

## COVID-19 and Migrant Vulnerability in Tijuana: A Looming Crisis

By Robert McKee Irwin, University of California, Davis; Juan Antonio Del Monte, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte

*This text came about out of a shared concern for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the numerous and abrupt changes in public policy that have been enacted to address it on the very large population of migrants living precariously in Tijuana. The concern quickly turned to urgency as it has recently become clear that COVID-19 is beginning to hit the city with force. As of April 15, Baja California is the state with the third largest number of cases in the nation, and Tijuana is the hardest hit city in the state. Policies on both sides of the border have radically changed daily life in Tijuana for migrants in only a matter of weeks, and service providing agencies are clearly struggling to adjust. As an onslaught of COVID-19 in the coming weeks seems likely, a rapid response is needed to ensure that vulnerable migrants do not take the brunt of the blow.<sup>1</sup>*

### Key Concerns

The developments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to control its propagation have raised several alarms regarding the large population of migrants residing in the border city of Tijuana. The conditions in which this demographic segment – which depends heavily on basic services of lodging, food, and medical care offered by a robust network of charitable organizations – subsists in Tijuana are, under normal circumstances, highly precarious. This health crisis has put them especially at risk.

Health risks include contagion in shelters or dining facilities, lack of access to medical care, and the possibility of the importation of the virus, particularly through deportations from the United States. Meanwhile, reduced availability of services coupled with continued flows of new arrivals places severe strains on service providers, which rely heavily on charitable donations, in many cases from the United States whose border with Mexico is largely closed to traffic.

While larger concerns have been raised worldwide, with the World Economic Forum declaring that “the coronavirus pandemic could be devastating for the world’s migrants,” Tijuana, long one of the world’s busiest hubs of migration, as well as deportation, could easily become a migrant COVID-19 hotspot.

Below we lay out the specific implications for migrant populations in Tijuana with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to control its spread.

### Rising Populations of Migrants

There are several main groups and subsets of migrants that depend on charitable services in Tijuana:

1) migrants in transit that hope to enter the United States, including foreign migrants awaiting US court dates through the Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP) program; many of them

have already initiated their asylum application process and attended one or more court hearings, while others, including many Mexican migrants, remain on a wait list for an initial “credible fear hearing” that would allow them to begin their process;

2) foreign migrants in Tijuana who are in the process or wish to begin the process of applying for asylum in Mexico;

3) migrants being forcibly returned from the United States, including those recently caught crossing without documents by US border patrol agents, as well as long term residents, many undocumented, who have been deported from the interior of the country; it should be noted, especially among the latter group, that not only recent arrivals but also some migrants who were last repatriated years ago remain highly vulnerable and dependent upon charitable organizations for survival.

All the groups include large numbers that require assistance as many lack economic resources and authorization to work in Mexico.

Migrants in transit include groups from Mexico, Central American, the Caribbean, Africa, and elsewhere, many of whom hope to obtain political asylum in the United States. Since late January of 2019, migrants applying for asylum along Mexico’s northern border have been subject to the Migrant Protection Protocol program (also known as Remain in Mexico), which requires them to wait out the process in Mexico, crossing to the United States only for scheduled court dates. As these application processes tend to take longer than six months, large numbers of asylum seekers have taken up temporary residence in Tijuana. The most recent available data (<https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/mpp/>) indicate that as of February 2020, 1108 asylum cases were pending at the Migrant Protection Protocol Court at the San Ysidro Port of Entry, while another 82 were in queue, awaiting an initial hearing.

<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to the migrant human rights defenders Father Pat Murphy, Soraya Vázquez, Paulina Olvera, Danny Ruiz, Darinka Carballo, Graciela Zarmudio, Claudia Portela and María de Jesús Cárdenas Lazaritt, who opened a space in their agenda to support us with their comments and communications in the midst of this complex situation. We also thank Jocelin Mariscal and Dalia Arreola for their support in preparing this text.

With the suspension of all Migrant Protection Protocol asylum cases on March 24 any newly arriving migrants hoping to initiate asylum processes in San Ysidro must wait until the courts reopen, potentially adding to this population in Tijuana. With no clear end in sight for the resumption of asylum hearings, it is possible that some migrants may give up and leave the city. Meanwhile, additional asylum seekers continue to arrive.

