

Venezuelan refugees now number 3.4 million; humanitarian implications massive, warns UN

As the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela continues to rise – hitting the 3.4 million mark this month – United Nations agencies sounded the alarm on Friday over the humanitarian needs these women, children and men face, and the strain this represents for communities hosting them.

The UN refugee agency ([UNHCR](#)) and the UN migration agency ([IOM](#)) issued [statements](#) based on data from national immigration authorities and other sources, showing that, on average, in 2018, 5,000 people left Venezuela every day in search of protection or a better life. The vast majority of them – 2.7 million – are hosted in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Currently, Colombia hosts the highest number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, with over 1.1 million. It is followed by Peru, with 506,000, Chile 288,000, Ecuador 221,000, Argentina 130,000, and Brazil 96,000. Mexico and other countries in Central America and the Caribbean are also hosting significant numbers of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

“The countries of the region have shown tremendous solidarity with refugees and migrants from Venezuela, and implemented resourceful solutions to help them,” said Eduardo Stein, joint UNHCR-IOM Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

“But these figures underscore the strain on host communities and the continued need for support from the international community, at a time when the world’s attention is on political developments inside Venezuela,” he stressed.

To date, Latin American countries have granted about 1.3 million residence permits and other forms of regular status to Venezuelans. Asylum systems have also been reinforced in order to process an unprecedented number of applications. Since 2014, over 390,000 asylum claims have been lodged by Venezuelans – close to 60 per cent (232,000) happened in 2018 alone.

As the numbers continue to rise, so do the needs of these refugees and migrants, as well as those of the communities hosting them. Governments in the region are leading the response and working to coordinate efforts based on the [Quito Declaration](#) for example, adopted in September and which has been an important step towards a regional approach to scale up the assistance and protection of Venezuelan nationals and facilitate their legal, social and economic inclusion.

The next regional meeting of this process will take place in the Ecuadorian capital in the first week of April.

To complement these efforts, a humanitarian [Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan](#) was launched last December, targeting 2.2 million vulnerable Venezuelans and 500,000 people in host communities across 16 countries.