Number of migrant children's passage through Panama increases

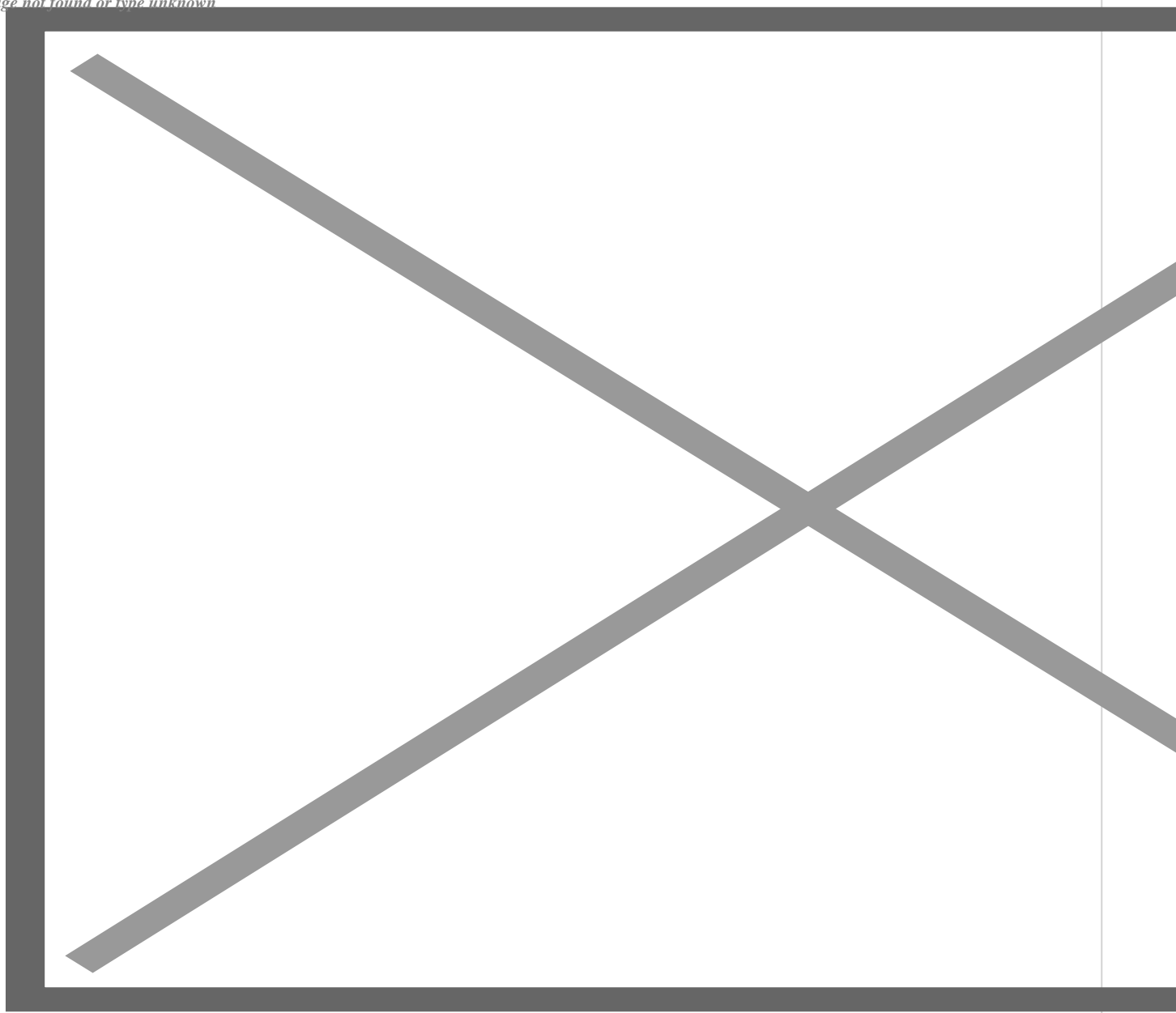## Number of migrant children's passage through Panama increases

Havana, March 31 (RHC) The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned about the increase this year in the passage through Panama of irregular migrant children, a population that today is the victim of the greatest vulnerabilities.

According to UNICEF, between January and February, some 9,700 minors crossed the Darién jungle on the border with Colombia on their way to the United States, compared to less than 1,400 in the same period last year.

That figure is the highest recorded in a two-month period since these records were kept. The agency also indicated that the number of unaccompanied or separated minors continues to grow, as an average of 5 infants a day arrive alone in Panama or at least 200 so far this year, while in 2022 in the same period less than 40.

On the other hand, the organization pointed out in its report that separated or unaccompanied minors are particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation.

The UNICEF director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Garry Conille, estimated that if current trends continue, the number of migrant children and adolescents crossing through Panama this year will far exceed the total registered in 2022.

He also highlighted that the international organization is increasing humanitarian assistance in support of the response of the Panamanian government to this migratory crisis, but basic services such as drinking water, food and maternal and child health, among others, are beginning to run out.

UNICEF called on governments to strengthen their response to the growing migratory flow of minors and on donors and partners to provide additional flexible funds to quickly respond to the needs of children, adolescents and women in host communities. (Source: Prensa Latina)

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