

PTA PROGRAMME

NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA (NCA)

January 2018

BACKGROUND

In recent years, the North of Central America — El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala — has seen a dramatic escalation in the acute violence of street gangs and organized criminal groups that is driving increased forced displacement both within and from these countries. The NCA countries are experiencing some of the highest homicide rates ever recorded, and sexual violence, forced disappearances, forced recruitment into gangs, forced prostitution and trafficking of girls and women for sexual exploitation have also been reported as part of the violence pattern.

UNHCR has developed a comprehensive protection strategy for the NCA countries within the framework of the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action and the 2016 San José Statement with the aim to provide protection to persons of concern to UNHCR.

What is the PTA?

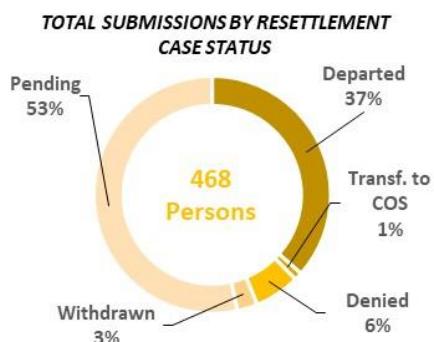
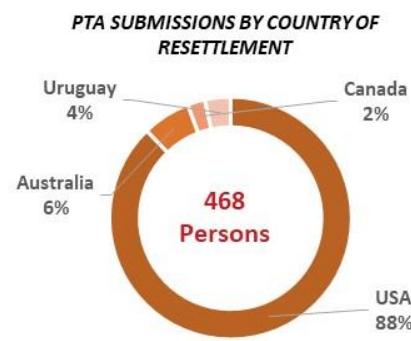
The PTA is one of the elements of the regional protection and solutions strategy and represents an innovative life-saving mechanism that provide individuals exposed to extreme risks with a safe and legal access to a durable solution in a resettlement country, via a country of transit. The programme is coordinated by UNHCR, IOM and the Republic of Costa Rica as transit country for the pilot, and with the Governments of the countries of origin and participating resettlement countries.

How does it work?

UNHCR works with civil society partners to identify cases at high risk in the country of origin, who also provide humanitarian assistance to identified cases and, where needed, provisional protection in safe houses. UNHCR interviews eligible cases and refers the PTA forms with an assessment of the individuals' protection needs. Upon desk review by the receiving country, the case may be accepted for further consideration and UNHCR liaises with the transit country to ensure a smooth transfer. UNHCR partners in the transit country receive the individuals and ensure access to protection and assistance until finalization of case processing by the receiving country. IOM is currently supporting the transfers with logistical and administrative arrangements.

PTA in figures

- As of January 2018, over **1,433** persons have been identified by UNHCR partners in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.
- **468** persons have been submitted to a resettlement country, and **171** persons have travelled to their resettlement country within the PTA framework.
- **5** persons are in transit in Costa Rica expecting onward resettlement.



GREATER RESPONSIBILITY-SHARING

The PTA pilot started in El Salvador in July 2016. In the meantime, it has become fully operational in Guatemala and Honduras. In 2018, the evacuation capacity of the three NCA countries will be of 1080 individuals per year, with possibilities to increase, contingent upon availability of funds and resettlement places. The **USA** has been participating in the PTA pilot as a receiving country has confirmed continuation of its participation for the 2018 USA fiscal year to receive 600 individuals via the PTA. **Canada** reviewed and accepted some pilot cases in 2017. For 2018 Canada has committed to receive 225 persons. In October 2018 **Uruguay** received its first set of pilot cases and have confirmed that they will receive another 4 cases (16 persons) this year. Finally, **Brazil** recently confirmed a quota of 65 individuals for 2018. Australia is currently considering several cases, and other countries, like **Argentina**, have expressed interest in joining the program and have reaffirmed their commitment to providing protection and solutions for persons at heightened risk from the NCA countries. UNHCR is working with current and prospective PTA partners to adapt the modalities of the PTA so as to meet the procedural requirements of receiving states.

The PTA and the CRRF (Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework)

Building upon the collective commitments and regional cooperation efforts such as the 2014 Brazil Plan of Action and the 2016 San José Action Statement, the CRRF for Central America and Mexico was agreed at a regional conference in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, on 26 and 27 October 2017. The PTA as a responsibility sharing mechanism is a key component of the CRRF. States within the international resettlement community that are interested in contributing to the CRRF can make a difference by participating in the PTA as receiving country, in a display of international solidarity that effectively saves lives.

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