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## FEATURED Q&A

# Can the U.S. Find More Humane Paths for Migrants?



The United States has expelled thousands of Haitian migrants who had been camped out under a bridge in Del Rio, Tex. (pictured). // Photo: Office of U.S. Rep. August Pfluger.

**Q The United States has deported thousands of Haitians from the southern border town of Del Rio, Tex., applying a Trump-era measure that allows for the expulsion of asylum seekers on the basis of the Covid-19 health emergency. Haiti, which urged the United States to halt the deportations, is expecting as many as 14,000 migrants to be flown back to the Caribbean nation. How has President Joe Biden's use of the Trump-era border security policy affected the U.S. public's views of his commitment to immigration reform? How does the international community view the administration's actions and rhetoric surrounding migration and border security? Will Biden be able to maintain continued support from the more progressive actors of the Democratic Party?**

**A Bocchit Edmond, Haiti's ambassador to the United States:** "Last Tuesday, I met with U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, and we discussed the influx of Haitian migrants in Del Rio, Tex., the repatriation of Haitian nationals, the H2A and H2B visa programs, border security and matters of mutual interest. While I expressed my concerns regarding certain border patrol agents' mistreatment of some Haitian migrants at the border, I also acknowledged that Haiti's government does not believe their behavior is consistent with DHS policy nor a reflection of the Biden administration. Secretary Mayorkas expressed his regrets for the incident and affirmed DHS' commitment to treating Haitian migrants with dignity and according to the rule of law. He is nonetheless dedicated to address-

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### ECONOMIC

## Venezuela Slashes Six Zeros From Currency

Venezuela today launched a new version of the bolívar currency that slashes six zeros from banknotes amid the country's hyperinflation.

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### BUSINESS

## Western Union Expanding in Guatemala

Western Union announced that it is expanding its number of service locations in Guatemala through a partnership with Banco Industrial. The deal will add more than 580 locations to Western Union's network.

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### POLITICAL

## U.S. Shifts Focus on Expulsion of Migrants

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said immigration authorities would be required to detain and deport migrants illegally in the country only if they are recently arrived or if they pose a threat to public safety.

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Mayorkas // File Photo: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Biden Administration Shifts Focus on Migrants' Detention

Amid bipartisan criticism over its approach to undocumented migrants, the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden announced Monday that immigration authorities would no longer be required to detain people illegally in the country solely because of their status, the Associated Press reported. The new rules, which Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas announced, will require authorities to pursue migrants only if they are deemed a threat to public safety or if they crossed into the United States after Nov. 1, 2020, the wire service reported. The new rules are a break from immigration policy under former President Donald Trump, who directed authorities to detain anyone who was in the United States illegally. "We are guided by the knowledge that there are individuals in our country who have been here for generations and contributed to our country's well-being," Mayorkas said in a memorandum to immigration and border agency officials, CNBC reported. "As we strive to

provide them with a path to status, we will not work in conflict by spending resources seeking to remove those who do not pose a threat and, in fact, make our nation stronger." The new policy takes effect Nov. 29. The changes follow criticism of the Biden administration, which has used a Trump-era policy known as Title 42 to rapidly expel migrants from areas along the U.S.-Mexico border. The administration has deported approximately 5,000 Haitian migrants from an encampment in Del Rio, Tex., over the past weeks, the AP reported. On Thursday, a federal appeals court in Washington ruled that the administration can continue expelling families under Title 42, overruling a lower court order that barred the expulsions. Also on Thursday, four agencies of the United Nations called on countries to refrain from deporting migrants to Haiti without thoroughly assessing whether they are eligible for refugee status, CNBC reported. In the statement, the U.N. Refugee Agency, the International Organization for Migration, the U.N. Children's Fund and the U.N. Human Rights Office emphasized the need to recognize the human rights of Haitians who have fled, and they urged countries to offer them protection or arrangements for their legal status in order to address "profound vulnerabilities." The agencies also urged countries in the Americas to coordinate on protecting Haitians.

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Ecuador Sends 1,000 Officers Into Prison Amid Deadly Riot

More than 1,000 police officers and soldiers were deployed to the Litoral prison in Guayaquil on Thursday to quell the deadliest-ever prison riots in Ecuador, which left at least 118 dead and 79 injured earlier this week, EFE reported. Police General Commander Tannya Varela said forces launched a search and control operation in the early morning of Thursday and another one at noon, but she added that there will be more. According to the latest police report, authorities seized three pistols, 435 bullets, 25 knives, three explosive devices and several doses of drugs from inmates, EFE reported.

