

More than 11,000 migrants waiting in northern Mexico amid border surge

By [Rosa Flores](#), CNN

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While thousands of migrants enter the US illegally every day, more than 11,000 people continue to wait in shelters and camps on the Mexican side of the border, CNN has learned from community leaders.

With Washington divided on the future of US immigration policy, those waiting migrants and asylum seekers still hope to enter the US through legal pathways established by the Biden administration.

In Tijuana, Mexico, across the border from San Diego, California, an estimated 3,800 migrants from countries like Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, and Venezuela are staying in shelters, according to municipal migration affairs director Enrique Lucero. In Reynosa, Mexico, across the border from McAllen, Texas, another 3,273 migrants are waiting at Senda De Vida shelters, according to pastor Hector Silva, who runs the facilities. And in nearby Matamoros, Mexico, about 4,000 migrants are living in camps, shelters, and abandoned homes, says Gladys Cañas who runs nonprofit Ayudandoles a Triunfar.

The waiting migrants feel “desperate,” according to Cañas – but many have put trust in mechanisms like the CBP One app, which automates scheduling appointments to claim asylum with border patrol, she said.

In recent weeks, US border cities have struggled under the weight of an unprecedented surge of people crossing into the US from Mexico. Federal authorities reported a seven-day average of more than 9,600 migrant encounters along the US southern border in December, CNN reported Friday. For comparison, the seven-day average reported on November 28 was about 6,800 encounters.

According to Cañas, three migrants drowned in the Rio Grande in the Matamoros area December, but people continue to try to cross the river despite the lethal dangers. Migrants who choose not to wait for a legal pathway are often blinded by hope, boosted by video and voice messages they receive from migrants who have been processed by US immigration authorities and have been released into American communities, she said.

“The migrants are only sharing the beauty, but they are not sharing the reality... that’s what worries me,” Cañas said.

Their chances are slim. Since May, the US Department of Homeland Security has deported or returned over 445,000 migrants – the vast majority of whom had crossed the US Southern border, the agency said online.

The federal government has also closed ports of entry in multiple states and reassigned personnel to transport and process migrants as it grapples with ways to maximize its limited resources. The Biden Administration also temporarily suspended rail operations in Eagle Pass and El Paso, but those services resumed Friday.

One group of migrants that had been waiting in cold temperatures in Eagle Pass, Texas, has been cleared and processed within the past couple of days, but US Customs and Border Protection is not out of the woods yet from the ongoing border surge, a senior CBP official told CNN Monday.

The official said that many steps, including increasing resources, were taken to address the challenge the agency faced in Eagle Pass last week, when CNN witnessed thousands of migrant families waiting outside to be transported to immigration processing facilities.

Despite the improved scene in Eagle Pass, illegal crossings continue, the same official said, and are being fueled by bad actors who push migrants to enter the US southern border between ports of entry, including rural areas of Arizona.

CNN has also learned large groups of migrants continue to arrive at the border by train. According to Sister Isabel Turcios, the director of a migrant shelter in Piedras Negras, Mexico – which is across the border from Eagle Pass – about 1,000 migrants arrived by train Monday. She said that violence in the streets of Piedras Negras temporarily stopped large groups of migrants from crossing into the US Monday.

On Wednesday, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is set to meet with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, and President Biden’s Homeland Security Adviser Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall in Mexico City.