

26,000 asylum seekers wait in Mexico for U.S. entry visas



Ciudad Juarez, August 20 (RHC)-- More than 26,000 people are waiting in several cities of Mexico for a United States visa, according to authorities of Tijuana, the biggest city of both Baja California State and the Baja Peninsula, which houses the largest number of migrants.

Tijuana now has 10,000 migrants, and the other 16,000 are spread among 11 cities along Mexico's northern border, the official statement affirmed. The second-largest community of people waiting for asylum is in Ciudad Juarez, located on the Rio Bravo river, south of El Paso, Texas, U.S., with 6,000 people. Third comes Reynosa, a border city in the northern part of the state of Tamaulipas, with some 4,000 people seeking asylum.

In Tijuana, the waiting time for the first hearing before a migration court in San Diego varies from six to nine months. After that hearing, cases that have a chance usually go on to two or three more hearings, also with an intermediate wait of several months each.

Since the end of January, the U.S. government has been sending migrants seeking asylum to the Mexican border to wait for the courts' responses. The program, Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), was unilaterally implemented by President Donald Trump's administration, and Mexico said it accepted the project for humanitarian reasons.

The MPP aims to send Central American asylum-seekers to Mexico while their court dates are processed, threatening to overwhelm migrant shelters, which Mexican officials point out are already overcrowded and underfunded.

An appeals court last week granted President Donald Trump's administration the power to reject asylum petitions on the Mexico border with the U.S. states of Texas and New Mexico. For those two states, the rule was passed in mid-July to block all migrants from applying for asylum, requiring them first to attempt international protection in a safe third country.

A study conducted by universities in Austin, Texas and San Diego, California indicates that the current number of migrants is 40 percent higher than it was in May when the counting began in both institutions.

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