



## UNHCR's RESPONSE for returnees in Honduras

In 2022, an unprecedented flow of people in mixed movements transited through Honduras and left the country to the north, including Hondurans. At the same time, arrests and returns at border points mainly from Mexico and the United States of America increased dramatically. Until January of that year, the last episodes of uncoordinated returns were still reported through the Corinto border point, leaving people without basic needs met upon their return to the country and exposing them to greater protection risks.

This period coincides with the last relatively successful call for Caravans (600 people) leaving this same point northbound, and with increased numbers of returnees in Honduras, including in the following months of 2022 and 2023. The increase in arrests could also be explained by the easing of health measures in several countries after the hardest months of COVID-19 pandemic, the messages that circulated about the elimination of the Title 42 and other migratory policies in Mexico and the United States of America, and to the challenges in accessing the Mexican asylum system, consequently increasing the number of returnees.

After January 2022, returns to Honduras have once more been coordinated and ordered, passing through the three Centers for Attention to Returned Migrants (CAMR/CANFM). In addition to increasing efficiency in the return process, the coordination through these centres aim to protect returnees and improve reception conditions after a hard journey leaving the country. Within the framework of the "Law for the Protection of Honduran Migrants and Members of Their

Families" (2013), as well as the adoption of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), the State of Honduras has been developing protocols for the identification of cases of persons with protection needs. These protocols are established in the following three centers, located north in the department of Cortés, the most populous in the country:

1. [Center for Attention to Returned Migrants \(CAMR\) in La Lima \(arrivals by air\)](#)
2. [Center for Attention to Returned Migrants \(CAMR\) in Omoa \(arrivals by land from Mexico\)](#)
3. [Centro de Atención para Niñez y Familias Migrantes \(CANFM\) Belén in San Pedro Sula](#)

In these centers, the Honduran state and UNHCR, together with other institutions such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Honduran Red Cross, the Pastoral de Movilidad Humana (PMH), among others, work together to strengthen institutional capacities for the care and identification of the returned population with protection needs, to guarantee that adequate protection alternatives are in place.

UNHCR established a fixed presence in all three CAMRs in 2019. These centers offer the possibility of reaching the highest number of returnees simultaneously, optimizing the identification of protection and response cases, since it is in

these places that all people currently arrive on their return. Since 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the attentions were mostly carried out by telephone or with a sporadic presence. Since February 2022, however, UNHCR re-established a permanent presence (Monday to Friday) of UNHCR staff in the three CAMRs, ensuring consistency in the identification and referral of protection cases.

There is an effort by state institutions to establish a comprehensive reception system for returnees in the CAMRs, which incorporates a perspective of protection in the various stages of reception. It involves both government actors present in the centers, NGOs, and UN agencies. This extensive collaboration between stakeholders and partners is essential to ensure a comprehensive and efficient response after identification.

Specifically, the Belén Centre for Attention to Children and Migrant Families (CANFM) ensures differential care for children and adolescents, including unaccompanied children.



UNHCR/Gabriela Villeca

## Dynamics of returns

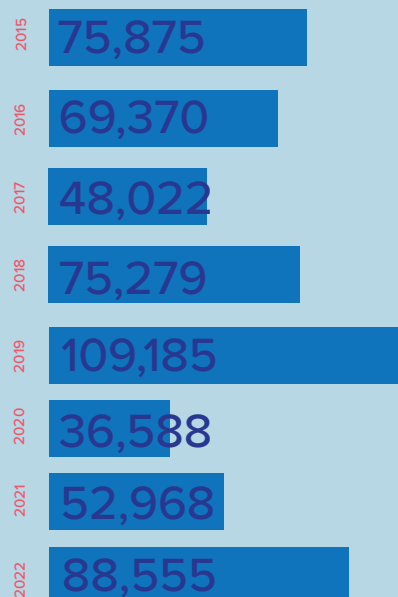
### **88.555 Honduran returnees received in the country in 2022.**

2022 is the second year with the highest number of returns in the last eight years, reaching and exceeding pre-COVID levels.

Returns to Honduras between 2020 and 2022 have more than doubled, according to data both from the Consular and Migratory Observatory of Honduras (CONMIGHO) and from UNHCR observation based on its constant presence in the CAMRs.

