

The U.S.-Honduras Asylum Cooperative Agreement: Sending Asylum Seekers to Honduras Defies the Law and Endangers Lives

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This factsheet examines the terms and implementation of the U.S.-Honduras Asylum Cooperative Agreement (ACA), and explains why it fails to meet the standards required by U.S. law, that an individual would not face a threat to their life or freedom and would have access to a full and fair asylum procedure. As documented during a CGRS fact-finding trip to Honduras in March 2026, Honduras meets neither of these requirements.

Since 2025, the administration has signed at least six ACAs, under which the U.S. government can transfer asylum seekers to third countries to seek protection there instead of in the United States (see CGRS's [ACAs two-pager](#)). Honduras was the first of these agreements, reviving a policy from the administration's first term, when it signed similar now-rescinded agreements with Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. CGRS and partners are challenging the rule and policies governing the agreements in [U.T. v. Blanche](#).



Terms and Implementation

The United States and Honduras entered into the ACA in March 2025. In June 2025, before the agreement was published in the [Federal Register](#), the two governments amended it through an exchange of diplomatic notes, expanding its temporal scope to include individuals who arrived in the United States before the agreement was signed.

The governments signed a Joint Implementation Plan in June 2025, published in Honduras's [Official Gazette](#), capping transfers at 10 individuals per month, for a total of up to 240 over the agreement's first two years. Eligibility for transfer is restricted to nationals of Spanish-speaking Latin American countries who do not require a visa to travel to Honduras, a criterion that excludes Cubans and Venezuelans.

Under Honduras' [Action Plan](#) for the agreement, transferees arrive in San Pedro Sula and are transported to a facility managed by the National Migration Institute. At this center, individuals are informed of their options to seek international protection in Honduras, return voluntarily, or remain in the country under the CA-4 agreement—a free-mobility pact between El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua—when applicable.

Roughly [50 people](#) of multiple nationalities, including Colombians, Ecuadorians, Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, Peruvians, and Salvadorans, are known to have been transferred to Honduras under the agreement between October 2025 and mid-March 2026. Of them, only around 8 have sought protection there. The vast majority have refused to seek asylum there out of fear, with some returning to the very countries they had originally fled despite the risks and others choosing to undertake the dangerous migration route once more.

Despite the ACA limit of 10 transfers per month, in the five months between October 2025 and February 2026, the Department of Homeland Security moved to pretermite, or terminate, the asylum cases of [4,877 individuals](#) in Immigration Court and designate Honduras as a country of removal pursuant to the ACA. As

with other ACAs, the government has released no official data on the number of individuals actually removed or the criteria used to select them for transfer.

Honduras is Not a Safe Third Country

The statutory requirements that must be satisfied before asylum seekers can lawfully be sent to a third country are not met by Honduras. Its asylum system is inadequate, and those transferred face serious risks of harm.

Honduras is a lower-middle-income nation of 10.7 million people that contends with pervasive violence and one of the highest levels of economic inequality in the region. It has traditionally been a country of origin for displaced populations and has also become a major country of transit, with more than [950,000 individuals](#) passing through since 2023. It grapples with large and growing vulnerable populations of its own, including over [250,000](#) internally displaced persons and a sizable number of returning nationals, over [42,000](#) of whom were sent back in 2025 alone, the vast majority deported from the United States.

Pervasive Violence and Dangers for Vulnerable Populations

Honduras is a dangerous country. Violence and recurring natural disasters have driven mass displacement for years. Civil society organizations documented over 21,000 cases of internal displacement in the first three quarters of 2025, with violence-related displacement more than doubling as compared to the year before. This crisis extends well beyond Honduras's borders. Over the last three years, Hondurans have been encountered by [CBP](#) nearly 390,000 times at the U.S. southern border, and [UNHCR estimates](#) that in 2025, approximately 107,000 Hondurans had been recognized as refugees and 195,000 more had active asylum claims worldwide.

For those transferred under the ACA, the danger is not hypothetical. As documented during CGRS's fact-finding trip to Honduras, a Salvadoran man transferred under the ACA was forced to flee Honduras, pursued by the same gangs he had originally escaped in his country. Nicaraguan asylum seekers face particular risks given the country's proximity to Nicaragua and the targeted killings that have taken place in Honduras in recent years.

