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FEATURED Q&A

What Is Behind the Surge in Emigration From Venezuela?



The number of Venezuelan migrants seeking to reach the United States has surged this year. Venezuelan migrants in Colombia are pictured. // File Photo: Colombian Government.

Q The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden announced on Oct. 6 that it will resume deportation flights for Venezuelan migrants amid an increasing number of arrivals at the U.S-Mexico border. Considering that the political and economic crises in Venezuela have been occurring for years, what are the main reasons behind the surge happening now? How much will deportations deter Venezuelan migrants from journeying to the United States? Why is the United States resuming the deportation flights after announcing just weeks before that Venezuelans who had arrived in the United States by July 31 would be allowed to stay under temporary protected status?

A Blaine Bookey, legal director and adjunct professor of law, and Felipe Navarro, policy and advocacy manager, both at the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies at the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco: "The protracted crisis in Venezuela has led to massive displacement for nearly a decade. The conditions forcing Venezuelans to flee have not improved, only deteriorated. The plight of Venezuelans persists in the context of increased displacement across the region resulting from political instability, climate change and disasters, and increasing violence. Conditions have become untenable even in countries that receive Venezuelan refugees and migrants, like Colombia. Between 2021 and 2023, the number of Colombians seeking refuge at the U.S. southern border increased more than tenfold. Last year, our center met with Venezuelans transiting through Panama. Most were unaware of the United States' restrictive policies toward

Continued on page 3

TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Machado Claims Victory in Venezuela Primary

Opposition candidate Maria Corina Machado claimed victory in Sunday's opposition presidential primary in Venezuela. The primary's organizer said Machado won 93 percent of the vote.

Page 2

BUSINESS

Chevron Boosting Guyana Presence in Deal for Hess

U.S.-based oil major Chevron announced today that it is buying Hess Corp. in a \$53 billion all-stock deal. The acquisition will boost Chevron's presence in Guyana.

Page 2

POLITICAL

Massa, Milei Head to Runoff in Argentina Election

Argentine Economy Minister Sergio Massa won the most votes in Sunday's presidential election in Argentina, setting up a runoff next month with the second-place finisher, libertarian Javier Milei.

Page 2



Massa // File Photo: Argentine Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Massa, Milei Head to Runoff in Argentina's Presidential Election

Argentine Economy Minister Sergio Massa, the candidate of the country's ruling Peronist coalition, won the most votes in Sunday's presidential election in Argentina, with libertarian economist and lawmaker Javier Milei coming in second, setting up a Nov. 19 runoff between the two candidates, Reuters reported. With nearly 98 percent of the votes counted, Massa garnered 36.6 percent of the vote, with Milei receiving just over 30 percent. Conservative Patricia Bullrich came in third, with 23.8 percent, failing to advance to the runoff. The result was surprisingly strong for Massa as Argentina is beset by an economic crisis that includes an annual inflation rate of 138 percent, a weak currency and a rising poverty rate that has reached 40 percent, The Wall Street Journal reported. "I know that many of those who voted for us are the ones who are suffering the most," Massa said Sunday after the results were announced, Reuters reported. "Our country is experiencing a complex, difficult situation, full of challenges to face ... I am not going to fail them," he added. Frustration over the economy has helped to fuel the rise of Milei, who has vowed to dismantle what he has said is a "political caste" that has driven the country into economic turmoil, The Wall Street Journal reported. In a speech after the results, Milei vowed to fight to win next month's runoff. "We are faced with the most important election of the last 100 years," said Milei, Reuters reported. "If we work together we can win, if we work together we can recover our country," he said. Voter turnout on Sunday was about 74 percent, higher than the primaries in August but lower than the 81 percent turnout in the last presidential election and the lowest participation rate since the country returned to democracy in 1983. Voters also selected members of Congress and governors in Sunday's election. While legislative results were not yet final as of this morning, the ruling coalition appeared to maintain the most

seats in both chambers of Congress, though it appears that the next Congress will be sharply divided, the Associated Press reported.

Machado Claims Victory in Venezuela Opposition Primary

Early returns in Sunday's opposition presidential primary on Sunday showed former legislator Maria Corina Machado in the lead as opponents of President Nicolás Maduro seek to unseat him in an election planned for next year, the Associated Press reported. Machado claimed victory in a speech to supporters on Sunday outside her campaign headquarters. "From tonight we begin a great movement for a great national alliance for the transformation of Venezuela," she said, Reuters reported. "Today I received a mandate and I accept with Venezuelans the commitment of making that mandate matter." The Independent Primary Commission, the primary's official organizer, said Machado received 93 percent of the votes, while the rest of the ballots were divided among the other nine candidates, The Washington Post reported. The vote marked the first presidential primaries for Venezuela since 2012. Although Maduro's administration agreed to let the opposition choose its candidate for the upcoming 2024 elections, it has also barred her from running for office, the AP reported.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Brazil, Argentina Seek Billions From E.U. in Talks: Report

