

# METERING UPDATE

MAY 2022



BY STEPHANIE LEUTERT AND CAITLYN YATES

# INTRODUCTION

In April 2018, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) leadership issued guidance that allowed officers to limit asylum seekers' access to ports of entry. This guidance permitted CBP officers stationed at the United States' international boundary with Mexico to inform arriving asylum seekers that U.S. ports of entry were full. Simultaneously, CBP officers also began accepting a specified number of asylum seekers each day, in a process that is known as metering. Two months later, in June 2018, then-DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen signed a memo that authorized port directors to begin metering at all U.S. ports of entry.<sup>1</sup>

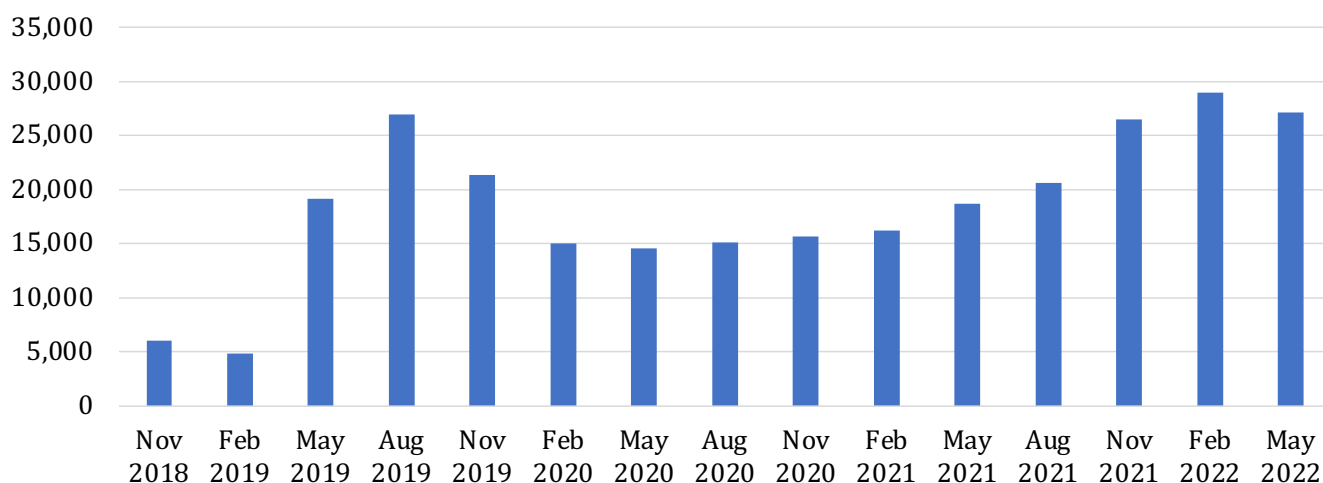
As metering spread across the border and a subsequent backlog of asylum seekers grew in Mexico's border cities, Mexican authorities and civil society groups responded by providing humanitarian assistance and creating informal waitlists. Since November 2018, the Robert Strauss Center for International Security and Law at the University of Texas at Austin—at times in collaboration with the Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies at the University of California San Diego and the Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute—has documented these informal lists through quarterly updates.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, CBP stopped processing asylum requests at ports of entry. This change took place via a Center for Disease Control's (CDC) regulation based on Title 42 authority and an order that blocked entry for individuals—including asylum seekers—attempting to enter the United States through Mexico without valid travel documents.<sup>2</sup> However, on April 1, 2022, the CDC announced that it would terminate its Title 42 public health order on May 23, 2022, which would restart asylum processing at U.S. land ports of entry.<sup>3</sup>

Despite Title 42 currently blocking asylum processing at ports of entry, a number of individuals continue to enter the United States each month through various pathways, such as Title 42 humanitarian exceptions and humanitarian parole. For Title 42 humanitarian exceptions, lawyers must file paperwork with CBP for an individual waiting in Mexico. However, from mid-March through mid-April, this has not applied to Ukrainian citizens, who were declared exempt from Title 42. For Ukrainian citizens, DHS leadership instructed CBP to provide humanitarian parole on a case by case basis, without the need for any advance paperwork. On April 21, these instructions were updated with the launch of the “Uniting for Ukraine” program and a note that the current Ukrainian processing system at the border would end on April 25.<sup>4</sup>

This report provides an update on waitlists, asylum seekers, and migrant shelters along the U.S.-Mexico border. It documents 27,135 individuals on waitlists in eight Mexican border cities. This is an approximately 6 percent decrease from February 2022, when there were 28,995 asylum seekers on the lists.

