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KIN ATLAS · 01

Internal Displacement in Latin America and the Caribbean: When Violence Redraws the Map

Criminal violence, armed conflict and the actions of organised groups displace people without them ever crossing a national border.

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Editorial direction: Patric Berjeaut · Research and verification: KIN Institute

1 Reading the data

Every number has a face. Every number also has a date, a definition, a source and a limit.

This paper distinguishes People still internally displaced (People still displaced) from Movements registered during the year (New displacements). It also makes the Limit of the available evidence (Coverage limit) visible before figures are compared or cited.

2 Suggested citation

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2.1 A quiet dynamic of forced migration

The global narrative around refuge often focuses on international borders and sea crossings. Yet one of the deepest and least visible dynamics of forced migration takes place inside countries themselves. Across Latin America and the Caribbean, criminal violence, armed conflict and the actions of organised groups continually redraw the human map, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to leave their homes in search of survival without ever crossing a national border.

Understanding this scale requires a rigorous reading of the data. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) groups these causes under the metric ‘conflict and violence’. This category ranges from confrontations involving non-state armed groups to widespread violence perpetrated by factions and organised crime.

2.2 The scale of displacement: stock and new movements

To analyse internal displacement, it is essential to distinguish two metrics that must not be added together: new displacements, or movements and episodes that occurred in a specific year and may count the same person more than once; and people living in displacement, the stock of people who remained displaced at the end of the period.

In 2023, Brazil recorded 16,000 new displacements associated with conflict and violence. In the same year, Latin America and the Caribbean recorded 636,960 new displacements. Brazil’s episodes represented 2.51% of the regional volume in that year [1] [2] [3].

By the end of 2025, the continental picture for the Americas indicated nearly 1.6 million new displacements and around 10.2 million people living in displacement. In Brazil, the end-of-2025 stock was 19,000 people living in displacement due to conflict and violence. The absence of a published figure for new displacements in Brazil in 2025 does not mean the number is zero; it means that no data are available [1].

2.3 The differentiated impact on women and children

One of the greatest gaps in understanding internal displacement is the lack of data disaggregated by sex and age in much of the region. Statistical silence does not demonstrate an absence of risk; it reveals a critical measurement limitation, making it harder to plan adequate responses to gender-based violence and child protection needs [4].

No comparable, published figure exists for women displaced by crime and violence in Brazil or for the regional aggregate using IDMC's same criteria. Still, specific national surveys show a substantial presence of women and young people: Guatemala's ENCOVI 2023 identified 1.2 million internally displaced people across all causes; 53% were women and 62.2% were under 30 [6]. In Honduras, EPHPM 2024 estimated that 423,845 people had experienced internal displacement due to violence at some point in their lives; 55% of this group were women and 11% were under 14 [7].

> *Available data show a substantial presence of women and young people among displaced people in Guatemala and Honduras, but they do not allow a regional proportion of women or children displaced by crime and violence to be calculated. Differences in population, period and method make aggregation inappropriate.*

2.4 Documented cases: organised crime as a driver

Beyond the headline numbers, specific cases show how criminal violence drives displacement.

Brazil — Ceará

[In June 2026, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the State of Ceará formally recognised people being forced to leave their homes because of criminal organisations and established an inter-institutional support pathway [5].]

Mexico

[In the absence of a consolidated national official registry, CMDPDH monitoring recorded 9,602 people displaced in 25 mass-violence episodes in 2022. Of these, 96% were displaced by violence generated by organised armed groups [8].]

Haiti

[Haiti faces the Americas' most acute crisis of displacement caused by criminal violence, with about 977,000 new displacements in 2025. The IDMC directly links this escalation to gang violence [1].]

Ecuador

[Escalating violence associated with armed and criminal groups contributed to almost 132,000 new displacements in 2025, showing how organised crime can create rapid displacement crises [1].]

3 References

1. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Global Report on Internal Displacement 2026 (GRID 2026), 2025 data.
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3. World Bank / IDMC. Indicator VC.IDP.NWCV for Latin America and the Caribbean (ZJ).
4. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Gender dynamics in internal displacement, 2023.
5. Public Prosecutor's Office of the State of Ceará (MPCE). Ceará public institutions establish a support pathway for people forcibly displaced by criminal factions, 26 Jun. 2026.

6. Guatemala National Institute of Statistics and UNHCR. INE and UNHCR present data on internal displacement in Guatemala, 4 Sep. 2025.
7. Honduras National Institute of Statistics. Internal displacement due to violence affected more than 423,000 people in Honduras, 29 Apr. 2026.
8. UNHCR Mexico. Bulletin: Internal displacement in Mexico — January to June 2023, published in 2024.

4 Key terms

***Coverage limit* – Limit of the available evidence**: A geographic, temporal or methodological boundary on what a figure can establish.

***New displacements* – Movements registered during the year**: Movements or episodes registered during a year; the same person may appear more than once.

***People still displaced* – People still internally displaced**: People who remained internally displaced at the end of the reference period.