



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

IOM RESPONSE TO THE CARAVAN GUATEMALA-HONDURAS

Situation report – January 16, 2021

Context

The caravan of migrants that left San Pedro Sula on January 15, 2021 managed to enter Guatemalan territory through **El Florido border point, in Copan**. The large group conforming the caravan split into two large groups which entered Guatemalan territory separately with some hours of difference. The first group, of around 2,500 to 3,000 persons managed to enter Guatemala on January 15, 2021 at night and the second group made up of approximately 4,000 people crossed the border on January 16, 2021 at noon.

Initially, the Honduran authorities did not allow the transit of these groups of migrants, but the large number of people (including children) made it possible for the groups of migrants to break through, despite the fact that all border points between Honduras and Guatemala had strong police and military presence since 14 January 2021. Migrants crossed the border without passing immigration controls. Once in the territory of Guatemala, several efforts were made to stop the convoy. These have produced clashes between authorities and some of the migrants of the caravan in an effort to continue their journey. An IOM team monitoring the caravan was exactly in the place where one of these clashes took place (**Vado Hondo, Chiquimula**) and had to get back because of safety reasons.

The IOM field teams which were deployed again early this day to continue monitoring the caravan, making voluntary return options available to authorities, civil organizations and migrants. To date, no request has been received from migrants or counterparts to provide assisted voluntary return in Guatemala. Though, IOM has provided internal transportation support for Hondurans in Honduras, to facilitate their voluntary transportation from the border to their communities of origin.

IOM Response – Key Actions

1. Psychosocial Support

El 16 de enero de 2021, como parte de la fase 1 del Plan de respuesta en atención en salud y apoyo psicosocial, se coordinó con Organizaciones No-Gubernamentales (ONGs) como Médicos del Mundo y Doctors Without Borders (MSF) con el objetivo de aplicar la Herramienta de Identificación de Necesidades de Salud Mental de las personas migrantes que se encontraban en la frontera de **Agua Caliente/Chiquimula**. Debido a la tensa situación en el lugar, ambas ONGs priorizaron en el monitoreo de las conversaciones y diálogos entre autoridades guatemaltecas y migrantes, quienes solicitaban se les permitiese el ingreso a Guatemala.

On January 16, 2021, as part of the phase 1 of the Response plan on health and psychosocial assistance, the team coordinated with NGOs, such as Doctors of the World and Doctors Without Borders (MSF) with the aim of jointly apply the tool for the assessment of mental health needs to those migrants who were in the **Agua Caliente / Chiquimula border**. Due to the tense situation in the place, both NGOs prioritized the monitoring of conversations and dialogues between Guatemalan authorities and migrants, who were requesting to be allowed to enter Guatemala.

The IOM team was able to conduct interviews to four migrants waiting to cross the land border of Agua Caliente / Chiquimula. While conducting the interview, a strong refusal to reveal information was evidenced. Because of this, the team made adaptations to the tool to make it more effective. The focus of the tool is to assess:

- Possible health and psychosocial needs.
- Exposure to the COVID-19.
- Motivation to migrate.

IOM team is currently preparing reports on the results of these interventions.



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2. Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR)

○ Guatemala

IOM response team deployed in the **Corinto/Izabal** monitored the border in search of cases of migrants requiring assisted voluntary return. The team made the following visits obtaining the following findings:

- **8:00 a.m. – Corinto Border** - no greater movement of migrants was detected. The normal flow of people was observed passing regular migration control in an orderly manner.
- **9:00 a.m. – route from Corinto to Guatemala City** - The police checkpoints continued operating as in the previous days on the route to the border. Though, a reduced number of officers was observed. The authorities in these checkpoints did not refer to IOM any case of assisted voluntary return and no migrants with interest in the program were found.
- **13:20 p.m. - km. 131 of the route Gualán, Zacapa to Guatemala City**. A tent in which several institutions of the Government of Guatemala were operating was found. In the place a presence of military, the National Police (PNC), the National Coordination for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) and the NGO Refugio de la Niñez was evident. Some migrants were receiving assistance in this tent. The authorities and the NGO Refugio de la Niñez (an IOM ally) did not refer to IOM any case of assisted voluntary return and no migrants with interest in the program were found.
- **13:50 p.m. - km. 100 of the route San Agustín Acasaguastlán, El Progreso to Guatemala City**, another control of the PNC was found. The authorities in these checkpoints did not refer to IOM any case of assisted voluntary return and no migrants with interest in the program were found.
- **15:20 p.m. - km. 81 of the route Aldea El Rancho to Guatemala City**, another tent in which several Guatemalan institutions were operating was found. The authorities in these checkpoints did not refer to IOM any case of assisted voluntary return and no migrants with interest in the program were found.