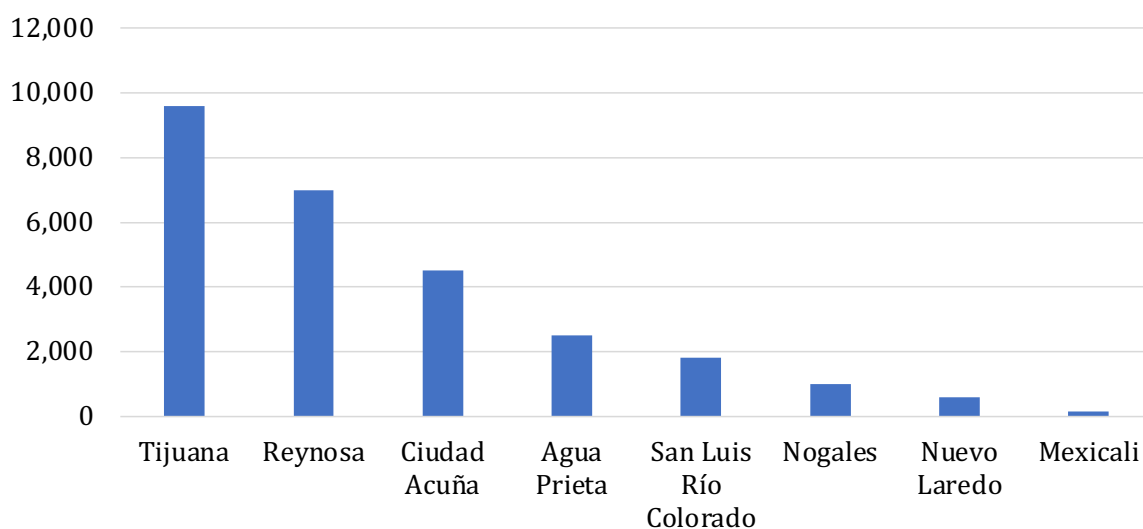
**Figure 1: Number of People on Asylum Waitlists (November 2018 - May 2022)**



*Author's elaboration. Data collected from November 2018 to May 2022.*

The number of individuals on waitlists should not be taken as the definitive number of asylum seekers at the border. While list managers report that some of these asylum seekers continue to wait in Mexican border cities for their turn to request asylum at a port of entry, other individuals have entered the United States between ports of entry, been returned or been removed to their countries of origin, or moved to other cities in Mexico's interior. Additional individuals on the lists have been processed into the United States through the Title 42 exception processes.

**Figure 2: Number of People on Asylum Waitlists by City (May 2022)**

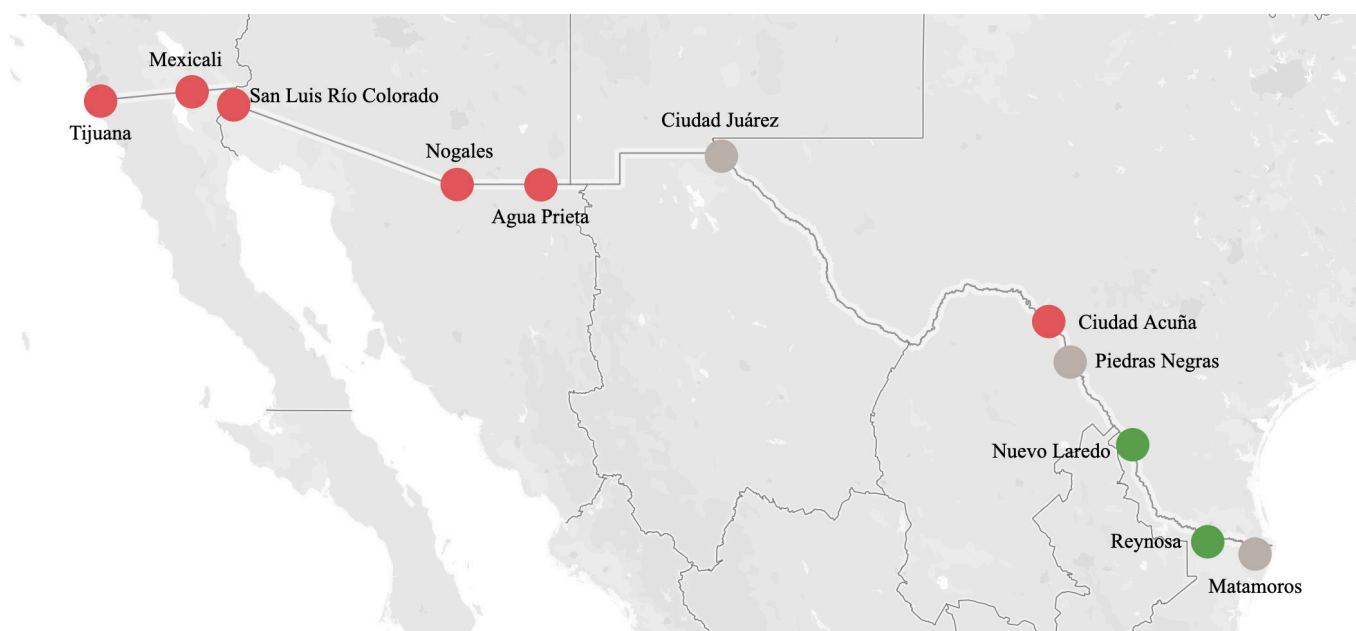


*Author's elaboration. Data collected from April 18, 2022 to April 25, 2022.*



Since March 2020, many of the original asylum waitlists closed to new entrants and the number of asylum seekers on some lists has remained frozen. For example, Tijuana’s Grupo Beta waitlist has 9,600 registrants (approximately 35 percent of all individuals on asylum waitlists), and this number has remained unchanged since March 2020. Further, some asylum seekers who arrive at the border have been unable to sign up on a waitlist, since many remain closed. Figure 3 shows the status of waitlists in each Mexican border city. Green circles indicate cities where waitlists are open; red circles indicate cities with waitlists that are closed to new entries; and gray circles indicate cities where waitlists have been completely dissolved.