Brazil and Argentina are seeking financial aid totaling 12.5 billion euros (\$13.2 billion) from the European Union amid their talks to finalize a trade agreement with the South American Mercosur bloc, Reuters reported Friday, citing a document relating to the negotiations. "To ensure fulfillment of the objectives of this

NEWS BRIEFS

Chevron Boosts Presence in Guyana Through \$53 Bn Acquisition of Hess

California-based oil major Chevron announced today that it is acquiring Hess Corp. in a \$53 billion all-stock deal, a transaction that will boost its holdings in Guyana. "The Stabroek block in Guyana is an extraordinary asset with industry leading cash margins and low carbon intensity that is expected to deliver production growth into the next decade," Chevron said in a statement. The total enterprise value of the transaction, including debt, is \$60 billion, Chevron said.

SLB Seeking to Return Quickly to Venezuela's Oil Sector: Chief Executive

Oil service firm SLB wants to quickly restart its operations in Venezuela, its chief executive said Friday after the U.S. government said it was easing sanctions on the South American country's oil sector, Reuters reported. "We will be responding and, as fast as we can, mobilizing resources and equipment," CEO Olivier Le Peuch said during a call with investors. The administration of U.S. President Joe announced last Wednesday it was lifting for six months many of the restrictions placed on Venezuela's petroleum sector.

Peru's Congress Approves \$408 Million Fiscal Stimulus Package

Peru's Congress approved a fiscal stimulus package of approximately \$408 million on Friday to support the impacts of El Niño and boost the economy during a recession, Reuters reported. In a post on social media early last week, economy minister Alex Contreras acknowledged, for the first time, the existence of a recession in the country, whose economic activity fell 0.63 percent year-on-year in August.

agreement, the E.U. shall allocate financial resources ... for an amount of not less than EUR 12.5 billion in grants, loans and other financial instruments," the text reads. Argentina made the request, which received Brazil's backing, the wire service reported, citing three E.U. and South American diplomats. Argentina and Brazil also want to exclude additional types of government procurement from competition by European companies, but Uruguay and Paraguay are not supporting that effort because it could derail a deal, the wire service reported, citing two unnamed diplomats. Mercosur's position in the negotiations is still evolving, and the document that Reuters reviewed may not be the latest version under discussion, a spokesman at Brazil's foreign ministry told the wire service. "There are changes being discussed and agreed upon," the spokesman said. The financial aid from the European Union would be intended to compensate for higher levels of competition, according to the document. A European diplomat said the 12.5 billion euro number was "floated" but added that any support from Europe "would not be anything like that figure," Reuters reported. A trade deal between Mercosur and the European Union has been stalled since 2019, largely because of European concerns over deforestation in the Amazon. Talks accelerated last month via video conferences, and lead negotiators are to meet in person this week in Brussels, the wire service reported. Another meeting is scheduled to be held Oct. 30 in Brasília. Paraguayan President Santiago Peña said last month that the European Union and Mercosur need to finalize the trade deal by Dec. 6, the day his country takes over Mercosur's presidency. If the two sides do not reach a deal by then, Peña said Mercosur will walk away from the deal and seek agreements with Asian countries instead. The trade talks have been "an arduous 20-year negotiation process," Juan Cruz Diaz and Santiago Ott of Cefeidas Group in Buenos Aires wrote in a [Q&A](#) published in the Advisor Oct. 6. "The slow pace of negotiations was due to numerous factors, including the very nature of multilateral FTAs, in which the interests of each member state must be reconciled line by line, the geopolitical landscape and domestic pressures of each state," they said.

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 1

asylum seekers. Their decision to cross the perilous Darién Gap was motivated by immediate safety concerns. This highlights the cruel futility of deterrence measures, which have never worked. Despite inhumane policies that limit access to asylum at the border, such as expulsions to Mexico under Title 42 and the current asylum ban, desperate Venezuelans continue to seek safety in the United States. The contradictory decision to resume deportations, weeks after the United States designated Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), indicates a pattern. This move—knowingly deporting Venezuelans to a country the government has acknowledged is unsafe—is reminiscent of recent mass deportations to Haiti. Unfortunately, under the Biden administration, fair and humane migration measures are often followed by sweeping 'deterrence' policies that fly in the face of the country's moral and legal obligations to protect refugees. Instead of caving to political pressure, the administration should put humanity first."

