

Risks of homelessness and evictions rising among Venezuelan refugees and migrants

Panamá, 17 February 2021 – During the pandemic, about 40% of refugees and migrants from Venezuela were evicted and an additional 38% were at risk of losing their homes, reveals a household survey conducted by the Protection Sector of the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V) and the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Migrants of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

Data also indicates that three out of ten of the evicted households are facing new risks of eviction, with a fifth of those affected being pregnant and new mothers with small children.

“Evictions affect the economic and social human rights of migrants, refugees and displaced persons and, in the current context, mainly the access to decent housing for Venezuelans,” said Julissa Mantilla, Commissioner, Rapporteur on the rights of migrants at the IACHR. “In this regard, the IACHR observes that data collection is important because it allows the identification of differentiated effects, discrimination factors, and multiple intersectional aspects, including the gender approach, to precisely guide the policies and protection measures necessary in the countries of the region.”

Most Venezuelan refugees and migrants, dependent on the informal economy for survival, lost their jobs during the pandemic and are now living in poverty, and unable to cover basic needs, including payment for rent.

According to the surveys conducted in seven countries across Latin America and the Caribbean - Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Guyana – half of the interviewed households live in a single room. The study also shows that 11% of all evictions resulted in homelessness and three out of four will be homeless if evicted, increasing the risk of COVID-19 contagion.

In addition to the pandemic-related health risks that homelessness poses, evicted Venezuelan refugees and migrants living on the streets also face stigmatization and the risk of exploitation and abuse.

Irregularity has proved to be a driver for evictions, with half of the evicted families lacking a regular stay in their host country and unable to establish formal contracts.

"Public policies to promote access to adequate housing need to be guaranteed and are key as a next step to regularization efforts if we want to prevent situations as dramatic as those we have observed in the past year," said Eduardo Stein, UNHCR-IOM Joint Special Representative for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela.

Encouragingly, some governments across the region have put in place temporary bans on evictions and other initiatives to prevent homelessness during the pandemic. However, some of

these regulations have already expired or will end once the emergency declaration is over, leading to a possible spike in evictions.

Furthermore, landlords have not always complied with these measures. Many rent flats or rooms informally, with only verbal rental agreements, increasing the risks of evictions. According to the results, six out of ten of the households which faced an eviction, lacked a contract. Lack of institutional presence and assistance increases levels of exposition and vulnerability, especially for women, children, persons with disabilities and ethnic groups.

Different eviction tactics and measures have been reported to humanitarian partners, including threats and the use of violence, including sexual violence, harassment and the disconnection of utilities such as water, electricity and gas.

Across the region, R4V partners are ramping up assistance, reinforcing and expanding existing temporary and alternative shelters, setting up emergency hotel accommodation to host those evicted, providing information and legal support to report incidents or threats of eviction and distributing cash assistance, rental subsidies or other assistance for those most vulnerable, including those evicted or at risk of eviction.

You can download the report [here](#).

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Following the launch of the report, a High-Level Forum will take place on Thursday 18 February to discuss international standards on adequate housing, main obstacles, and recommendations to address the risk of eviction in the region as well as to present concrete tools to mitigate existing risks. You can register to attend the Forum [here](#).

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R4V

In April 2018 the UN Secretary-General provided direction for UNHCR and IOM to lead and coordinate the regional response to the situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela seeking access to basic rights and services, protection, as well as self-reliance and socio-economic integration. Further to this direction, the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform was established as a forum to coordinate the response efforts across 17 countries of Latin

America and the Caribbean, with a particular focus on achieving coherency and consistency throughout the response.

“R4V” stands for “Response for Venezuelans” and provides for a simple, intuitive and recognizable logo for the Platform approach that leads and coordinates the ‘Response for Venezuelans’. The Regional Protection Sector gathers 106 organizations and is co-lead by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and HIAS.

IACHR

A principal, autonomous body of the Organization of American States (OAS), the IACHR derives its mandate from the OAS Charter and the American Convention on Human Rights. The Inter-American Commission has a mandate to promote respect for and to defend human rights in the region and acts as a consultative body to the OAS in this area. The Commission is composed of seven independent members who are elected in an individual capacity by the OAS General Assembly and who do not represent their countries of origin or residence.