Furthermore, under the policy of express deportation, launched by the United States as an emergency response to the public health crisis on March 17, any migrants who might have crossed illegally into the United States are deported immediately – within a reported average of 96 minutes. This includes migrants who cross with the intention of turning themselves over to Customs and Border Protection (more commonly known as “border patrol”) agents, asking at that time to file an asylum application, without being consigned to the Migrant Protection Protocols program. Exceptions are not being made even for unaccompanied minors that might otherwise have been processed in the United States. These express deportations are resulting in a large number of migrants in transit waiting to apply for asylum in Tijuana, including both those already enrolled in MPP and new arrivals who have not yet even entered onto a waiting list. Over 10,000 migrants have been expelled to Mexico, including both Mexicans and Central Americans, through this program in its first three weeks through rushed processes that do not allow for any health screening protocols.

These migrants have not only been left without a clear indication of when their next – or first – court date will be, but for those who previously had court dates set, their visas offering them a temporary legal status in Mexico have been set to expire on those cancelled dates, leaving them subject to becoming undocumented in Mexico.

Regarding those migrants seeking asylum in Mexico, many have been unable to obtain assistance as many government offices are closed, including those of Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR), while international agencies such as Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados (ACNUR) and the United Nations’ Organización Internacional de Migración (OIM), as well as foreign consulates in Mexico, have been, according to Darinka Carballo of Agencia Migrante, restricting these processes.

Meanwhile, US deportation courts continue to function, in many cases via videoconference, and the United States continues to deport migrants from its interior to Mexico. These migrants, who faced deportation orders after having lived in the United States, often for a decade or more, are normally held in migrant detention centers while their cases play out, a process that may go on for years. The most recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) data, from July 2019, indicate that 8791 Mexicans were being held in detention facilities. As many of these cases end in deportation to border cities (with roughly 30% of deportations in the first two months of 2020 – 10,781 incidences – arriving in Baja California according to Unidad de Política Migratoria data), this category of return migrant continues to arrive in Tijuana.

These migrants usually arrive without financial resources, and without the documents they will need to seek employment in Mexico. While some repatriated migrants may leave the border and resettle in the interior of the country, many remain along the border, especially in Tijuana, in order to be as close as possible to family living in California. With Mexican government offices closed, and a rapidly contracting job market, these migrants are unable to quickly become financially independent, and will therefore rely on charitable organizations for an extended period of time.

Not only does this latter influx add to the number of migrants requiring assistance in Tijuana, but it is highly likely that some have been exposed COVID-19. As early as March 18, incidences of COVID-19 were logged in migrant detention facilities in the United States. Since then, it has been reported that several migrants deported to Guatemala from detention facilities tested positive. Furthermore complaints have been raised that migrants confined in detention facilities, where they are forced to live in close quarters, often have no access to protective items, such as masks, hand sanitizers, gloves, or even basic cleaning supplies and hand soap. Lawsuits have been filed by Human Rights First demanding that ICE respond to unsanitary conditions and risk of contagion of COVID-19 in its detention facilities, while Amnesty International has issued communiqués demanding the immediate release of noncriminal detainees from ICE facilities.

With most shelters in Tijuana running at full pandemic capacity, these newly arrived deported migrants are being sent to the recently launched government run Carmen Serdán shelter, which, although large, may be especially vulnerable to a COVID-19 outbreak (see below).

### **Limited Space, Limited Services**

Tijuana has over the past decades developed a robust range of services for the many migrants who pass through the city. The vast majority of these services are provided by charitable organizations, many depending heavily on transnational cooperation. The measures taken to control the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed the fragility of the city’s migrant services infrastructure.

The closure of the US-Mexico border beginning March 21 to all but the most essential movement has precluded both volunteers and in kind donations from arriving from the United States. The loss of these donations has, according to Soraya Vázquez of Families Belong Together, caused significant hardships for many shelters, which have begun to scramble for new funding sources, and to explore new forms of receiving aid, such as digital transfers or vouchers for provisions.

