

Panama will strengthen measures against illegal migration



(FILE) Migrants at a shelter in Paso Canoas, on the Panama-Costa Rica border, August 2023.
EFE/Marcelino Rosario

Panama City, August 25 (RHC)-- The Panamanian government has announced strengthening of security measures to curb the migratory wave that tries to cross the Darien jungle, on the border with Colombia, to reach the United States.

The Minister of Public Security, Juan Manuel Pino, affirmed that "Panama must make its internal and external decisions" and that soon "it will be taking strong measures and actions" to stop migration, without offering more details of the plans in that sense."

According to the official, "the communication and management that Panama has tried to give (to the migratory issue) through international cooperation has fallen on deaf ears, there are countries of the south that are not giving due responsibility to this issue", he criticized.

Official data reveal that, so far in 2023, just over 307,000 people have crossed through the Darien jungle, a figure much higher than the same period last year, when only 248,000 had done so. Despite the dangers, wild animals, raging rivers, steep roads and criminal gangs, they continue to use these corridors.

The Darien jungle, 266 kilometers long and covering an area of some 575,000 hectares, has become a highly trafficked route for those seeking to reach the United States from South America via Central America and Mexico. Haitians, Ecuadorians venture through it.

Panamanian immigration and civil security authorities have set up shelters in conjunction with international organizations, as an increasing number of Chinese nationals have also been detected, despite the fact that the US has warned that it will not allow those who enter Panama irregularly to enter its territory.

Also today, government representatives from 23 countries signed a joint communiqué in which they recognize "the need to generate coordinated actions" to prevent "irregular migration" and prosecute human traffickers. However, Panamanian authorities are calling for greater international involvement.

"It is a reality that surpasses us (...), we already understand that we are alone in this issue," lamented the director of Panama's National Migration Service, Samira Gozaine.

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