



## SPECIAL SITUATION REPORT

# BOLIVIA, CHILE & PERU

## CURRENT SITUATION

In the context of increased onward movements of refugees and migrants in the region, crossing different countries in vulnerable situations and through unofficial border points, in Chile, on 12 February, the country's new Migration Law went into effect with the publication of its [by-laws](#). This led to the application of a procedure known as *reconducción* or "redirection" of refugees and migrants who enter Chile through irregular crossings. According to information available to R4V partners, pursuant to this procedure, since 12 February at least 70 individuals, the vast majority Venezuelan refugees and migrants, were "redirected" back from Chile to Bolivia. Out of this group, more than 50 refugees and migrants (including at least 20 children) remained at the border between the two customs offices of Colchane (in Chile) and Pisiga (in Bolivia) for several hours on 13 February, without the possibility of entering Chile and in disagreement not wanting to return to Bolivia.

Since these events, according to R4V partners, all of the refugees and migrants who were so far "redirected" back from Chile to Bolivia have now re-entered Bolivia. It is understood that some traveled on to Oruro and others attempted to re-enter Chile through irregular crossings.

With refugees and migrants from Venezuela continuing to be impacted by COVID-19 and related mitigation measures, which have increased onward movements, also northward, it is anticipated that those moving southward will continue to be affected by the "redirection" procedure in Chile and returned to Bolivia and possibly Peru, although there is no formal agreement with the General Directorate of Migration in Bolivia (DIGEMIG), nor with the Superintendence of Migration in Peru to receive refugees and migrants returned from Chile.

Up to 600 refugees and migrants enter Chile [daily](#) through irregular crossings along its northern borders with Bolivia and Peru. It is estimated that this could increase to 850 refugees and migrants attempting to enter Chile daily, particularly with the potential re-opening of borders by Peru initiated beginning on 12 February.<sup>1</sup> Main travel routes to Chile include from Puno in Peru, to Desaguadero in Bolivia, on to Colchane in Chile; as well as from Tacna in Peru to Arica in Chile. Recent R4V partner border monitoring exercises found an average of 498 refugees and migrants exiting Peru daily at Puno towards Bolivia and Chile over the last five months; while there were an average of 319 refugees and migrants exiting Peru daily at Tacna bound for Chile over the past two months.

Meanwhile, monitoring undertaken by R4V partners at Puno in Peru, near the Desaguadero border in Bolivia, found that since last weekend's first application of the new Migration Law in Chile, approximately 2 out of 5 Venezuelans in transit at Puno were re-entering Peru from Bolivia, including after being unable to enter Chile, with the majority entering Bolivia from Peru having the intention to reach Chile.

While "redirections" are a new legal feature of the Chilean Migration Law, some "pushbacks" and "expulsions" of refugees and migrants from Venezuela at the border between Chile and Peru (despite its closure due to COVID-19 measures) have been reported over the past months. For example, Venezuelans interviewed during border monitoring exercises in Tacna (Peru) noted that even refugees and migrants near the city of Arica (Chile) had been detained by the police and returned to Peruvian territory.

<sup>1</sup> Peru declared the [reopening](#) of its land borders in the province of Tacna on 12 February 2022. Meanwhile, the zonal chief of Migration in Puno reported that the Peruvian border with Bolivia (through Desaguadero and Casani border checkpoints) was to reopen at midnight on 14 February. At the time of publishing of this report, the border remained closed.

## NEEDS

This situation is unfolding in a context of extreme high altitudes (up to 4,000m) and weather conditions posing grave **health risks** for refugees and migrants transiting these routes, with temperatures along the crossing from Pisiga (Bolivia) to Colchane (Chile) dropping below 0 degrees Celsius at night and rising to up to 35 degrees Celsius by day. At least 20 refugees and migrants died on this route in 2021, while there have already been three deaths of refugees and migrants reported in 2022. The remoteness of these areas also results in limited capacity to provide humanitarian assistance, while criminal groups are known to take advantage to exploit vulnerable refugees and migrants, creating additional **protection risks**. Despite these risks, during 2021, at least 11,279 Venezuelans were detected having entered irregularly the Chilean region of Tarapacá, bordering the Department of Oruro in Bolivia.

The response is further complicated by the recent rise in **xenophobic violence** directed against refugees and migrants in Peru and Chile as well as those who provide them with assistance, with growing anti-UN sentiment including attacks in social media and [demonstrations outside of UN offices](#) in Santiago. The death of a Chilean truckdriver in an incident involving three Venezuelan nationals sparked anti-immigrant protests and demonstrations, intermittent road closures in January limited humanitarian access, and violence directed towards refugees and migrants. This situation also affects R4V partners' ability to safely deploy humanitarian teams to the affected areas, and leaders from the refugee and migrant community have also received threats and faced harassment.