Shelter in Place orders, launched in California on March 19, and in Baja California by the end of the month, likewise have kept Baja based volunteers from working volunteer shifts at migrant service organizations such as shelters. Moreover, as many volunteers are retirees, who may themselves be especially vulnerable to the disease’s most severe symptoms, shelters and other organizations began turning them away early on. Casa de Migrante, whose long

time cooks were senior citizens, had to ask them to take a hiatus from volunteering and find other help in their kitchen. In the past weeks, it has become quickly become much more challenging to maintain the provision of basic services to migrants.

More importantly, social distancing protocols and the desire to limit as much as possible the risk of contagion among residents have led shelters to drastically reduce admissions. Shelters such as Casa del Migrante, Espacio Migrante and the Padre Chava Salesiano facility have cut capacity in some cases by more than half, yet still struggle to ensure social distancing protocols are maintained. And with no migrants leaving for the United States, many shelters are now all but closed to new arrivals into the foreseeable future.

The Carmen Serdán facility, which does have space available, has been taking in deported migrants, and have reportedly implemented screening procedures to identify migrants potentially infected with COVID-19. There roughly 90% of recently repatriated migrants admitted to this facility have been express deportations, the other 10% being those deported after having spent long periods of time confined in migrant detention facilities. This facility also accepts migrants enrolled in the MPP program, with cases still pending, but has refused admission to newly arrived migrants, including those who are registered on a waiting list for an initial “credible fear” interview with US migration authorities, but whose asylum application process has not yet begun. According to Soraya Vázquez, that population is not being helped by anyone and are among the most vulnerable.

In addition to scarcity of shelter space, institutions offering free meals to migrants in need have had to alter delivery procedures. The Salesian Padre Chava Breakfast Kitchen, which normally serves some 1000 people per day in a cafeteria style setting, has had to close off entry to its dining room, instead offering migrants meals in Styrofoam containers, which they eat on the street, where few seem to follow social distancing protocols. Even as donations have been severely limited due to the border closing, there is a rising need for food, with Claudia Portela of Padre Chava recently reporting having served more than 1500 breakfasts on a recent morning, roughly 50% more than on an average day only a few weeks earlier.

Meanwhile, shortages for some items in supermarkets have made it difficult for migrant shelters or dining halls to obtain food and supplies, including essential hygiene products, that they need to care for the populations they serve. Paulina Olvera of Espacio Migrante recounts difficulties in obtaining food staples such as milk and eggs due to rationing. Graciela Zamudio of Alma Migrante reports that sanitary supplies have been particularly difficult to obtain in adequate amounts.

While agencies such as Families Belong Together and Al Otro Lado have sought out donations that enable the former to distribute hygiene and cleaning products, as well as masks and informational materials on COVID-19 to a number of shelters, and the latter to offer gift cards to allow migrant families to obtain food and supplies, both institutions (shelters, dining halls) and migrants (those living in shelters

as well as on their own) remain in dire need for assistance.

## **Risks to Health and Safety**

Recent reports of Tijuana’s main hospitals quickly becoming overwhelmed with patients suffering with COVID-19 like symptoms (sometimes categorized as “atypical pneumonia”) and in need of intensive care, including respirators indicate a rapid rise in contagion across the city. Migrants, including both foreign asylum seekers and recently repatriated Mexicans, may have no health insurance of any kind and, as Father Pat Murphy of Casa del Migrante observes, are likely to be last in line for treatment.

While current protocols in the city’s most reputable shelters will help prevent the spread of disease among migrants lodging in their facilities, this is not necessarily the case for migrants living in other spaces, including those renting small apartments, staying in hotels, residing in informal shelters (some of which may double as drug dens), or living on the streets, all spaces that may not lend themselves to the kinds of controls that have been implemented in the city’s network of major shelters. It is estimated that 70% of MPP asylum applicants are not living in shelters. With Shelter in Place orders in effect in Tijuana since the end of March, many of those migrants working in formal sectors of the economy, such as maquiladoras, stores, or restaurants, are losing their jobs, and may be unable to stay at home.

