MEXICO IDP NEWSLETTER

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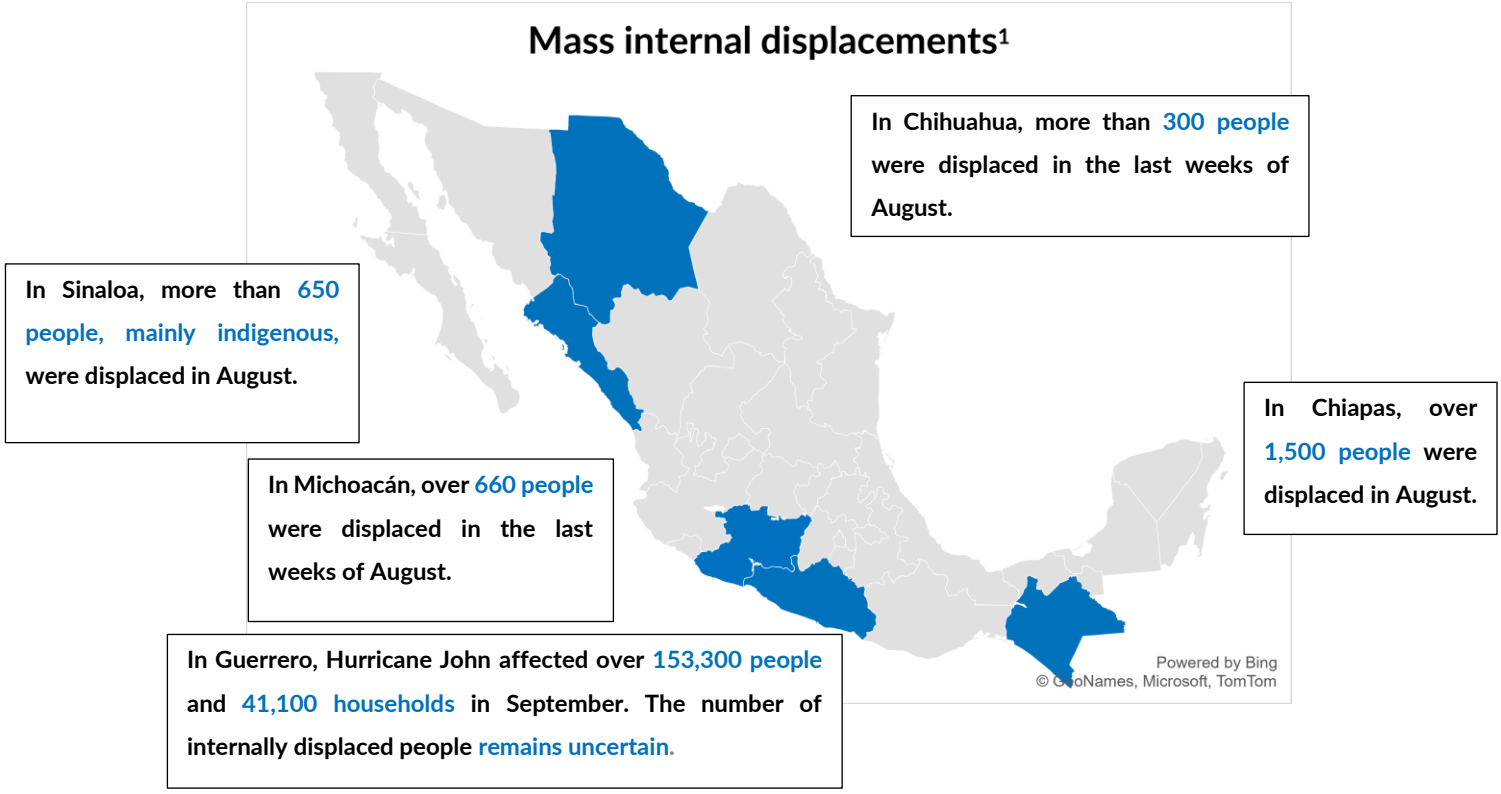
2024 Internal Displacement



