

URGENT ACTION

HUNDREDS STRANDED AT MEXICO–GUATEMALA BORDER

Approximately 400 people from rural Guatemala are stranded at the Mexico-Guatemala border in temporary shelters and tents, without adequate access to water, food, or medical supplies, after a Guatemalan court order was executed to evict them. Babies, children and elderly people are suffering from conditions such as diarrhea and fever, and there is little access to humanitarian support.

On 2 June approximately **400 people** (approximately **70 families with many young children**) from the community of Laguna Larga, El Petén Department, Guatemala, arrived along the Mexico – Guatemala border. They had abandoned the lands where they lived, a few hours before more than 1000 Guatemalan security forces carried out a massive eviction on these lands, following a court order from a judge in San Andrés, El Petén. Community members travelled by foot to nearby Mexico across remote jungle territory. They arrived on 2 June and established an improvised camp on the Mexican side of the border with Guatemala, near La Candelaria, Campeche state. The border area is highly patrolled by the military and there are a number of drug and human trafficking networks that are active in the region. Mexican authorities from the National Institute of Migration (Instituto Nacional de Migración, INM) arrived at the site and provided basic supplies, but have yet to adequately respond to the ongoing crisis.

The order for eviction was issued in the context of a long standing land tenure dispute in the Tigre National Park, which is affecting several communities. Amnesty International received information of another imminent eviction planned in the nearby community of Sacrificio El Reloj, which would affect approximately 200 people, as well as one in La Mestiza de la Laguna del Tigre due to take place on 14 June. The latter could involve evicting dozens of other families and their possible arrival in the makeshift camps on the border in the coming weeks. A dialogue table was recently established between Guatemalan authorities and affected communities, but according to community members and their representatives, their proposals to solve the issue were not taken into account. Dialogue is currently at an impasse.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Mexican and Guatemalan authorities to urgently and significantly enhance the attention to basic humanitarian needs such as medical supplies and attention, food, water and shelter and ensure that protection of the population, particularly children, adolescents and elderly people without shelter is the first priority, beyond military or security objectives in the area;
- Calling on the Guatemalan authorities to promptly reinstate dialogue with affected communities in order to address long-standing land issues in the region.
- Calling on Mexican authorities to guarantee the human rights of those people who cross the border into Mexican territory and prioritize humanitarian objectives above immigration enforcement measures at this time.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JULY 2017 TO:

Guatemalan Minister of Interior
Sr. Francisco Rivas Lara
Ministerio de Gobernación
6 avenida 13-71 zona 1, C.P. 01001
Guatemala, Guatemala
Email: frivas@mingob.gob.gt
Twitter: @mingobguate

Salutation: Dear Minister/ Sr. Ministro

Mexican Minister of Interior
Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, Col. Juárez, Del.
Cuauhtémoc, C.P. 06600
Ciudad de México, México
Twitter: @osoriochong
Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

And copies to:

Amnesty International Central America team
Amnistía Internacional
Luz Saviñón 519, Col. Del Valle, Del.
Benito Juárez, C.P. 03100
Ciudad de México, México
Email: equipoca@amnesty.org

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Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR DAVID NAJERA RIVAS, Head of Mission Embassy of Mexico, 16 St. George Street, London, W1S 1FD Phone: 020 7499 8586 E-Mail: mexuk@sre.gob.mx Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Embamex-Reino-Unido/197866996938638> twitter: @Embamexru Salutation: Your Excellency. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ACISCLO VALLADARES MOLINA, Embassy of Guatemala, 13 Fawcett St SW10 9HN, 020 7351 3042, inglaterra@minex.gob.gt, info@guatemalanembassy.co.uk
Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Mexican government requires visas from Guatemalan citizens in order to cross into Mexico, however a number of the people who left Laguna Larga and arrived in Mexico on 2 June hold temporary visitor visas that allow them to remain in the border areas of Mexico for limited periods. Mexican officials and international organizations have confirmed to Amnesty International that the displaced people from Laguna Larga currently stranded in Mexico comprise 13 infants under the age of one, 119 children under 12 years old, 82 adolescents, 32 elderly people and 151 adults. The area is a remote jungle region without proper access to official services.

Since 2014 the Mexican government has increasingly relied on a securitized approach to migration along its southern border, which has had direct consequences on the human rights of people on the move. The spike in arrivals was accompanied by Mexico's new immigration enforcement programme, known as the Southern Border Plan. Announced by Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto on 7 July 2014, the Plan is ostensibly aimed at ensuring safety for migrants crossing over Mexico's southern border with Guatemala and Belize, including strengthened security and infrastructure. The implementation of the Plan has had negative consequences on the ability of Central Americans in need of international protection. The Southern Border Plan has led to a surge in security operations on the Mexican border with Guatemala and Belize, and has been widely criticized for its hardline approach that significantly increases the involvement of police and military in enforcement operations.

Amnesty International has also documented the situation of evictions in north-eastern Guatemala in recent research reports (see: "*We are defending the land with our blood*": *Defenders of the land, territory and environment in Honduras and Guatemala*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/4562/2016/en/>). Campesinos (peasant farmers) living in areas that are currently part of the Tigre National Park in the Department of El Petén came to the area in the 1970s, or are the descendants of those who did so. According to the campesinos, they moved there as part of a state-promoted relocation programme. The Natural Parks of Tigre and Sierra del Lacandón were created between 1989 and 1990. The campesinos argue that they only discovered that they were living in a national park after the end of armed conflict in 1996. Since then, several farmers have been accused of usurpation or land invasions. Since 1985, well before the area was declared a natural park, oil extraction had begun at the Xan wells, located in the Laguna del Tigre Park. The Perenco company acquired the wells in 2001, after the creation of the parks, and continues to exploit the oil wells to the present day. The area around Laguna Tigre has a history of evictions from lands that have involved human rights violations.

Guatemala is living through a particularly fraught period as part of a regional security crisis in recent years which have forced many people to forcibly migrate from the country. Although homicide rates have slightly declined over the last few years, violence continue to be major concern in Guatemala. The country is part of the Northern Triangle of Central America, comprising three of the deadliest countries in the Latin America, alongside Honduras and El Salvador.

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