## Diageo to Invest \$500 Million in Tequila Production in Mexico

British beverage firm Diageo said on Thursday that it will invest \$500 million in its tequila production capacity in Mexico to help cover local and international demand with the construction of a third local manufacturing plant, said Alvaro Cardenas, the company's president for Latin America and the Caribbean, Reuters reported. Cardenas said the new plant will be in the La Barca municipality in Jalisco state. "It is the most significant investment we have made in Latin America and the Caribbean in the last 10 years," Cardenas said.

## Chile's Copper Production Declines 4.6 Percent in August

Chile's copper production declined 4.6 percent year-on-year in August amid falling ore grades and labor strikes at some of the country's key deposits, government statistics agency INE said on Thursday, Reuters reported. Copper output was down to 466,928 metric tons in August, with production in the first eight months of the year falling 1.2 percent.

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ing the root cause of migration through progressive immigration policy. This crisis is a defining moment for the United States, our international partners and allies to help promote direct foreign investments in the Republic of Haiti. It is my sincere prayer, moving forward, that Haiti will be viewed as a strategic partner for investments instead of through the lens of humanitarian assistance. For example, Congress should urgently renew the HOPE and HELP acts, which can create jobs for roughly 200,000 Haitian nationals. Furthermore, under the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, Haiti could play a more crucial role in strengthening the supply chain for personal protective equipment and textiles in response to Covid-19, making

the United States less dependent on nations outside the Western Hemisphere. We expect to work with the United States to realize this possibility, which would reduce migration to the United States."



**Isabel Carlota Roby, Latin America staff attorney at Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights:**

"International human rights law is very clear—under the principle of nonrefoulement, no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm. This principle applies to all migrants at all times, irrespective of migration status and methods

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## ECONOMIC NEWS

## Venezuela Slashes Six Zeros From Currency Amid Hyperinflation

Venezuela today launched a new currency with six fewer zeros as the bolívar continues to slump after years of hyperinflation, the Associated Press reported. The highest denomination starting today will be a one million bolívar bill that on Thursday was worth slightly less than a quarter of a U.S. dollar. The ceiling for the new currency is 100 bolívares, the equivalent of nearly \$25. The new digital bolívar will replace the so-called sovereign bolívar, which started circulating three years ago, Bloomberg News reported. The slashing of zeros is intended to help both with cash transactions and book-keeping calculations in bolívares that before had multiple zeros, the AP reported. "The most important and fundamental reason is that the payment systems are already collapsed because the number of digits make the payment systems and doing the math practically unmanageable," José Guerra, economics professor at the Central University of Venezuela, told the AP.

## BUSINESS NEWS

## Western Union Expanding Service in Guatemala

Western Union announced Wednesday that, through a partnership with Banco Industrial, it is expanding the number of locations in Guatemala where customers can send and receive money transfers. The deal will add more than 580 locations to the U.S.-based company's network and will provide greater access to the company's services, Western Union said. "This is a great alliance that will reinforce our growth strategy, which is based on receiving family remittances. It will become a great option in the portfolio of services that we have firmly provided to our clients for 52 years," said

## THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

### Will Venezuela's Talks Lead to Any Real Progress?

**Q** **Mexico in early September began hosting representatives of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government and the opposition for talks following preliminary meetings in mid-August. The objective of these talks has been to overcome the country's political gridlock and economic crisis, which have resulted in a regional migratory exodus of more than five million Venezuelans in recent years. Given that one of the government's primary demands is the lifting of U.S. and E.U. sanctions on officials and institutions, how much progress can be made without a change in international actors' approach? With the release of opposition leader Freddy Guevara prior to the talks, is the Venezuelan government likely to continue freeing more people whom the opposition considers political prisoners? How much are government-opposition relations likely to change as a result of the talks?**

**A** **Francisco José Virtuoso, S.J., rector of the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello in Venezuela:** "The first round of negotiations between the representatives of Maduro's government and the Unitary Platform concluded on Sept. 6 in Mexico City and resulted in two agreements: the Agreement for the Ratification and Defense of the Sovereignty of Venezuela over Guayana Esequiba, and the Partial Agreement for the Social Protection of the Venezuelan People. The former is an issue on which there was no disagreement, as no Venezuelan supports the actions Guyana has taken to continue its