The national census counted more than **262,400** individuals displaced between 2015 and 2020 because of public insecurity and violence, but this number is widely recognized as an underestimate of the true magnitude of internal displacement in the country. More recently, the National Victimization Survey (ENVIPE) conducted by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) estimated that over **320,000** households changed homes in 2023 alone as a means of protecting themselves from crime, an increase of over **40** per cent compared to the annual average of preceding years, underscoring the growing impact of crime and insecurity on human mobility within the country.

Definition

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are individuals who have been forced to flee their homes as a result of or to avoid the effects of **armed conflict,** situations of **generalized violence**, **human rights violations**, or **natural or human-made disasters**, and who have not crossed any internationally recognized state borders (Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement).

[1] Mass internal displacement refers to incidents where 20 or more individuals or five or more families are displaced in a single event. This definition is provided by the NGO Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights.

Internal Displacement and UNHCR

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) was the agency historically first called upon by the General Assembly and ECOSOC to protect and assist internally displaced people in 1971. Since then, it is UNHCR's role to support and complement the efforts of states, who hold the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting the displaced within their borders.

In **Mexico**, UNHCR has been working since 2019 at the request of the authorities to provide technical assistance and strengthen existing prevention and response mechanisms to protect internally displaced people. In addition, the state governments of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Oaxaca and Sinaloa, to name only a few, have requested UNHCR's support to enhance protection for internally displaced people.

IN BRIEF

From **August to October 2024**, Mexico experienced significant mass internal displacement events, primarily due to violence in various regions. UNHCR worked alongside the local and state authorities of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca and Sinaloa to provide emergency responses and analyse current displacement patterns, drawing from UNHCR's field presence and available information. Hundreds of people in these states were forced to flee their homes and seek safety in temporary shelters or with relatives in less affected areas. However, these were not the only displacements that occurred in this timeframe. The situation has strained local resources and highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of internal displacement and provide sustainable solutions for affected populations.

UNHCR and the Coordination for the Attention of Human Rights in Oaxaca working together.
© UNHCR/Jelena Hawellek

I. Mass Internal Displacement Events and Humanitarian Response

The following displacement events occurred in the reporting timeframe (August-October 2024) and are ordered in geographical order starting with the north.

Sinaloa

During August, landowners of territories surrounding the city of Sonoyta were displaced due to violence in their communities.

Due to threats, forced recruitment, disappearances of people, food shortages and clashes between organized crime groups during September and October, over **650** people were also displaced from **five** municipalities of Sinaloa (Concordia, El Rosario, Culiacán, Cosalá and Elota). Some sought refuge in shelters in the city of Mazatlán.

Response
Most of the displaced people were sheltered by family and friends in nearby communities. Government authorities provided food supplies, hygiene items, shelter, water tanks, and blankets.

Local authorities are using the rapid needs assessment tool shared by UNHCR and adapted by the state of Sinaloa. They established referral pathways for healthcare and education services.

During September and October, the Sinaloa government also assisted more than **1,100** families of returnees and host communities (over **3,400** people) in the five municipalities of Sinaloa mentioned above. The number of returnees is unknown.

Community empowerment in Sinaloa, northern Mexico. © Bryssa Julieta Valenzuela López, SEBIDES

Chihuahua

On 29 August, over **300** indigenous people were displaced from **four** towns of the municipality of Guadalupe and Calvo. Of those forced to flee, some **30** people fled to Sinaloa, in northern Mexico, while others remained sheltered at a local school for weeks.

Response
Security forces escorted the people displaced to a school nearby where they received support from the Chihuahua State Commission for Victims (CEAVE).
UNHCR shared a needs identification tool with CEAVE and is currently collaborating with them to identify inputs for a shelter for the displaced population that they plan to operate in the municipality.