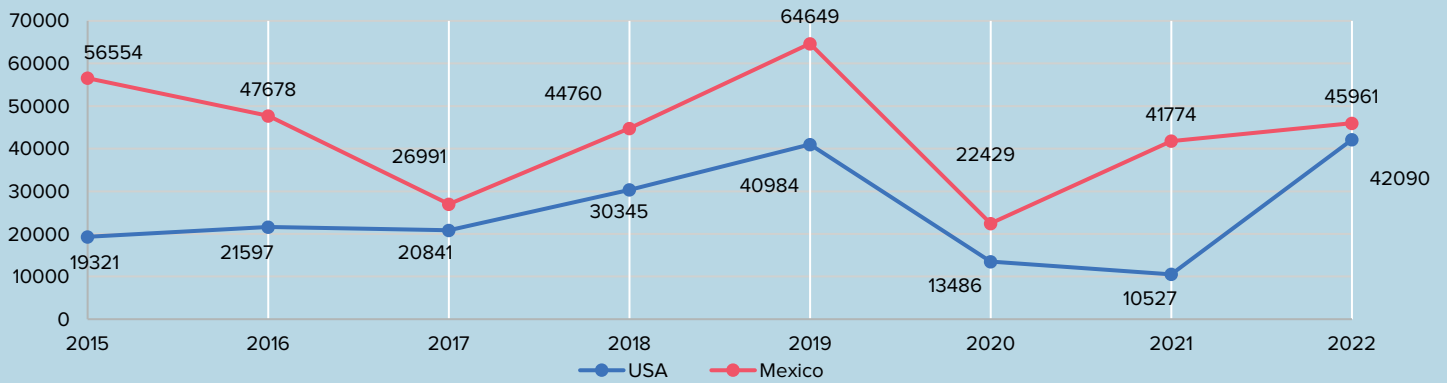
Between 2015 and 2022, Mexico was always the country that returned people to Hondurans the most. However, while between 2021 and 2022 the number of returnees from Mexico increased only slightly, returns from the United States of America quadrupled. 2022 was also the year with the highest number of deportations from the United States of America (42,090). Additionally, 2022 represents the year in which the percentage of deportations from the United States of America was the highest at all since 2015, corresponding to 46.3% of the total (during previous years this figure did not exceed 38%).

Total number of people returned per year 2015 - 2022





## Returnees from Mexico and the US 2015 - 2022



UNHCR/Gerardo Moya

*In 2022, a significant increase in the proportion of returned women was also identified, reaching 23% of the total.*

*The proportion of returned children remains high, representing 16% of the total.*

According to the figures provided by the Directorate of Children, Adolescents and Family (DINAF), of the 15,500 children and youth returned to CANFM Belén in 2022, 30% were unaccompanied. According to information observed by UNHCR and CANFM Belén, 93% of unaccompanied children were returned from Mexico, four percent from Guatemala, one percent from the US, while two percent are represented by exit barriers.

## Returnees in need of protection

UNHCR works strategically in the CAMRs to identify and refer cases of returnees in need of protection. UNHCR permanent staff presence from Monday to Friday guarantees that in the place where all arrivals happen, there is a constancy in the observation and identification of cases. To complement its presence, UNHCR also installed information and visibility material to improve self-identification of cases in need of protection.

Following identification, UNHCR works with its partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to reference protection cases for handling by relevant authorities and actors. UNHCR follows up on cases until they are closed. In this regard, UNHCR worked with the DINAF Forced

Displacement Unit to improve the care and follow-up of returned children in the CANFM Belén.

Finally, to develop institutional response capacity, training was carried out in conjunction with NRC for all personnel present at CANFM Belén and CAMR La Lima, with the aim of improving the identification and care provision for returnees with protection needs. Likewise, modules were developed focused on strengthening differential approaches (specifically towards survivors of gender-based violence, childhood, LGBTIQ+ people) and the principles of protection in attention to the population and basic training in Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).

## UNHCR's 2022 results and profile analysis

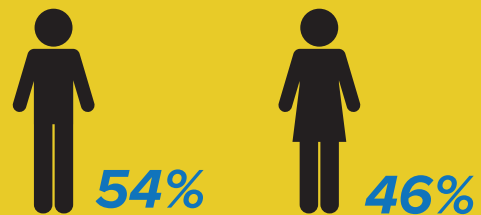
**912 cases attended (approximately 3,000 people) of returnees in need of protection, tripling the number of cases attended in 2021.**

43% of the cases were identified in the CANFM Belén, while 33% in CAMR Omoa and 24% in CAMR Lima. UNHCR partner NRC attended 410 cases of returnees in need of protection.