Not sheltering in place may present risk of exposure not only to COVID-19, but also to street crime. With Tijuana’s job market crashing and no significant government programs to assist those without resources to wait out the pandemic without working, there are reports of rising street crime, including assault and extortion. Pat Murphy observes: “my biggest preoccupation is what will happen when more and more people lose their jobs and hunger and the lack of resources lead people to survive by any means necessary.” María de Jesús Cárdenas Lazaritt of Madres y Familias Deportadas en Acción reports that very recently an African migrant was beaten and robbed in front of the downtown hotel where he was residing, while, according to Pat Murphy, a Mexican migrant who was still working, was assaulted and robbed four times in two weeks on his way back to Casa del Migrante following his work shift at a call center. Migrant service providers fear that the streets will become increasingly dangerous in the weeks ahead as people become more desperate; the solution, which would be to begin providing basic food and hygiene items to those in need across the entire city, is not likely even being considered.

The situation for migrants who live in the streets is likely even more dire. Tijuana has long had a large population of homeless people, many of them deported migrants who have become addicted to drugs or alcohol. It should be noted that with many businesses shuttered, and with the border closed to most traffic, not only are formal workers without work, but so too are those of informal sectors, including, for example, squeegee men, street performers, and hawkers of candy and cigarettes, who normally work the city’s streets, or in many cases the often lengthy lines of vehicles waiting, sometimes for hours, to cross the border to the United States. Tijuana’s

large homeless population, which depends on a combination of charity and informal street labor to survive, is, according to Danny Ruiz of the Border Line Crisis Center, “not being attended” and has largely been “forgotten in this crisis.”

In addition, the Tijuana municipal police are notorious for harassing migrants, particularly recently repatriated Mexicans as well as the city’s homeless, and with Tijuana’s streets relatively empty, these migrants, according to María de Jesús Cárdenas Lazaritta, are especially visible, and vulnerable to arbitrary arrest, extortion or assault by police. Paulina Olvera furthermore cites cases of police extortion of asylum seekers staying at the Espacio Migrante shelter.

Police negligence toward migrants was likewise made apparent in a recent incident reported by Espacio Migrante of a police action that occurred outside the shelter in which stray police bullets were fired into the facility, which houses children and families, piercing a front window and two interior walls, endangering and terrifying occupants, several of

whom, refugees who had come to Tijuana fleeing extreme violence in their places of origin, reacted with pronounced distress.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

To sum up, the public health crisis that has emerged around us may be especially devastating the migrant populations of Tijuana if immediate measures are not taken. Migrants, people by nature in a state of movement, cannot easily follow stay at home orders, and the spaces available to shelter them in Tijuana are running at full capacity and barely able to maintain social distancing and other sanitary protocols appropriate for a public health crisis of this kind. Meanwhile, new migratory control measures relating to the MPP program extend on, express deportations assure a brisk flow of new arrivals, international institutions providing protection to migrants are closed, and the migratory dynamic at the border continues on unchecked. The large numbers of migrants who have been waylaid in or repatriated to Tijuana represents a situation of great risk and precarity that could easily turn critical in a city that seems poised to become a hotspot of the pandemic in Mexico.

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#### Specifically, we recommend the following:

- Assure that shelters and other sites that provide assistance to migrants have supplies on hand to maintain sanitary conditions necessary to promote the spread of COVID-19
- Implement sanitary brigades under the auspices of the Secretary of Health and the National Migration Institute to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in these spaces
- Channel cases of infection among migrants in serious need of medical attention to city hospitals
- Guarantee protection and security in sites of attention to vulnerable migration populations during this critical phase of the pandemic
- Review cases and facilitate bureaucratic processes to ensure that US asylum seekers’ migratory status in Mexico is extended until new court dates are set
- Provide conditional release of all nonviolent migrants from migrant detention centers in the United States
- Place a moratorium on deportation of migrants from US detention centers until these institutions are no longer high risk sites of infection
- Allow charitable organizations to transport in kind donations across the border to ensure the ongoing supply of the necessary inputs so that migrant care organizations can continue serving these vulnerable populations