Michoacán

In late August and September, over **660** people fled their homes in Michoacán, central Mexico due to confrontations between organized crime groups in the border between Colima and Jalisco. In this context, **nine** members of the community police in Coahuayana were killed. **17** individuals from Chinicuila and **seven** people from the indigenous community "El Coire" in Aquila were disappeared. **250** people fled from the municipality of Aquila and sought refuge in churches in the municipality of Tancitaro, 230 km to the north, and in shelters in Coahuayana, 50 km to the west.

On 11 September, in Tancítaro, northern Michoacán over **211** individuals returned to their homes in the municipality of Buenavista thanks to a security operation led by the Public Security Corps of Tancítaro, a police unit known for being highly trained and equipped with modern technology. However, on the same day, due to another violent event, some **50** people were displaced again. It was until October, that the Ministry of Interior in Michoacan stated that all the people displaced from Aquila and Buenavista had returned to their communities.

Also in September, more than **160** people were displaced to various communities within the municipality of Coahuayana, in southwestern Michoacán.

Response
Michoacan's Ministry of Migrants provided humanitarian assistance, including food and mattresses to the **200** displaced people, drawing from supply stocks for humanitarian assistance that UNHCR had donated as part of its prevention and response strategy. The State Ministry of the Interior and the System for Integral Family Development (DIF) also provided these items to the **250** people housed in the community of Aquila.

Local civil society organizations, and faith-based organizations in Michoacán organized

two brigades of emergency assistance for the people in Aquila and Coahuayana, including **200** packages of shoes and clothing.

UNHCR held meetings with the local Ministry of Migrants and civil society organizations to coordinate the emergency response and assure it was aligned with international standards, emphasizing protection and durable solutions. The UN Refugee Agency also provided technical support to **five** bishops and over **a hundred** priests in developing a joint strategy on internal displacement and community-based protection activities.

On 18 September, UNHCR facilitated the extraordinary session of the *Inter-Institutional Committee for Attention to Forced Displacement* and assisted the design of general guidelines on coordination schemes in emergency contexts and on voluntary, safe, and dignified returns and integration, which was approved unanimously.

Guerrero

On 20 September, Hurricane John impacted the state of Guerrero and affected over **153,300** people and **41,100** households in the regions of Acapulco, Central Region, Costa Grande, Costa Chica, La Montaña and Tierra Caliente, leaving many people homeless due to partial or total damage to their homes. Nevertheless, the number of internally displaced people remains uncertain. Communities are facing difficulties in accessing basic services and food, due to damage of infrastructure and limited access to roads.

Temporary shelters were overcrowded and lacked basic services, such as security, showers and toilets, exposing displaced people to protection and health risks.

Response

This situation has highlighted the importance of UNHCR supporting Civil Protection authorities to carry out risk assessments in homes.

The UN Refugee Agency has been working on the prevention of disaster and emergencies, preparedness, response, rehabilitation and livelihood recovery in

collaboration with Civil Protection, the State Ministry of the Interior, other UN agencies, the "United for Them" network led by the *Mexican Centre for Philanthropy (CEMEFI)* and the *National Centre for Support for Epidemiological Contingencies and Disasters (CENACED)*. UNHCR co-leads the ad hoc thematic groups on Protection, Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence (ÚNETE), which are activated in case of emergencies to address protection needs in coordination with local authorities and civil society organizations.

An improvised shelter for internally displaced people in Chilpancingo, central Guerrero, Mexico.
© UNHCR/Fátima Lara

UNHCR proposed several initiatives, including the creation of a protocol for internal displacement due to disasters, technical support for the continued operation of shelters and the coordination of workshops with local authorities to develop safer and more sustainable housing solutions for displaced people.

UNHCR conducted a joint mission with UNICEF and IOM to Guerrero's central region, focusing on needs assessments, including evaluating the infrastructure of temporary shelters. Key recommendations were developed, including improvements in access to basic services and protection standards.

