

UNHCR warns of human rights violations over U.S. asylum policies



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La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados

United Nations, July 17 (RHC)-- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office (UNHCR) warned Tuesday that the new asylum application policies by which the United States seeks to stop migrant flow go against international obligations because they highly violate basic rights and freedoms.

"We understand the U.S. asylum system is under significant pressure... However, we are deeply concerned about a measure which will put vulnerable families at risk," said the UNHCR head Filippo Grandi referring to the rejection of asylum requests made by migrants who have reached the U.S. territory without previously presenting an asylum application at a third safe country.

"This measure excessively curtails the right to seek asylum, threatens the right not to suffer a forced return and places the excessive burden of proof on the applicants," Liz Throssell, the OHCHR Spokesperson, explained.

The consequence of the U.S. policy will be "to put at risk the vulnerable people who need international protection and who flee their countries for reasons ranging from poverty to persecution," she added.

This measure will force migrants to seek asylum in Mexico or Guatemala, countries which can hardly be considered safe territories for Hondurans or Salvadorans. If they do not file their applications in such countries, those migrants will be returned by U.S. authorities to Mexico.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said the new rule goes into effect Tuesday and places "further restrictions or limitations on eligibility for aliens who seek asylum in the U.S." The American Civil Liberties Union, however, called the measure "patently unlawful" and vowed to file a lawsuit against it.

In January, President Donald Trump required many asylum-seekers to wait out their cases in Mexico, known as the "Remain in Mexico" policy or the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), with nearly 20,000 people sent back so far. It was not immediately clear how the new rule would affect MPP.

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