Edgar Chavarría, manager of Banco Industrial's personal banking division. Western Union said the deal between the companies will enhance cross-border payment capabilities of the bank's customers. "Banco Industrial has distinguished

claims against Venezuela. The validity of the 1966 Geneva Protocol is reiterated, but this alliance will serve to reinforce the existing position of rejection regarding the lack of competence that the International Court of Justice has to decide on the matter. More important is the second agreement, which recognizes the need to urgently address the health and nutrition needs of the Venezuelan people, especially those arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. To this end, there was a consensus on the establishment of a joint national social care roundtable, as well as a commission to review the inconveniences of the overcompliance of sanctions in the financial system. While a very limited agreement, it is nonetheless important. In Venezuela, we have been trying for almost two years to advance the construction of institutional agreements allowing for the implementation of the U.N. World Food Program, the Covax system for the supply of Covid-19 vaccines and the opening of the country to international humanitarian assistance. Perhaps this high-level agreement will facilitate the understanding and urgent implementation of care programs in these high-priority areas. The review of the overcompliance mechanisms that have been established as a result of economic sanctions also is necessary and positive, and it can help the government obtain resources for the development of social policies."

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**EDITOR'S NOTE: The comment above is a continuation of the Q&A published in the Sept. 9 issue of the Advisor.**

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itself as one of the Guatemalan leaders in cross-border payments for being at the forefront in the adoption of payment technology," said Pablo Porro, Western Union's general manager for Mexico and Central America.

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of entry. Nonetheless, the Biden administration continues to use Title 42 to deport families without a hearing to seek asylum, using Covid-19 as an excuse. More recently, the Department of Homeland Security ramped up efforts to deport Haitians at the border, with an average of seven deportation flights per day. The deportation of Black families must stop immediately. The images that we have all seen of Haitian migrants being forcibly removed, detained and/or deported at Del Rio, Tex., are horrific—and they reflect the United States' historically racist and discriminatory migration policies. Whereas the Trump administration was viciously and openly hostile to migrants, the Biden administration has paid lip service to a humane solution to the immigration crisis at the border, while bypassing the rights of refugees to seek asylum. Clearly, the rhetoric of a 'humane' immigration response does not match the current policies. If the Biden administration continues to implement discriminatory Trump-era border policies, which are unacceptable and immoral, it will undoubtedly rescind its credibility and commitment to immigration reform and, more generally, to people of color in this country. We must hold power to account. The United States is bound by international human rights and must halt all deportations to Haiti, provide people a fair chance to claim their legal right to asylum and find a truly humane approach to immigration reform. Outrage and apologies will not do. We need honest leadership, fair and humane policies, and the respectful implementation of refugees' most fundamental rights."

**A** **Andrew Selee, president of the Migration Policy Institute:** "The current increase in the number of migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border has a distinctive feature from previous surges over the past decade. This time, a larger percentage of those arriving are from countries beyond Mexico and Central America, including Haiti, Ecuador,

Brazil, Venezuela and Cuba. Honduras and Guatemala continue to be the primary source countries as before (once repeat crossings are calculated), but the numbers from other countries are growing quickly. The Haitian migrants are a particularly difficult case because most have been out of their country for five to 10 years, first seeking refuge in Brazil after the 2010 earthquake and then often moving on to Chile. The Biden administration has wanted to deter future arrivals by returning some Haitians to Haiti, but it has allowed most to stay because of the fragility of the Haitian state and legitimate concerns about returning people to Haiti after a decade away. However, there are many more migrants coming from all of these countries, including Haitians, and the administration will need to develop a coherent regional approach and a permanent shift away from Title 42 at the border. The U.S. government can do much more to create legal pathways (primarily in Central America) and to work with governments in South America on their policies for integrating migrants (including the more than five million Venezuelans and one million Haitians who live in other Latin American and Caribbean countries). It will also have to decide what border management looks like, implementing a fair and efficient asylum system and restarting returns for those who do not seek or qualify for asylum. None of these options are easy, but all point to a need to engage proactively with countries in the region around migration and to understand the connections between U.S. immigration policy and hemispheric policies."

*[Editor's note: The commentaries above were submitted to the Advisor before the Biden administration on Thursday announced new rules on the deportation of undocumented migrants.]*

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at [gene.kuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gene.kuleta@thedialogue.org).*

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