

# UNHCR welcomes Colombia's decision to regularize stay of Venezuelans in the country

*This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Shabia Mantoo – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at today's press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.*

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Venezuelan refugees and migrants prepare for a day on the road after overnighting in Pamplona, in eastern Colombia. © UNHCR/Hélène Caux



UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, welcomes the Colombian government's announcement of the creation of two new Special Stay Permits (PEP) that seek to benefit more than 100,000 Venezuelans, by allowing them to stay and work in the country.

Colombia is host to more than 1.6 million Venezuelans, of whom more than half, almost 60 per cent, lack a regular status. Many of them face difficulties accessing essential services, such as health, education and employment.

The two new Special Stay Permits announced by Colombia this week are expected to benefit Venezuelans who entered Colombia before 29 November 2019 with stamped passports as well as those currently in an irregular situation but holding an offer of employment for a period of at least two months up to a maximum of two years.

Venezuelans receiving the new Special Stay Permits will therefore be able to regularize their situation in the country, receive wages and be covered by Colombian labour laws. They will also be able to enroll in and benefit from the national social security and healthcare system.

UNHCR protection monitoring exercises indicate that access to the labour market remains a top priority among Venezuelans in Colombia.

According to the Colombian Migration Authority, only 14 per cent of the almost 600,000 Venezuelans in the country that currently hold a special stay permit are engaged in formal employment.

Since 2017, Colombia has created several Special Stay Permits that have been granted to Venezuelans who entered the country during specific periods of time and who fulfilled specific requirements such as having their passports stamped at an official border crossing.

Among these permits is also one issued for Venezuelans who were irregularly present in Colombia and were registered during a nation-wide registration exercise carried out by the Colombian government and supported by UNHCR in 2018.

UNHCR remains committed to support governments across Latin America and the Caribbean to regularize the situation of Venezuelans currently living in an irregular situation. These efforts are key to guaranteeing the inclusion of Venezuelans in national systems, reducing their vulnerabilities and allowing them to contribute to the economy of their host countries.

In 2020, USD 1.35 billion will be needed to respond to the increasing needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and the communities hosting them in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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