Flooding in Tixtla, Guerrero, in central Mexico following the passage of Hurricane John. © *UNHCR/Fátima Lara*

Northern Chiapas

On 4 August, over **200** indigenous people from Pantelhó in northern Chiapas abandoned their homes due to fear of organized crime groups which had fired projectiles. Over the past three years, violence in this area has escalated due to ongoing clashes between organized crime groups which made people flee to communities in the municipality of Chenalhó, 33 kms away from their homes.

Response

On 24 August, the Institute of Elections and Citizen Participation (IEPC) decided to cancel the elections scheduled for 25 August due to inadequate security conditions in the municipality of Pantelhó. The IEPC determined that holding the election would jeopardize both the safety and integrity of electoral personnel and citizens, preventing a free and secure voting process. Finally, in September, the Permanent Commission of the State Congress appointed the Municipal Council, due to the lack of security conditions.

Southern Chiapas

During the week of 18 August, **600** people from Amatenango de la Frontera and Mazapa de Madero fled to Guatemala. On 25 August, following violence in Bejucal de Ocampo, **700** people from this and the neighbouring municipality of Amatenango de la Frontera fled to Frontera Comalapa and Motozintla.

Response

On 26 August, Civil Protection, the Municipal DIF and the municipal police of Motozintla provided temporary shelter with food and lodging for those displaced. Also, people were sheltered in houses of the Diocese of Tapachula.

The UN Refugee Agency is building up its field presence and response in Chiapas and is closely cooperating with the state authorities. UNHCR's strategy includes plans to support with hygiene kits and blankets as part of broader technical assistance and capacity-building efforts.

Preview November: What You Need to Know

Northern Mexico

More than **500** indigenous people were displaced in two mass events due to violence in the community of Guadalupe and Calvo in Chihuahua, northern Mexico. UNHCR met with local authorities to provide a tool for needs assessments and technical assistance for their response.

Central Mexico

According to local partners, at least **150** people were displaced from **five** rural communities in mass events due to violent confrontations in Apatzingán, Michoacán, during the first week of November. UNHCR provided protection guidance to local NGOs and churches and offered technical assistance to detect urgent needs to establish referral pathways with municipal authorities.

UNHCR assisting internally displaced people in Oaxaca. © *The Coordination for the Attention of Human Rights in Oaxaca*

II. Monitoring of Risks and Needs

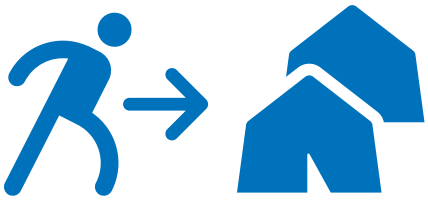
"As long as displacement and other humanitarian crises persist, we need an equally large, sustained, and urgent influx of humanitarian resources."
– Filippo Grandi, Global Refugee Forum, 2023

Monitoring is a critical component of ensuring the protection of internally displaced people, as it systematically collects, verifies, and analyzes data to identify the protection risks they face. In Mexico, internally displaced people reported that even for those who received humanitarian assistance during the emergency phase, challenges such as limited access to documentation, education, healthcare, and financial support persisted.

UNHCR's Mixed Movements Monitoring Report in Mexico's northern border[2]

Internally Displaced People Data

- The top three needs for internally displaced people are **food, legal assistance, and information** on protection.
- **86%** of the surveyed Mexicans were displaced individuals.
- **70%** of those are women.
- **67%** are traveling with all or part of their family.
- **73%** reported leaving because they or a family member were subjected to violence, threats, and intimidation.
- **60%** reported leaving due to fear of violence and insecurity.
- **21%** are from Guerrero and **19%** from Michoacán.
- **92%** believe they would face risks if returning.
- **68%** reported a direct threat against their family.
- **73%** are currently residing in shelters.
- **21%** of respondents were single adults, and **21%** were survivors of violence.
- **11%** are women at risk.



