

March 19th, 2024

**STATEMENT FROM THE CARIBBEAN & LATIN AMERICA REGION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTE (IOI) REGARDING THE MOBILITY
CRISIS IN THE REGION AND THE CRISIS IN HAITI**

The Caribbean & Latin America Region of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI)¹, expresses its concern about the human mobility crisis that affects the region.

According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Latin America and the Caribbean region is the world region with the greatest growth in the number of international migrants in the last 15 years, increasing from around 7 million to 15 million in 2023, with a significant proportion of intra-regional migration. This tendency is also observed in the increase of people in need of international protection; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that two of every five new asylum applications in the world during 2023 were submitted by people from this region, which highlights the need for coordination, solidarity and shared responsibility to seek answers to this global challenge.

This upward trend in human mobility increases the risks that people have to face; proof of that is the increasing number of people who have crossed the Darién region/gap² in an irregular way, accumulating more than 886,000 people between June 2021 and

¹ The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), established in 1978, is the only global organization for cooperation that brings together more than 200 independent Ombudsperson institutions from more than 100 countries worldwide. The IOI is organized in six regional chapters: Africa, Asia, Australasia & Pacific, Europe, the Caribbean & Latin America and North America. The Caribbean & Latin America region is formed by 30 members. For more information, visit: <https://www.theioi.org/>

² The Darien is a vegetation zone that extends along the frontier between Panama and Colombia. In this place, due to the complexity posed by a jungle, the Pan-American Highway is interrupted.

December 2023, exposing themselves to the possibility of being victims of extortion, kidnapping and other serious human rights violations, including the risk of losing their lives during the journey.

In particular, we have been following the situation in Haiti, a nation afflicted by an institutional crisis that has deteriorated in recent years due to, among other causes, the damage caused by the earthquakes in 2010 and 2021, the murder of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic and the growing climate of insecurity derived from gang violence and other organized crime groups against State agents and civil population which has resulted in the events of the last few days, including the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry and the forced displacement of approximately 15,000 people in the first week of March 2024, according to IOM estimations.

The combination of all these factors has generated the displacement of approximately 1.7 million people from Haiti since 2010, including thousands of entire families, to countries such as Brazil, Chile, Mexico and the United States, exacerbating the crisis in the migration and international protection system in the Americas.

The attention to this new displacement crisis in the region will require the sensitivity of all Latin American and Caribbean countries in order to provide international protection to displaced Haitians and to all those who will not be able to return to their country in a short term.

The Ombudsperson institutions of the Caribbean & Latin American Region of the IOI express our solidarity with the Haitian people and our respect and support for the Office for the Protection of the Citizen of the Republic of Haiti. This office, in our view, is essential

in guaranteeing that the Human Rights of the entire population of the country of Haiti is respected.

Given the complexity of the region in terms of human mobility, we call for solidarity and international cooperation among all the actors involved, but above all we call on all the Ombudsperson institutions in the rest of the IOI regions to promote in their respective countries measures of care and protection for this population, as well as to strengthen our coordination and to develop proposals to guarantee the human rights of all persons transiting or residing in our countries, regardless of their nationality and immigration status.

Caribbean & Latin American Regional Board of Directors of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI)

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