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## FEATURED Q&A

# How Are Migrants From Venezuela Affecting Chile?



Several Venezuelan migrants have sought refuge in Iquique, Chile's Plaza Brasil, pictured last February. // File Photo: Chilean Government.

**Q** Groups of Chileans burned the belongings of Venezuelan migrants during an anti-migrant march in Iquique on Sept. 25, one day after police evicted many migrants, including families with children, from the city's Plaza Brasil. According to the National Institute of Statistics in Chile, Venezuelans make up almost one-third of the migrant population in the country, which has led to an increase in xenophobic acts against Venezuelans. What has the increase of immigration in Chile meant for the country's social dynamics and tensions surrounding migration? How will growing social unrest affect Chilean policies regarding Venezuelan migration? How much is the situation affecting Chile's debate over what should be in the country's new constitution, and to what extent is migration a factor in the country's presidential election campaigns?

**A** Miguel Pizarro, member of the National Assembly of Venezuela and commissioner to the United Nations: "Venezuela is the victim of a political, social and economic crisis that each day deepens the complex humanitarian emergency that has existed for more than six years. This has led to the emigration of more than six million Venezuelans, with the majority going to other countries in the region, according to official figures from the Response for Venezuelans (R4V) platform. These host countries should continue to explore more comprehensive reception, protection and integration mechanisms. However, while it is important to address the consequences of this emergency, it is also necessary to put pressure on the regime that has caused

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### POLITICAL

## Top U.S., Mexican Officials Eye New Security Deal

Top U.S. and Mexican officials are to meet today to discuss a new arrangement for security cooperation between the two countries.

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### POLITICAL

## Nicaragua's Opposition Deems Election Void

Nicaragua's main opposition alliances declared the country's upcoming presidential election "void and illegitimate." President Daniel Ortega's government has imprisoned several potential presidential candidates.

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### ECONOMIC

## Peru's Central Bank Increases Key Interest Rate

Peru's central bank, led by Julio Velarde, increased its benchmark interest rate by a half percentage point to 1.5 percent. Peru's president also confirmed that Velarde will remain the central bank's head.

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Velarde // File Photo: TV Perú.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Top U.S., Mexican Officials to Discuss New Security Deal

A U.S. delegation including Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Attorney General Merrick Garland and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas are set to meet with their Mexican counterparts today in Mexico City to discuss a new agreement on security cooperation, CNN reported, citing State Department spokesman Ned Price. "The United States and Mexico recognize the need to adapt a bilateral security cooperation to address the concerns and priorities of both governments," Price told reporters on Thursday. "Our security challenges

### SUBSCRIBER NOTICE

The Latin America Advisor will not be published on Monday due to the Columbus Day federal holiday in the United States, which is observed in Washington and other locations as Indigenous People's Day. The Advisor will resume publication on Tuesday.

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it. As long as those in power in Venezuela today continue to ignore the needs and demands of the population, Venezuelans will not stop leaving their country. The populism that seeks to blame Venezuelan migration for the local problems of each country or state is reprehensible and inhumane. Hate speech generates events such as the one in Iquique, or like many others that we have seen in various communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Xenophobia is one of the most serious attacks on refugees. Host communities must work hard so that residents can understand that no one walks long distances, leaves their home and family or wanders through deserts for pleasure. They are all looking for opportunities that their

are shared, and so is the responsibility for resolving them," Price added. The new deal could update or possibly replace the Mérida Initiative, a \$3 billion binational program forged in 2008 with the aim of fighting drug trafficking and organized crime. "We believe we are due for an updated look ... and we need an approach that addresses the concerns and the priorities of both governments, and this will really be one of the core elements of the discussions," said Price. It is unclear what those "concerns and priorities" entail, but an unnamed official told CNN that the governments will look not just at security challenges but also the factors that create them, as well as a "humane approach to migration management." The Mexican delegation will include President Andrés Manuel López Obrador as well as Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard, both of whom have declared the Mérida Initiative "dead," Reuters reported. "For those who believed the Mérida Initiative was to reduce or end drug trafficking ... the initiative clearly failed," Roberta Jacobson, former U.S. ambassador to Mexico, told the Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published Aug. 17. "That perspective, however, fundamentally misunderstands its purpose. The real goal of the Mérida Initiative was to be a process—a way of developing a culture of security cooperation between Mexico and the United States," she added.

country denies them. A country where one in three people suffer from food insecurity, or where at least a third of the population lacks sufficient resources to cover their basic needs, is one that systematically forces its inhabitants to leave."