For decades, Honduras has faced entrenched [organized crime](#) with deep roots in its communities, businesses, local economies, and political structures. Criminal organizations exercise territorial control through extortion, forced recruitment, kidnapping, and targeted killings, leaving few corners of Honduran life untouched. The homicide rate remains among the [highest in the world](#), and it is considered the [deadliest country](#) for environmental defenders. Violence against women is systemic, with the highest [femicide rate](#) in Latin America, and LGBTQ+ individuals face harassment, torture, and killings. That more than [36 Hondurans](#) deported from the United States were killed there last year alone speaks to the danger awaiting those who are forced to return.

There is little to no recourse for those who experience this violence as the vast majority of offenses go unpunished. Impunity is [widespread](#): nearly [90 percent](#) for violent crimes, with even higher rates for [gender-based violence](#). A government that cannot protect its own citizens is in no position to protect those forcibly sent there to seek refuge.

Extralegal Transfers of Guatemalan Nationals

During its fact-finding trip to Honduras, CGRS documented an additional practice that has received no public scrutiny. Since October 2025, over 100 Guatemalan nationals have been transferred by the United States government to Honduras outside the formal ACA framework and bused directly into Guatemala. This process denies individuals any opportunity to seek asylum in Honduras and violates U.S., Honduran, and international law.

Absence of a Full and Fair Asylum Process

Aside from the dangers they face, asylum seekers in Honduras encounter a system that offers no meaningful path to protection. Honduras is not a destination country accustomed to receiving asylum seekers, and its asylum system is not equipped to meet that demand. By the end of 2025, only [270 recognized refugees](#) were living in the country, despite the large numbers of vulnerable people transiting through it.

The system is modest in scale and has historically processed very few cases. Between 2022 and 2024, the government adjudicated fewer than [15 applications per year](#), despite receiving fewer than 430 applications in the same period. In 2025, Honduras received over 700 asylum applications, an increase of over 400 percent compared to the average of the [prior four years](#). The addition of up to 120 ACA-related applications per year, on top of the substantial growth in 2025, represents a caseload that the system has no demonstrated capacity to absorb.

The barriers asylum seekers face in Honduras are inherent to the system. The legal framework governing international protection, the [Migration and Nationality Law](#) and its [regulation](#), establishes a process that lacks clear procedures and defined roles, making it ill-suited to providing timely and effective protection. Every case must be reviewed by a multi-member commission that meets no more than once every two weeks, and every final determination requires the signature of a cabinet-level official.

Structural deficiencies are exacerbated by a severe lack of capacity and resources. Migration officers who conduct screenings, gather evidence, and handle the initial stages of the asylum process before cases reach the multi-member commission, fulfill a broad set of additional duties that divide their attention and limit their ability to develop expertise in refugee law. This means they often lack the training needed to conduct proper credibility assessments or handle complex claims. The situation is compounded by UNHCR's diminished presence in Honduras, which has historically provided this training. This year, UNHCR has received only [21 percent](#) of its required funding and was forced to cut over 70 percent of its in-country staff.

That funding gap affects asylum seekers directly, as UNHCR is the primary source of legal accompaniment during the asylum process and plays a central role in coordinating integration and humanitarian services, including health and shelter. Without that support, asylum seekers are left to navigate an opaque process largely on their own. Denied work authorization while their claims are pending, and in a country where nearly [two-thirds](#) of the population lives in poverty, there is little social infrastructure to support them through the nearly year-long wait. Cut off from their finances and entirely dependent on international organizations whose funding is now running low, individuals transferred under the ACA face a growing risk of homelessness and trafficking.

The cumulative effect is a system in which the obstacles to receiving protection are so significant that meaningful access to asylum is, for most, out of reach.

Congress Must Act

The U.S.-Honduras ACA is being used to strip people of their right to seek asylum and expose them to serious harm. Congress should demand transparency on transfers under the agreement, hold oversight hearings on Honduras's human rights conditions and its asylum system, and condition further funding and implementation on demonstrated compliance with the established statutory requirements. Congress should also examine the legal basis and scope of the transfer of individuals from the United States to Honduras outside the ACA framework and their onward movement into Guatemala without any screening for protection.