[2] The information is drawn from an internal database and will be featured in an upcoming public report, which is currently under development.

III. UNHCR Work to Prevent and Respond

Consultations with internally displaced people in Oaxaca, southern Mexico. © *UNHCR/Jesús González Ponce*

National level

In the absence of a national law to address internal displacement but given the need to promote the coordination between local governments and the federation, in August, the Migration Policy Unit (UPMRIP), Michoacán's Ministry of Migrants, and UNHCR invited all actors coordinating the response to internal displacement nationwide to the first National Coordination Meeting. Good practices and common challenges for the comprehensive attention to internal displacement were addressed, and **28** government institutions participated. A second forum is expected to be held in 2025 to continue promoting cooperation and coordination actions.

As a follow-up, a directory of the main services provided in the different states will be created, and a platform to advance the basis for better coordination. UNHCR provided support to the government of Nuevo León, northern Mexico to initiate a protocol for the attention of internally displaced people.

In September, UPMRIP and UNHCR presented the Guide for the registration of internally displaced people in Mexico, the first of its kind to assist in the design and implementation of the registration of internally displaced people. In the absence of a specific national law, it provides guidance to local authorities in the design and implementation of registration mechanisms for internally displaced people.

Local level

Michoacán

UNHCR provided technical assistance to Michoacan's Ministry of Migrants to respond to displacement emergencies and provide **local and municipal authorities technical assistance for a comprehensive response**. This included consultations with internally displaced communities. Approved in August, it is the first binding legal instrument in Mexico to address mass events of internal displacement at the local level.

In October, UNHCR facilitated the first workshop for members of the Interinstitutional Committee for Internal Displacement in Michoacán to develop the State Protocol to address the needs of Internally Displaced People.

Oaxaca

In October, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Oaxaca to help develop a law on internal displacement and public policy. Within this framework, the UN Refugee Agency has provided technical assistance to Oaxaca's Department for Human Rights in more than **22** consultation roundtables for the development of the local law to prevent, address, and respond to internal displacement. Once consultations are complete, the proposal will be submitted to the state legislature.

Chihuahua

UNHCR provided a workshop on internal displacement for **40** authorities in August and September, in collaboration with IOM, UNICEF and OHCHR.

UNHCR is currently working with Chihuahua's Ministry of Interior to develop a

protocol for emergency assistance. The first draft is now under review. At the request of the State Population Council, UNHCR sent comments on a registration platform for people in mobility, which is planned to be implemented soon.

Internally displaced children participating in community-based activities in Oaxaca. © UNHCR/Jesús González Ponce

Chiapas

UNHCR supports the government in strengthening its internal displacement law to improve the registration process, the coordination mechanisms, and the regulatory framework. An IDP liaison consultant from UNHCR is now working in strengthening efforts to support local authorities and protect displaced communities in the region.

IV. Legislation and Public Policy Update

National level

A General Law to Prevent, Attend and Comprehensively Repair Internal Displacement was approved by the Chamber of Deputies in 2020. However, when the Legislature (2021-2024) concluded, it was stopped. UNHCR will have consultations with the Senate to reopen the proposal.

Local level

There are currently **four** local laws on internal displacement in Chiapas, Guerrero, Sinaloa and Zacatecas.

This trimester, Oaxaca advanced in drafting a local law on internal displacement, holding consultations with displaced people and those at risk of displacement in the state.

In August, the Law for Response to Internal Displacement Emergencies in Apatzingán was approved by the Town Council. The main objective of this municipal instrument is to establish a clear coordination scheme among municipal and local authorities in Apatzingán, to deploy a comprehensive response in internal displacement emergencies.