*This report is the result of a collaborative effort between Juan Antonio del Monte of the Migration Law and Policy Observatory of El Colegio de la Frontera Norte and Robert McKee Irwin of the Global Migration Center of the University of California, Davis. The data was collected from an extensive review of media reports and announcements from governmental and nongovernmental agencies, as well as interviews with on the ground defenders of human rights of migrants in Tijuana. See Appendix for a timeline that includes hyperlinks to key digital sources. While we realize that the situation continues to evolve daily, we believe it is urgent that we share our findings and observations promptly. We plan to publish a more extensive and detailed analysis of this situation in the near future.*

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# Appendix: Thematic Chronology of an Imminent Crisis

## COVID-19 and Migrant Vulnerability in Tijuana: A Looming Crisis

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The first cases of COVID-19 emerged in late 2019 in China, and on Wednesday March 11, 2020, with accelerated increases in cases of the illness in multiple sites around the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared this new outbreak of coronavirus a global pandemic. This rapidly propagating virus has wreaked havoc in the Americas through the months of March and April. In addition to national mandates to stay at home, and keep a healthy distance, Mexico's northern border cities have been affected by a series of measures, including a shutdown of the border to all but essential traffic, the postponement of court dates for asylum applicants, the partial closing or reduced capacity of shelters and migrant service agencies, deportations without medical or sanitary screenings, among others, which place already vulnerable and precarious populations of migrants in transit, international asylum seekers, and repatriated Mexicans into an even more markedly vulnerable and precarious situation. This thematic chronology aims to lay out the links between the development of the pandemic and the lives of the most vulnerable migrants in the border city of Tijuana.<sup>1</sup>

### COVID-19: cases, mandates, and development of the pandemic in relation to migratory processes

#### 20 January

First case of COVID-19 confirmed in United States

#### 28 February

First case of COVID-19 confirmed in Mexico

#### 29 February

First reported death from COVID-19 in the US, in Washington state

#### 11 March

World Health Organization (WHO) [declares](#) COVID-19 a global pandemic

#### 17 March

Baja California logs first two COVID-19 cases in Mexicali.

#### 18 March

[Employee in Texas detention center tests positive for COVID-19](#); migration lawyers fear that the illness will spread rapidly within detention centers

#### 19 March

[Confirmation](#) of first COVID-19 death in Mexico, in Mexico City

#### 19 March

Stay at home order mandated across the state of California

#### 23 March

[Protest in detention center in Texas](#) due to lack of screening

for COVID-19 among new detainees and lack of means of protection within the complex

#### 23 March

[Launch](#) of National Day of Healthy Distancing in Mexico; classes and nonessential activities suspended for one month; population is urged to “remain at home.”

#### 24 March

A [Mexican migrant](#) in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody tests positive for COVID-19 in New Jersey

#### 26 March

The number of COVID-19 cases in the United States surpasses that of China; the US thus becomes the [epicenter of the global pandemic](#)

#### 26 March

An outbreak of COVID-19 is [detected](#) at an ICE detention facility in Louisiana where migrants are held in close quarters and without basic sanitary items such as gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, and cleaning implements; several migrants sign voluntary removal orders out of fear of contagion

#### 31 March

Mexico declares a health emergency due to COVID-19 and extends the suspension of activities through April 30; the state of Baja California [announces](#) that no one should leave home for any nonessential reason and that police and health authorities would enforce the order

#### 1 April

Baja California [registers](#) its first COVID-19 death Mexicali

<sup>1</sup> Chronology elaborated based on communiqués and official informative notices, social media posts of civil society organizations, and new reports from the following online resources: The Washington Post, The New York Times, El País, The Guardian, Univisión, BBC, Reuters, The Huffington Post, Al Jazeera, LA Times, San Diego Union Tribune, Telemundo Chicago, ABC News, Fortune, Animal Político, El Financiero, Excelsior, La Jornada, El Universal, Proceso, Herald de México, El Sol de Tijuana, PSN, Radio La Primerísima, La Vanguardia, ProPublica, Houston Public Media, Texas Tribune, Dallas News, Conexión Migrante, World Health Organization, Mexico's National Migration Institute, Human Rights First, Amnesty International, Refugees International, Facebook, Live Science, El Diario de Chihuahua.

