especially pregnant women), children, and already ill people require greater access to healthcare services, including mental health services. Women travelling to or through Honduras also need hygiene kits containing menstrual products (MSF 28/04/2023).

WASH services

In July 2023, a Protection Cluster assessment revealed that there were only five functional chemical toilets at Machuca border point. These toilets were insufficient to cater to the high number of people crossing Honduras, especially during peak hours (Protection Cluster 08/08/2023). Because of the growing number of people, there is a critical need for WASH services, possibly mostly at border points and in areas hosting more refugees or migrants in an irregular status.

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

Situation in countries of origin

Many people on the move travel to or through Honduras to reach North America, mostly the US, because of major humanitarian, economic, or political crises in their countries of origin.

Venezuela: over seven million Venezuelans have left the country since 2015 because of economic and political instability. The crackdown on the opposition and use of flawed elections by the Government to gain full control of state institutions have resulted in restricted civil liberties and the prosecution of perceived opponents without due process, triggering emigration for asylum and a better life (AI 29/08/2023; Freedom House accessed 03/04/2023; NIF 09/02/2023; LMD 07/05/2022).

Ecuador is experiencing increased criminal and political violence, economic instability, and social unrest. According to police records, 3,568 incidents of violent deaths were reported in the first half of 2023, a 43% increase compared to the same period in 2022. Criminal gangs, often related to drug cartels, fight for control of the streets, prisons, and drug routes to the Pacific, contributing to the escalation of violence. Political violence has also increased: on 10 August 2023, Fernando Villavicencio, a presidential candidate, was shot dead during the

electoral campaign. This event led to a 60-day state of emergency in the country. Five days later, on 15 August, Pedro Briones, a political leader, was killed (AP 13/08/2023; CFR 14/06/2023; The Guardian 15/08/2023; Amelia and JP 11/01/2023). The combined impacts of increased violence levels and the COVID-19 pandemic have caused an economic downturn in Ecuador. This has led to violent mass protests, with clashes occurring between protesters and security forces. As a result of the deteriorating situation and living conditions, many people are fleeing the country (CFR 14/06/2023; Freedom House accessed 04/09/2023; Amelia and JP 11/01/2023).

Haiti continues to suffer from political instability two years after the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021. This has affected the country's economy, with inflation rising to double digits and over 70% of the population living below the poverty line in 2022. The significant rise in gang-related violence in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and other areas of the country has increased injuries, deaths, and disappearances (CFR 01/12/2022; IRC 07/04/2023). Haiti is also prone to natural hazards and is experiencing high food insecurity levels, forcing many to seek refuge outside the country.

Cuba is facing a severe economic crisis marked by the scarcity of essential goods, surging inflation, and limited foreign investment. It is the most severe economic downturn in Cuba in over 30 years, prompting many Cubans to leave the country. The Government's suppression of dissent and opposition voices has also led to accusations of curbing political freedoms, causing several citizens to leave their homeland (WSJ 24/08/2022; CFR 25/04/2023). Since 2018, the Government has been employing repressive measures to suppress rising frustration and dissent resulting from socioeconomic difficulties. These tactics include targeting civil society and opposition members, using violence against civilians during heightened demonstrations, and increased arrests and short-term detentions (ACLEDD 23/03/2023).

COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Climate hazards

Honduras is highly vulnerable to climate-related hazards, including hurricanes, tropical storms, floods, droughts, and landslides (WorldData.info accessed 03/09/2023; IFRC 04/05/2023). The 2022 rainy season damaged regions already affected by Hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020, destroying housing and critical infrastructure and leaving over 3.4 million people in need of emergency assistance (OCHA 08/02/2023; FloodList 04/11/2020). The combined effects of the rainy season (mid-April to October) and hurricane season (June–October) might further increase the number of people in need. This represents a risk of access constraints, cutting off certain areas from humanitarian assistance, including those hosting migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (FEWS NET accessed 03/09/2023).

On 15 June 2023, the Permanent Contingency Commission of Honduras raised the Red Alert for drought (meaning high vulnerability of people and a determined territory because of El Niño effects) for 145 municipalities, the Yellow Alert for 101 municipalities (meaning danger for the territory and likelihood of affectations to people and essential infrastructure), and the Green Alert (meaning the likelihood of an event that may cause affectations) for 57. The drought will increase the risk of the spread of waterborne diseases, such as typhoid, hepatitis E, and diarrhoea, in a country with a shortage of safe drinking water and low sanitation levels (IFRC 18/07/2023; IndexMundi accessed 03/09/2023; GC 21/03/2023).

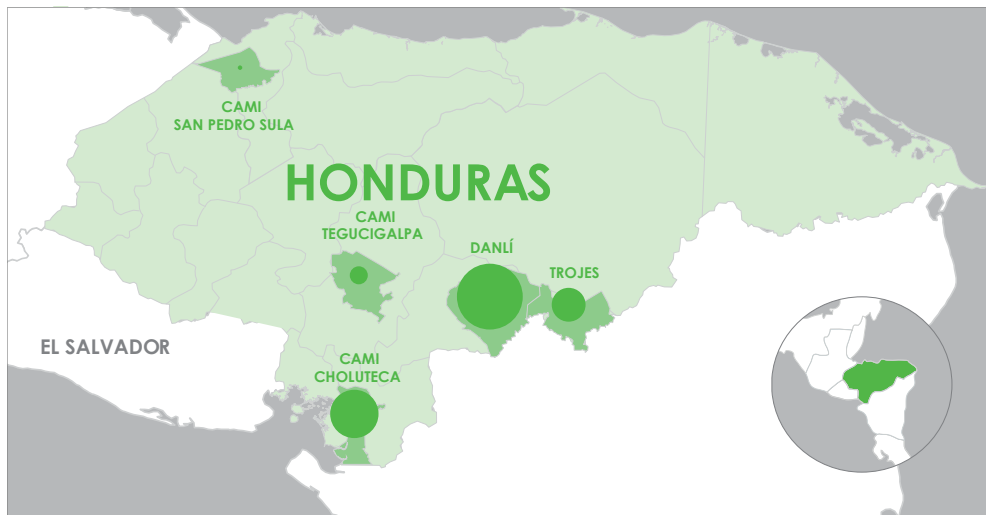
Political instability

On 6 December 2022, the Honduran Government declared a state of emergency, which was renewed for the sixth time in August 2023, to reduce insecurity. The authorities claim that the national homicide rate has decreased by 44% since this measure came into effect. The state of emergency suspends six rights, however, including freedom of movement and the right of association and assembly. There is also a constitutional crisis over the blocked vote for a new Attorney General. People and various NGOs have claimed the presence of corruption in the process (ICG 01/09/2023; WOLA 07/12/2022). Political instability is likely to hamper the Government's ability to respond to the growing influx of immigrants and refugees.

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

As at 30 August 2023, there was a gap of 58% of funding for the response to support forcefully displaced people, those at risk of displacement, asylum seekers, refugees, and people in mixed migration in Honduras (UNHCR 30/08/2023).

Map 1. El Paraíso, the department that received the highest number of arrivals from January–August 2023



Source: OCHA (21/07/2023)

Map 2. Honduran municipalities that received the highest number of arrivals in April–May 2023



Source: AAH et al. (21/06/2023)