While the countries' Resident Coordinators have been deliberating political implications of the evolving situation with the respective host governments, the R4V National Platforms in each of the countries have been leading and coordinating the response of UN agencies, NGOs

and civil society actors, in response to needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela and affected host communities, complementing and in close collaboration with national authorities. In the present context, the main needs of affected refugees and migrants in these border regions of Bolivia, Chile and Peru are aligned with those identified in the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan ([RMRP](#)) 2022, with emphasis on the sectors of shelter, food security, health, protection, humanitarian transportation and WASH.

- **Shelter:** there is limited shelter capacity in the affected areas to accommodate the current and anticipated numbers of refugees and migrants in Bolivia, Chile and Peru. Possible scenarios include a growing number of refugees and migrants in Peru experiencing homelessness, estimated at 800 to 1,000 persons, especially where Venezuelans are unable to enter Chile and returned from Bolivia.
- **Food security:** need for hot and cold meals for persons in transit in Bolivia and Peru and upon arrival in Chile.
- **Health:** treatment of altitude sickness and respiratory diseases (particularly in the Puno/Desaguadero/Pisiga/Colchane corridor) and for dehydration and foot injuries.
- **Protection:** refugees and migrants require accurate information on the legal requirements and protection risks of travel routes, and vulnerable profiles (incl. pregnant women, children, as well as those with pre-existing health conditions) should be identified and referred to specialized services.
- **Humanitarian Transportation:** safe transportation for particularly vulnerable refugees and migrants.
- **WASH:** safe drinking water for persons in transit and upon arrival, as well as chemical toilets, showers, hygiene and biosecurity kits, to maintain COVID-19 protocols, especially in areas without adequate WASH infrastructure and capacity.

## OPERATIONAL RESPONSE

In **Bolivia**, due to the remote location of the travel routes in question, adverse conditions and poor connectivity, response capacities in Pisiga are limited. Adequate provision of food, shelter and

non-food items (NFI) therefore remains a challenge. R4V partners have identified various alternatives for accommodations in the area, including a shelter of an R4V partner with capacity for 36 individuals

which resumed operations on 17 February. R4V partners in Bolivia have stocks of winter supplies, blankets, cooking kits, medicines and hygiene kits in La Paz which may be transferred and distributed in Pisiga, as necessary.

In **Chile**, partners of the R4V National Platform are supporting the establishment of a new temporary sanitary residence in Playa Lobito in Iquique, to be administered by the government, with a capacity to accommodate 230 individuals. Partners are delivering 185 hot meals daily (lunch and dinner) to refugees and migrants in the transitory center in Colchane. Partners also have 400 emergency kits (with water and blankets) available to be delivered in Colchane, as well as 1,500 hygiene and food kits

and 1,500 recreational kits that will be delivered this week to Colchane, Iquique and Loa.

In **Peru**, the R4V National Platform led the preparation of a contingency plan to provide a joint response together with local authorities, especially in terms of shelter, under a potential scenario where refugees and migrants are stranded in Peru for over two weeks (along the border with Chile). The anticipated response includes shelter, food and water, protection for cases with special needs, WASH, health care and humanitarian transportation.

## PLATFORM COORDINATORS

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## BOLIVIA, CHILE &amp; PERU

## CURRENT SCENARIOS

- 1 ABOUT 60% OF VENEZUELAN IN PUNO ARE LEAVING PERU, WHILE 40% ARE RE-ENTERING FROM BOLIVIA**

after being unable to cross to Chile, according to R4V partners' border monitoring.

- 2 387 VENEZUELAN EXITED TACNA ON 15 FEBRUARY**

according to a one-day monitoring exercise by an R4V partner.

- 3 AT LEAST 70 VENEZUELAN "REDIRECTED BACK TO BOLIVIA" FROM CHILE**

at the Colchane-Pisiga border after 12 February, including at least 20 children. Up to 59 people remained in the border area without departing for several hours on 13 February, before re-entering Bolivia.

- 4 UP TO 600 VENEZUELAN ENTER CHILE DAILY**

through unofficial border crossings with Bolivia and Peru.



## POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

- UP TO 850**

people a day could attempt to enter Chile from Peru and Bolivia with borders reopened



This could lead to a build-up of refugees and migrants unable to cross from Peru (Tacna) to Chile (Arica).

## HAZARDS / RISKS



Extreme weather



High altitude



Organized crime

All figures shared in this document are estimates obtained from field observations and key informants of cross-border movements (non-official figures).