#### 4 April

Human Rights First [files a lawsuit](#) in US federal court demanding the release of migrants detained at an ICE facility due to lack of adequate conditions to protect the population from the spread of COVID-19

#### 10 April

[Reports are published](#) of overtaxed hospital services in Tijuana, infected medical personnel, and lack of supplies to attend properly to the pandemic in the city

### Processes of deportation and express deportation

#### 17 March

The US declares that due to the public health emergency it will institute a procedure to expedite removals of undocumented migrants apprehended at the US-Mexico border in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus into detention centers and among border patrol agents

#### 19 March

In a joint communiqué, the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE in Spanish), the Secretariat of the Interior (SEGOB) and the National Institute of Migration (INM) [announce](#) the following: measures with regard to Mexicans repatriated from the United States:

- In response to the cancellation of repatriation flights to the Mexican interior, the INM will strengthen its capacity to attend to the reception of Mexican citizens at the various points of repatriation along the northern border of the country
- In order to avoid the possible spread of the coronavirus by Mexicans who have passed through US border patrol processing centers, hours of operation at official repatriation points authorized through Local Arrangements for Repatriation will be extended

#### 20 March

The US implements new protocols that permit the expedited deportation of migrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico apprehended at the Mexican border; without being taken to a border patrol station they will returned directly to the border and deported to Mexico, with no medical screening, in what will later be [reported](#) as an average of only 96 minutes in custody

#### 26 March

A migrant [deported](#) from the United States to Guatemala tests positive for COVID-19, awakening a fear that deportations from the United States (the nation recording the largest number of cases of infection in the world) could spread the virus to other countries.

#### 28 March

Baja California governor Jaime Bonilla Valdéz, [announces](#) that deported migrants can be received at the Carmen Serdán Integration Center for Attention to Migrants in Tijuana, a federal government run migrant shelter

#### 31 March

As second case of a migrant infected with COVID-19 deported to Guatemala [is confirmed](#); this migrant had spent three weeks in an ICE detention center prior to his deportation on the same flight as another migrant that previously tested positive for the virus after arriving in Guatemala

#### 31 March

Baja California governor Jaime Bonilla, [indicates](#) that there are presently 183 people being housed at the Carmen Serdán shelter, noting that public health authorities are ensuring the implementation of preventative measures to avoid contagion and [that 90% of migrants house there have arrived through the US's new express deportation program](#)

#### 9 April

The US has realized a total of more than [10,000 expulsions](#) since the March 21 implementation of expedited deportation program

### Temporary suspension of evaluation of asylum applications in US and Mexico

#### 9 March

Tijuana's city government warns of a possible mass attempts at border crossing due to rumors that the Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP) program may be cancelled

#### 24 March

[US immigration courts suspend all MPP asylum cases](#), in order to contain the spread of COVID-19 through April 22; the [suspension was later extended](#) through at least May 1

#### 25 March

The Mexican Refugee Aid Commission (COMAR) [suspends](#) all procedures initiated by foreigners requiring protection from the Mexican government through April 20, [a measure later extended through April 27](#)

#### 30 March

Refugees International [demands](#) that the Mexican government reopen asylum application processes as soon as possible and that it cease to admit new asylum seekers into its protective shelters unless they appropriate public health protocols are properly applied

#### 2 April

An internal memorandum of the border patrol [leaked](#) to the press reveals that agents have been ordered to return all migrants apprehended at the border immediately, without giving them an opportunity to initiate an asylum process due to credible fear, denying them humanitarian protection guaranteed under the Refugee Act of 1980

### US Mexico Border Closure to All Nonessential Activities

#### 18 March

[Human Rights Watch](#) warns that a border closure would endanger asylum seekers and is a pretext to advance an anti-immigrant agenda

## 21 March

United States and Mexico agree to prohibit nonessential travel across the border, including tourism and recreation; Mexicans who are authorized to work in the US will not be affected; essential services, including those related to medicine and emergency services will continue

