

**«INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ‘THE IMPACT OF THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON MIGRATION MOBILITY»**
in the framework of the project “Migration Bridges in Eurasia - 2020”

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEE FACING CORONACRISIS IN LATIN AMERICA AND BRAZIL

Patricia Villen

Bruno De Conti

University of Campinas (Brazil)



INTRODUCTION

- Latin America will be certainly one of the regions with most severe consequences of COVID-19
 - Disease
 - Economic crises
- Structural dimension: inequalities and socioeconomic vulnerability
- Conjunctural dimension: the region was already in a deep crises

RESPONSES OF GOVERNMENTS

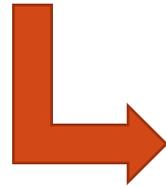
- No joint response to the pandemic => Each country acting individually
- Closing borders
- Increasing militarization
 - Even Costa Rica created a military base on the border with Nicaragua
- People in transit (trying to reach the USA) got stuck in Mexico or Central America

RESPONSES OF GOVERNMENTS

- Abuses:
 - States take advantage of pandemic and the “exception situation” to approve some laws
 - E.g. in Peru, to expel irregular foreigners
 - Bolivia maintains more than 200 seasonal workers from Chile closed in a military camp
 - Venezuelans are being massively evicted from their homes in Peru and Colombia.

SITUATION OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

- Economic crises: immigrant are more exposed to poverty and precariousness
 - E.g. In São Paulo, 75% of the Bolivians were informal workers in the textile industry



Unemployment and starvation

- Xenophobia:
 - Venezuelans population in Bogota (Colombia)
 - Chinese population in Brazil (“State racism” and civil society xenophobia)
- Latin American immigrants in USA:
 - Care centers and prisons
 - No access to health insurance
 - Remittances

SITUATION OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

- Brazil:
 - Informal workers; unemployment; starvation
 - Formally immigrants have access to health services and emergency assistance programs for vulnerable families, even if they are undocumented (USD 120/month for three months)
 - But... many operation problems (no information, no translations, bureaucracy, no tax registration, no information for the bank staff)
- Problems with Venezuela
 - Closed borders
 - No Brazilian Embassy in Venezuela

IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES ACTIONS

- Organized mobilization in the city of São Paulo with entities representing immigrants, NGOs, the Public Defenders, in the search for answers to integrate immigrants and refugees in state policies
- Public defenders launched a letter explaining the equal rights of immigrants
- Argentina: “*Agenda Migrante 2020*” document produced by 100 migrant organizations, presents the result of a survey of 850 immigrants in order to show the Institutions how to give urgent attention to this population
 - Brazil still did not produce something similar (no official data about immigrants)

IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES ACTIONS

- Twitter: campaign to regularize immigrants and refugees
- MST (Landless workers movement): distribution of lunch boxes to immigrants
- Immigrant groups' initiatives
 - Food, translation of orientations against COVID-19, campaign against discrimination in the health services, legal aid against evictions, etc.

FINAL REMARKS

- Currently, many governments in Latin America have very restrictive policies against immigrants
 - Reinforcement of the “historical fake news” that foreign population brings problems and diseases
- Nevertheless, Latin America is a subcontinent where immigrants had a very crucial role in its formation; and it will have a crucial role in its reconstruction after Coronacrises

**If the immigrants suffer and get ill,
the whole region will suffer and get ill !**

THANK YOU

Patricia Villen – villenpatricia@gmail.com

Bruno De Conti – deconti@unicamp.br