**A Rachel Schmidtke, advocate for Latin America at Refugees International:** "The unsettling events that took place in Iquique on Sept. 25 represent a broader struggle for Venezuelan inclusion in Chile. Last April, a new migration law made it more difficult for Venezuelans to regularize their status in Chile and easier for them to be quickly deported. This has increased the number of

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## NEWS BRIEFS

## Nicaraguan Opposition Alliances Declare Upcoming Vote Void

Nicaragua's main opposition alliances on Thursday issued a statement calling the upcoming Nov. 7 elections "void and illegitimate" because of President Daniel Ortega's crackdown against critics and seven potential presidential candidates, the Associated Press reported. The Blue and White National Union, the Nicaraguan Democratic Front, the Democratic Renovation Union, the Farmworkers Union and other opposition groups signed the statement.

## Some 20,000 Haitian Migrants Stuck in Colombia: U.S. Official

Approximately 20,000 migrants, mainly Haitians, are temporarily stranded in the northern Colombian city of Necoclí, an unnamed senior U.S. official told reporters Thursday, the Associated Press reported. The figure is similar to that reported by local human rights groups. The migrants have been awaiting ferries to Panama, from where they seek to travel north toward the United States.

## Mexico's López Obrador Pushes for Reserving Lithium Mining for State

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Thursday that the government will not issue any lithium mining permits unless lawmakers approve legislation declaring it a "strategic mineral" and guaranteeing any future exploration and mining for the government, the Associated Press reported. The president said he will not back down until lithium becomes "the property of the nation." López Obrador last week sent a bill to Congress that would effectively nationalize lithium production, but his coalition currently does not have the necessary votes for its approval.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

## Peru's Central Bank Hikes Key Interest Rate to 1.5 Percent

Peru's central bank on Thursday hiked interest rates for the third consecutive month as inflation surged to its highest rate in 12 years and political volatility rattled the sol, Bloomberg News reported. The central bank rose its benchmark rate by 50 basis points to 1.5 percent, in line with economists' median forecast in a Bloomberg survey. Peru's stocks, bonds and currency all rallied on Thursday following President Pedro Castillo's cabinet shuffle, in which he replaced leftist Prime Minister Guido Bellido with Mirtha Vásquez, a former legislator of the leftist Frente Amplio party, Agence France-Presse reported. Despite the rally, the sol is still down 11 percent since Castillo unexpectedly secured a place in the presidential runoff in April. Castillo on Thursday also confirmed Julio Velarde will continue as president of the central bank, though he announced his appointment of several economists to the board of the central bank, including Roxana Barrantes, José Távara and Germán Alarco, EFE reported.

## BUSINESS NEWS

## Safra Family Close to Deal to Avoid Suit Over \$15 Bn Fortune

Heirs of Brazilian banker Joseph Safra, who died last December, are close to an agreement that could avoid litigation over an approximately \$15 billion fortune, Reuters reported Thursday, citing two unnamed sources with knowledge of the matter. In a New York court in August, Alberto Joseph Safra challenged the will of his late father, who was Brazil's richest person when he died. Alberto sought medical records to prove that he was ill when he last changed his will in 2019, the wire service

# THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

## What Will the U.S.-Mexico Economic Talks Accomplish?

**Q** After a four-year hiatus, U.S. and Mexican officials on Sept. 9 relaunched the High-Level Economic Dialogue, or HLED, an initiative started in 2013 to advance strategic economic and commercial priorities for both countries. What does relaunching HLED indicate about the state of economic relations between the Biden and López Obrador administrations? How have the HLED's agenda and goals evolved in recent years? What are the principal tasks facing a new bilateral working group on supply chains, which the two countries plan to create? What disagreements will the group likely seek to overcome, and how much headway will the two countries make in addressing them through the HLED mechanism?