## 21 March

Mexico's National Institute of Migration (INM) announces that it will cooperate in screening for cases of COVID-19 at international arrival points and migration stations in Mexico

## Migrant services in Tijuana

### 23 March

The Madre Asunta shelter, which can accommodate up to 45 women and children, has stopped receiving new migrants as a means of prevention and protection

## 26 March

Tijuana's Casa del Migrante shelter declares that it will be closing its doors to new arrivals in order to protect those currently lodging there; its maximum capacity is 80

## 2 April

The Espacio Migrante shelter and community center releases a communiqué regarding the excessive use of force by Tijuana's municipal police who are putting the population of migrants and asylum seekers who are under this shelter's care at risk

## 3 April

It is revealed that the Desayunador Salesiano Padre Chava is operating its shelter at half capacity as a sanitary measure, and that it is applying hygiene and health protocols as best it can with severely limited resources; its breakfast service is no longer being realized in its dining hall; instead patrons are receiving food in disposable containers to go and eating on the street

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9 April: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/trump-administration-has-expelled-10000-migrants-at-the-border-during-coronavirus-outbreak/2020/04/09/b177c534-7a7b-11ea-8cec-530b4044a458\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/trump-administration-has-expelled-10000-migrants-at-the-border-during-coronavirus-outbreak/2020/04/09/b177c534-7a7b-11ea-8cec-530b4044a458_story.html)

### Temporary suspension of evaluation of asylum applications in US and Mexico

24 March: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/calls-mpp-delays-hearings-due-coronavirus-20032412335107.html>; <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2020/04/01/world/americas/01reuters-health-coronavirus-usa-immigration.html>

25 March: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-mexico/mexico-suspends-refugee-requests-as-coronavirus-cases-climb-to-405-idUSKBN21C06N>; <https://www.eldiariodechihuahua.mx/nacional/suspenden-atencion-a-refugiados-por-covid-19-20200330-1646206.html>

30 March: <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2020/3/29/covid-19-and-the-displaced-addressing-the-threat-of-the-novel-coronavirus-in-humanitarian-emergencies#The-Americas>

2 April: <https://www.propublica.org/article/leaked-border-patrol-memo-tells-agents-to-send-migrants-back-immediately-ignoring-asylum-law>

### US Mexico Border Closure to All Nonessential Activities

18 March: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/18/us-plan-shut-border-endangers-asylum-seekers>

21 March: <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2020/03/eu-restringe-paso-turistas-mexico-coronavirus/>; <https://www.gob.mx/inm/prensa/mantiene-inm-coordinacion-con-autoridades-sanitarias-en-zonas-de-internacion-estaciones-y-estancias-migratorias-de-mexico-238576?idiom=es>

### Migrant services in Tijuana

26 March: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sH2FnF4k0Sc&feature=share&app=desktop&fbclid=IwAR1AkMVtqTnb3IMp\\_4opaowq9soHNI31laf8vF53-yEMRYAd-5IPONQP-wlc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sH2FnF4k0Sc&feature=share&app=desktop&fbclid=IwAR1AkMVtqTnb3IMp_4opaowq9soHNI31laf8vF53-yEMRYAd-5IPONQP-wlc)

2 April: <https://www.facebook.com/EspacioMigranteOrg/photos/pcb.2960296764091691/2960296677425033/?type=3&theater>

3 April: <https://elfinanciero.com.mx/opinion/rafael-fernandez-de-castro/heroes-fronterizos-del-covid-19>

*This report is the result of a collaborative effort between Juan Antonio del Monte of the Migration Law and Policy Observatory of El Colegio de la Frontera Norte and Robert McKee Irwin of the Global Migration Center of the University of California, Davis. The data was collected from an extensive review of media reports and announcements from governmental and nongovernmental agencies, as well as interviews with on the ground defenders of human rights of migrants in Tijuana. See Appendix for a timeline that includes hyperlinks to key digital sources. While we realize that the situation continues to evolve daily, we believe it is urgent that we share our findings and observations promptly. We plan to publish a more extensive and detailed analysis of this situation in the near future.*