Both UNHCR and NRC reported a significant increase in cases of returnees in need of protection. Despite this, a probable under-identification of cases persists. In addition, the state of exhaustion in which returnees arrive and the speed of the return process cause some of the identified cases to desist from accessing interviews with Protection Officers.

All the cases attended received guidance on protection alternatives and services available in the country and/or information on international protection and the right to asylum in another country. Additionally, the cases with the intention of permanence were able to access internal relocation, participation in the protection transfer arrangement program (PTA), accompaniment for cases of gender-based violence (GBV), physical and mental health care, and livelihoods.

### Profiles of returnees in need of protection:



**70% are between 18 and 35 years old**



### Education

**45.6%**

Primary

**35%**

Secondary

**15.4%**

Technical or University

**4%**

Have not studied.



86%

of returnees with protection needs interviewed have suffered **one or more** direct victimizing events.



14%

left the country because of a protection **incident suffered by a family member.**



47%

of people **had already attempted to move internally in Honduras** on at least one occasion before leaving the country.



*Three percent suffered more than three internal displacements.*

Most people associate the incident of protection and violation of rights to:

their occupation



Merchants

18%



Carriers

5%



Members of the public force

3%

or being witnesses of some act of violence



7%

due to the use and recruitment of people (including 2% of children and adolescents)



Gender

16%

who relate it to being a woman \*

*\*Among whom at least 9% have been victims of domestic or sexual violence) and 3 % who report victimizing acts due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.*

61% of the cases did not report protection incidents to any authority. That is, only 39% sought protection from the Honduran state before their departure, while the rest sought international protection directly.

Protection incidents are mostly related to extortion, recruitment and bonding and murder of a family member. 80% of the cases report having received threats, 21.5% extortion, 20% murder, 18% report having suffered an attack, 14.6% forced bonding, six percent domestic violence and another six percent sexual violence, finally four-point five percent report restrictions on mobility.

60% of the cases indicate maras and gangs as persecuting agents, while seven percent indicate a local gang. According to the cases dealt with in CAMR, an increase in drug trafficking (four percent) has been identified, especially in areas of Gracias a Dios, Colon, and Copan, which has increased the dispossession of house, land and property and forced recruitment. Likewise, a high number of people (eight percent) indicate as persecutor the partner or ex-partner or other relatives (three percent). Two percent indicate the public force as a persecuting agent.

56% of returnees in need of protection report that they had previously left the country.

On the other hand, before deportation, 52% had reported in Mexico or the United States of being at risk in the country of origin. Even 13% mention that they had requested asylum, of these, 18% had been approved, while 34% were deported before finalizing the process.







UNHCR/Gabriel Villeda

## Next steps

The main challenges observed in the CAMRs is the deficit in the identification of cases of people with protection needs, despite the improvement in the identification of these cases by the organizations and institutions present in the CAMRs, including UNHCR. Six point one percent of the total returnees were assisted by UNHCR Protection Officers directly or through their partners NRC or the Honduran Red Cross, but it is estimated that there is a higher percentage of people who would need protection.

In addition, the state of exhaustion in which returnees arrive and the speed of the return process influence this identification gap. These points often undermine the intention to access interviews with the Protection Officers of international organizations present in the CAMRs. In this regard, UNHCR will continue in 2023 to strengthen the capacity to identify and respond to these cases through training for CAMR staff, specifically state institutions responsible for return procedures.

In addition, UNHCR will work in 2023 to strengthen its Transit Transfer Programme to ensure that the most urgent cases of people in need of protection and no alternative resettlement in Honduras can seek resettlement solutions in other countries.

UNHCR recommends the development of an integrated information system among the institutions present in the CAMRs to avoid re-victimization of returnees. It is also recommended to update and implement protocols and standard operating procedures to ensure key protection principles and differential approaches are incorporated.

Finally, with the approval of the Law on the Prevention, Care and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons by the National Congress of Honduras in December 2022, even if it is pending presidential approval, returnees with protection needs must be treated within the framework of the National System of Response to Forced Displacement of the Honduran state (Article 2). UNHCR will provide ongoing technical support to the state to further strengthen its capacities and leadership in identifying and managing these cases.