**A** Nicolás Mariscal, member of the Advisor board and chairman of Grupo Marhnos in Mexico City: "The USMCA brought a plethora of changes and mechanisms that enhanced trade and cooperation among parties to solve sensitive issues such as rules of origin, labor rights and the energy sector. However, the HLED presents a new window for institutional dialogue to address other topics concerning the bilateral economic relationship. The United States has been Mexico's largest trading partner for decades, especially after NAFTA took effect in 1994. More than 80 percent of Mexican exports head to North America. Even though oil was

a significant component in the beginning, the benefits of a free trade agreement have diversified Mexican exports over the past 20 years. As a result, and in the absence of formal mechanisms to discuss important trade matters, the HLED was created in 2013 and lasted through 2016, until the Trump administration took office and dissolved it. A whole term later, this dynamic group resurges to gather representatives from all sectors to address the most important items on the bilateral agenda. Mexico and the United States have decided that managing supply chains and trade across the border is easier when working in tandem. Deeper cooperation and dialogue can also help increase investment in other regions such as Central America, reduce migration flows and combat violence across the region. Economic recovery after the pandemic will also benefit from working together and institutionalizing dialogue. Besides, stronger ties and frequent encounters within the HLED framework can bolster cooperation beyond trade and head into new areas such as cybersecurity and information technology. Unlike last time, both governments must commit to ensuring that no political change in either country will affect the duration and reach of this forum."

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The comment above is a continuation of the Q&A published in the Sept. 27 issue of the Advisor.

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reported. In court, Alberto said he had been disinherited, which his mother, Vicky Safra, disputed. Alberto stepped down from the board of directors of Banco Safra in November 2019 following a dispute with his brother David, Reuters reported. Alberto said at the time that he would start a new bank, known as ASA Bank, however, he changed his plans and instead launched an asset manager, ASA Investments.

Alberto also previously said he disagreed with the dividend policy at the Safra family's holding company, Reuters reported. The minutes of a May shareholders' meeting of J. Safra Holding showed that Alberto took issue with the minimum-level distribution of the company's dividends. Brazilian daily newspaper O Estado de S.Paulo first reported on the negotiations among the Safra family members.



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irregular entries into the country, the number of people who lack a regular status as well as tensions in areas such as Iquique. Limits to regularization have a multitude of adverse effects, including lack of access to basic services such as housing, and limits to economic inclusion. Such is the case for many of the Venezuelans evicted from the Plaza Brasil, who live in a precarious state. Some

“**Political leaders in Chile must take a strong stance against discrimination...**”

— Rachel Schmidtke

data shows that over time, Venezuelans are experiencing growing rates of discrimination in Chile. Polls in Chile show that many Chileans incorrectly believe that Venezuelans increase criminality, and 57 percent of Chileans approve of fewer foreigners in the country, according to a report by Universidad Andrés Bello in Chile. Sentiments such as these fuel anti-migrant sentiments and can have devastating effects for displaced people. Xenophobia can limit migrants' access to important services, reduce their ability to gain employment and can influence the political decisions of leaders to limit migration or to enact policies that further marginalize displaced people. To combat xenophobia and political and social exclusion, political leaders in Chile must take a strong

stance against discrimination and condemn xenophobic acts and broaden options for regularization and access to essential services in the country for Venezuelans and other displaced populations.”

**A** Isaac Caro, director of the master's in social and political studies in Latin America program at Universidad Alberto

Hurtado in Santiago: “Venezuelans make up an important part of Chile's migrant population. In recent months, many migrants have crossed into Chile from Bolivia, where there are no police controls at the border. Migrants have settled in squares and on the beaches of northern cities, as they make their way south in Chile, and they are living in very poor conditions. In this context, three factors are observed. First, as in other South American countries, there has been an increase in xenophobia on the part of the Chilean population, who see Venezuelans as strangers and as a threat to national security. The rejection of foreigners is associated with violent characteristics, both in speech and actions. Second, the far-right presidential candidate, who is in second place in the polls with about 15 percent of the vote, has exploited this situation through anti-migrant discourse. Third, the situation in northern Chile shows that there is no national or regional migration policy. Venezuelan migration is a regional and global phenomenon, and a regional approach that considers migration as a fundamental human right is necessary.”

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