A Manuel Orozco, director of the Migration, Remittances and Development Program at the Inter-American Dialogue:

"Deportations respond to internal political pressure from public opinion and politicians about immigration mismanagement. Two-thirds of Americans criticize Biden for the immigration problem: 1.6 million migrants will have arrived at the border in 2023, 25 percent less than in 2022, a drop due to the restrictions imposed on Cubans, Haitians, Venezuelans and Nicaraguans with humanitarian parole—whom in order to benefit had to apply first for asylum and not show up at the border. But the drop is not enough after seven million arrivals since 2019. The policy is accompanied by other ones, such as the construction of the wall interpreted as a political concession for being soft on migration. Although more than 100,000 Venezuelans will benefit under parole, 270,000 will have arrived at the border; those arriving

without proper authorization will be the most affected. The number of Venezuelans in the United States rose to 600,000 in mid-2022. By the end of 2023, they could total 750,000. Some will be covered by TPS if they arrived before July 31, 2023. The administration continues to approach Venezuela with one hand tied behind its back: it tries to control migration, while operating without a foreign policy on points like free elections, repression and the economy. It has stopped sanctions and offered to reduce them in exchange for political reforms, while the Maduro regime mocks sanctions and laughs at any democratization effort. The big immigration problem is not pairing migration and foreign policy together. The restrictions may contain people in the short term (as it happened with Nicaragua), but they will not solve the humanitarian and political crisis that persists in Venezuela. People will try to leave again."

A Nicole Hallett, clinical professor of law and director of the Immigrants' Rights Clinic at The University of Chicago Law School:

"The numbers of Venezuelans arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border has increased this year, but migration levels from Venezuela have been high for several years. The recent increase is probably the result of several factors: worsening conditions in Venezuela, increasing migration through the Darién Gap and network effects (as more Venezuelans arrive in the United States, others in their social network decide to make the journey as well). The Biden administration undoubtedly hopes that restarting deportations will deter people from making the journey, but past experience suggests that it will not have much of a deterrent effect, particularly since the numbers of people deported as a percentage of all arrivals remains very low. The resumption of deportation flights shortly after the announcement that Temporary Protected Status (TPS) would be extended to approximately 400,000 Venezuelans already in the

Continued on page 4

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 3

United States was likely not a coincidence. Although future arrivals will not be eligible to apply for TPS, the administration may worry that the announcement will encourage more people to come. Whether the deportation flights will deter future migration remains to be seen. Past efforts at deterrence have largely failed.”

A **Colleen Putzel-Kavanaugh, associate policy analyst at the U.S. Immigration Policy Program at the Migration**

Policy Institute: “Several factors are driving Venezuelan migration. As the question mentioned, long standing political and economic crises continue to drive migration directly from Venezuela. However, a significant portion of Venezuelans are secondary migrants, migrating from other countries in the region including Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. Political unrest or worsening economic conditions in these countries are likely drivers of this secondary migration. UNHCR recently published a report estimating that 45 percent of Venezuelan migration comes directly from Venezuela, with the remainder from other countries in the region. It’s hard to know for sure what deterrent effect deportations could have on Venezuelans as the details of the U.S. agreement with Venezuela have not yet been revealed. Given the large numbers of Venezuelan migrants continuing to arrive irregularly to the U.S.-Mexico border, the number of deportations would have to be quite robust to have any real deterrent effect. This is not an uncommon practice for the United States to have deportation agreements with countries that also qualify for TPS. For example, the United States also has deportation agreements to remove Afghans and Haitians, who are also TPS recipients. Given that irregular arrivals of Venezuelan migrants remain high, this is likely an effort to encourage Venezuelans to make use of the lawful pathways available, including CBP One and the parole programs for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans.”

A **Alejandro Velasco, associate professor of modern Latin America at New York University and executive editor of**

NACLA: “After years of stalemate, the past week has seen a dizzying flurry of activity in Venezuelan politics. Maduro’s government and sectors of the opposition agreed to a roadmap for free and fair presidential elections in 2024; the United States announced sweeping sanctions relief that surprised even the most tuned-in analysts; and authorities in Caracas released several high-profile political prisoners ahead of the opposition primaries. We should see the resumption of deportation flights in this wider context of re-engagement. The Biden administration has faced growing pressure not just from Republicans, but also from Democrats in different quarters, to respond to growing numbers of undocumented migrants, either by addressing root causes or by cracking down. Deportations coupled with sanctions relief and an electoral roadmap speaks to both constituencies. For the Maduro government, accepting returning migrants helps bolster a narrative that problems in Venezuela are now ‘fixed.’ That of course is a far cry. Though repression remains a driver for some seeking asylum, Venezuela’s now-dollarized economy is at the heart of a surge of migrants looking for work to send remittances home. But the trek north is brutal, and conditions have grown increasingly restrictive as once welcoming cities in the United States have cut back aid. And while extending Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelans in the United States is indeed a welcome lifeline, its benefits are limited to those with legal status, who have financial sponsors, and who meet other eligibility criteria. That puts many recent migrants outside its scope.”

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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