

UN agency assists Central American caravan migrants, voices concern for receiving countries

The United Nations Migration Agency, [IOM](#), is providing support and assistance to migrants on caravans crossing Central America while expressing concern over “the stress and demands” they are placing on host countries.

In the Siglo XXI Migratory Station of Tapachula, Mexico, IOM and the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs are supplying food and basic hygiene kits to over 1,500 migrants seeking asylum in Mexico.

IOM said on Friday that after walking some 850 kilometres from Honduras, exhaustion and the challenges ahead have caused many to opt for voluntary return, offered by Mexican authorities and Honduran consular officials.

“IOM maintains its position that the human rights and basic needs of all migrants must be [respected](#), regardless of their migratory status,” said Christopher Gascon, UN Migration’s Chief of Mission in Mexico.

All migrants must be respected, regardless of their migratory status – *IOM Chief of Mission in Mexico*

“In coordination with UNHCR [[Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#)] we will continue to monitor the situation of the caravan counting on field staff, the Mexican Office of Assistance for Migrants and Refugees, and partner NGOs, providing information regarding alternatives for regular and safe migration, as well as options for voluntary returns,” he added.

Counting on its Mesoamerica Program – funded by the United States State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration – IOM is now also able to provide voluntary return assistance to migrants.

“The caravan phenomenon in Central America is another expression of a migration process that the region has been facing for quite some time,” Marcelo Pisani, IOM Regional Director for Central America, North America and the Caribbean explained, saying the “mixed migration flow” was driven by economic factors, family reunification, violence and the search for international protection.

“Nevertheless,” he added, “we are concerned about the stress and demands that caravans place on the humanitarian community and the asylum systems of receiving countries, which ultimately have limited resources to face this challenge or to properly care for and protect migrants.”

According to local authorities, on Monday the Mexican government admitted a

second caravan of approximately 1,800 Central Americans who initially started the regularization process, but later opted to continue the trek north without seeking asylum; a third caravan of around 500 Salvadorians crossed in on Tuesday, where most requested asylum; and a fourth group of some 1,700 individuals spent Thursday night in the Guatemalan town of Tecún Umán, on the border with Mexico.

“The effective protection of human rights for all is based on the respect of processes conveyed in international treaties and national laws, which must be the frame of reference for any action that may be implemented in this situation,” Mr. Pisani concluded.