Mother and son in Oaxaca, southern Mexico. *© UNHCR/Jesús González Ponce*

Laws, Public Policies, and Other Instruments (in effect)
Oaxaca, 1998. Article 16 of the Political Constitution of the State of Oaxaca includes the obligation to regulate penalties for various forms of discrimination against indigenous communities that result in relocations and displacements.
Chiapas, 2012. Law for the Prevention and Care of Internal Displacement in the State of Chiapas (unregulated).
Morelos, 2013. Inclusion of internal forced displacement as a result of victimizing acts in the State of Morelos Victims' Law.
Guerrero, 2014. Law No. 487 for the Prevention and Care of Internal Displacement in the State of Guerrero (unregulated).
National, 2017. Protocol for the attention and protection of Internal Forced Displacement victims, National Human Rights Commission.
Mexico City, 2017. Recognition in the Political Constitution of Mexico City as a state open to internally displaced persons.
Mexico City, 2018. Inclusion of internal forced displacement in Mexico City's Victims' Law.
Chiapas, 2019. Investigation Protocol for Crimes in Cases of Internal Forced Displacement by the Chiapas State Attorney General's Office.
National, 2020-2024. National Human Rights Program, Federal Government.
National, 2020. Protocol for Attention in Cases of Forced Displacement, Executive Commission for Attention to Victims (CEAV).
Sinaloa, 2020. Law to Prevent, Address, and Provide Comprehensive Reparations for Internal Forced Displacement in the State of Sinaloa (in the process of regulation).
Sinaloa, 2020. Criminalization of internal forced displacement, Article 175 Bis of the Penal Code.
Chihuahua, 2020. Action Protocol for State Attorney General's Office personnel in investigating crimes related to internal forced displacement.
Guerrero, 2021. Criminalization of internal forced displacement under Article 220 Bis of the Guerrero Penal Code.
Nuevo León, 2022. Reform to the Victims' Law of the State of Nuevo León, which includes internally displaced people in several articles of the law.
National, 2022. Internal Displacement Manual by the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJN), coordinated by UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Zacatecas, 2022. Law for the Prevention and Attention of Internal Forced Displacement in the State of Zacatecas (unregulated).
Chihuahua, 2023. Criminalization of internal forced displacement under Article 206 Quater of the Penal Code, State Attorney's Office of Chihuahua.
Michoacán, 2024. Emergency Response Regulation for Internal Displacement in the Municipality of Apatzingán under the 1814 Constitution.

Coordination Mechanisms and Other Actions
Chiapas, 2018. State Council for Comprehensive Attention to Internal Displacement of the Government of Chiapas.
Chihuahua, 2022. Establishment of the Internal Forced Displacement Commission.
Michoacán, 2022. Establishment of the Michoacán Inter-Institutional Committee for the Attention of Forced Displacement.
Sinaloa, 2022. Inter-Secretariat Commission on Internal Forced Displacement.
Michoacán, 2022. Collaboration Agreement with the Government of Baja California for the comprehensive attention of people in mobility originating from Michoacán.
National, 2024. National Meeting on Good Practices and Opportunities for Inter-Institutional Coordination in the Attention to Internal Displacement in Mexico. ** A service directory and a follow-up mechanism will be created.

Current Initiatives for Laws (not in effect)
National, 2019. Draft proposal to amend the Federal Penal Code to classify internal forced displacement as a crime.
National, 2020. Law Initiative to prevent, address, and provide comprehensive reparations for Internal Forced Displacement (approved unanimously by the Chamber of Deputies in 2020, and was concluded by the Senate in 2024).
Michoacán, 2022. Draft Law for the Prevention and Attention of Internal Displacement in the State of Michoacán de Ocampo.

State of Mexico, 2022. Draft Law to Prevent, Address, and Provide Comprehensive Reparations for Internal Forced Displacement in the State of Mexico.
Oaxaca, 2024. Draft Decree to issue the Law for the Attention of Internal Forced Displacement in the State of Oaxaca.

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