Another IOM team was deployed to the border **Agua Caliente/Chiquimula**. The team made the following visits, obtaining the following findings:

8:30 a.m. - at 2 km. from the border, se ubicó a un grupo de 20 personas, en su mayoría hombres de mediana edad quienes estaban detenidos y custodiados por la PNC. Había presencia de 20 militares en un puesto de control. Las autoridades no refirieron ningún caso de retorno voluntario asistido y no se encontraron a migrantes interesados en el programa.

- **9:30 a.m. – 15:00 p.m. – crossroad of the highway CA-11 to El Florido Border**, a group of approximately 200 migrants was found resting in the place. The Red Cross was providing assistance in this site (water and first aid) to these migrants. Close to the site, a large group of military and police officers had presence (at least 40). The authorities and the Red Cross (an IOM ally) did not refer to IOM any case of assisted voluntary return and no migrants with interest in the program were found.
- **11:30 a.m. - 5 km. from the CA9-C10 intersection**, another control post was found. Around 50 soldiers and 25 police officers were there, prepared with buses and police cars. The authorities in these checkpoints did not refer to IOM any case of assisted voluntary return and no migrants with interest in the program were found.
- **2 km. from the CA09-CA10 intersection**, a third control post was found with around 25 soldiers y 15 police officers. The authorities in these checkpoints did not refer to IOM any case of assisted voluntary return and no migrants with interest in the program were found.
- **12:00 – 13:30 p.m., exit to the highway CA-09 all along the highway up to the km. 90 in Aldea El Rancho**, five checkpoints were found in which all vehicles were inspected, especially buses and trucks. Several small groups of persons walking in the highway were found along the route. no migrants with interest in the program were found.

3. Displacement monitoring (DTM)



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DTM Reports number four and five were produced and disseminated.

Guatemala

The Information Team in Guatemala continued monitoring the displacement and evolution of the caravan after crossing the border **El Florido/Chiquimula**.

5:00 p.m. - Checkpoint in the km. 177, CA-11, Aldea Vado Hondo, Chiquimula, a clash between Guatemalan government security corps and some migrants of the caravan occurred. Elements of the police and the armed forces blocked the transit of migrants by using the force, fragmenting the group and pushing it back. The IOM team was at the site at the moment of the clash. Because of serious security concerns the team had to step back. IOM's drone was used to estimate the number and monitor the route of the caravan.

Information campaigns

The official Facebook and Twitter IOM accounts continued promoting the AVR program and disseminating messages on the access to protection and assistance services for migrants, prevention of risks in migration and prevention of human trafficking. Additionally, IOM continued performing daily monitoring of media and news on the caravans.

Humanitarian assistance

○ Honduras

On January 16, 2021, as part of IOM's humanitarian response, IOM provided assistance to migrants in the **Agua Caliente/Chiquimula** border, in the Honduras side, by facilitating transportation to stranded migrants in the border who voluntarily wanted to Return to their communities of origin. A total of 101 migrants were transported to San Pedro Sula, as stated below:

- Route Agua Caliente/San Pedro Sula: **53 persons assisted**.
- Route Agua Caliente/San Pedro Sula: **48 persons assisted**.

IOM will be providing, in the following days of PPE, exclusively to the migrants who will be returning to Honduras 4,000 PPE masks at the border points of **El Florido, Copán (1,000) and Agua Caliente / Chiquimula (3,000)**.

Challenges

- The teams of the IOM in the field have faced risks to their security, as a result of relatively unexpected violent clashes between security forces and migrants.
- Migrants approached are significantly reluctant to disclose information or accept AVR support.

Next Steps

- On January 17, 2021, 4,000 masks will be donated and placed in **El Florido, Copán and Agua Caliente/Chiquimula border posts**. These masks will be delivered only to those migrants who joined the caravan and will be returning to Honduras.
- Being almost completely clear that the route that the caravan will follow will be the one Guatemala City – Tecun Uman, the assisted voluntary return teams will reinforce its presence in Tecun Umán and Guatemala City. As these two places certainly will concentrate larger groups where people might find shelter. In coordination with Casa del Migrante, in the framework of the agreement signed with the AVR Program; both, this NGO and IOM will be offering the AVR program to migrants that will arrive at that place, providing humanitarian assistance and AVR support.
- The purchase and distribution of hydration assistance and hygiene kits to the most vulnerable migrants will be completed on January 17, 2021. This assistance will be distributed in partnership with Casa del Migrante.
- The offer and promotion of the program among authorities and counterparts will be strengthened throughout the entire journey and stay of the caravan.



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PHOTO ANNEX



[Around 500 migrants in the crossborder of Vado Hondo, Chiquimula. Photo: IOM, January 16, 2021.](#)



[Migrants walking to the Aqua Caliente/Chiquimula border. Photo: IOM, January 16, 2021.](#)