**Figure 3: Mexican Border Cities By List Status (May 2022)**



*Author’s elaboration. Data collected from April 18, 2022 to April 25, 2022.*

Waitlists remain open for all nationalities in only two cities: Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo. Since February 2022, the Senda de Vida shelter in Reynosa has updated its list, and decreased the total number of registrants by around 2,000 people. Additionally, Nuevo Laredo saw an approximately 30 percent increase in the number of individuals waiting on its shelters’ lists, from 460 to about 600. In mid-April, shelters in Nuevo Laredo reported that CBP began requesting that they send a certain number of asylum seekers each day from their metering lists to the Laredo port of entry, where they have been processed into the United States.

Asylum seekers—both on and off waitlists—continue to face unstable living conditions and security risks in Mexican border cities. Many shelters are full, and some shelters continue to operate at a reduced capacity. In Piedras Negras, the shelters remain closed due to municipal level COVID-19 restrictions. Along the border, a number of individuals are renting rooms, staying in hotels, or sleeping on the street or in abandoned houses.

Certain groups of asylum seekers continue to experience additional challenges. Civil society organizations

report that Black, LGBTQ+, and Indigenous asylum seekers have faced targeted discrimination by local authorities while waiting in Mexican border cities. In addition, parents have also reported difficulties finding childcare that would enable them to work and earn a salary, and additional challenges with enrolling their children in local schools.

The May 2022 metering update draws on phone and WhatsApp interviews with asylum seekers, government officials, and civil society organizations on both sides of the border from April 18, 2022 through April 25, 2022. It also relies on local news articles to fill in any gaps.

## Metering & Asylum Waitlists: May 2022

Mexican City <i>List Administrator</i>	Waitlist Status	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Recent Changes
<b>Matamoros, Tamaulipas</b>  <i>N/A</i>	Closed	0 people  <i>April 18, 2022</i>	<p>There are no asylum waitlists in Matamoros.</p> <p>Civil society organizations estimate that there are more than 500 people waiting in Matamoros to seek asylum in the United States. Shelters are operating near or at capacity but have not needed to turn anyone away.</p> <p>Large numbers of individuals continue to arrive, especially from Nicaragua, Haiti, and Mexico with smaller numbers from Honduras and Guatemala. The Mexican migrants are predominantly from Guerrero, Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Michoacán.</p> <p>Local U.S. based legal service providers maintain a waitlist for Title 42 exceptions. These are generally limited to medical cases.</p>
<b>Reynosa, Tamaulipas</b>  <i>Senda de Vida migrant shelter</i>	Open	~7,000 people <sup>5</sup>  <i>April 21, 2022</i>	<p>The Senda de Vida migrant shelter continues to manage a waitlist for asylum seekers in Reynosa. The list remains open.</p> <p>The majority of people arriving to Reynosa are from Honduras, followed by Guatemala and Mexico. Since mid-April, a small number of Ukrainians have also arrived in Reynosa. These individuals were able to cross into the United States after a short wait.<sup>6</sup> By mid-April, several Ukrainian families were crossing each week.</p> <p>An increasing number of people are now entering the United States via Title 42 humanitarian exceptions in Reynosa. Local U.S. based legal service providers maintain a waitlist for these exceptions. On April 19, CBP processed 45 families through Title 42 exceptions and on April 20, CBP processed an additional 50 families.<sup>7</sup></p>

## Metering & Asylum Waitlists: May 2022 (continued)

Mexican City <i>List Administrator</i>	Waitlist Status	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Recent Changes
<b>Reynosa, Tamaulipas</b> <i>(continued)</i>			The city's new shelter—Senda de Vida II—has begun to accept individuals. The shelter will have capacity for up to 3,000 migrants, a permanent National Guard presence, and space for civil society organizations to offer services. Individuals who were living in the Plaza de la República encampment are now being moved to the new shelter. Individuals who choose not to move to the new shelter will not be allowed to continue their pursuit of seeking asylum in the United States. <sup>8</sup> As of April 14, approximately 90 percent of the encampment residents had decided to move to the new shelter. <sup>9</sup>
<b>Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas</b>  <i>Network of migrant shelters managing separate lists (one per shelter)</i>	Open	~600 people  <i>April 19, 2022</i>	<p>In Nuevo Laredo, eight migrant shelters manage separate waitlists.</p> <p>As of mid-April, shelter directors reported that CBP had begun to process people into the United States. They reported that INM in Nuevo Laredo coordinated the process, and the shelters would send 15 to 40 people a day to the port of entry. These individuals were then processed into the United States.</p> <p>The number of people waiting in Nuevo Laredo is low and the majority are Mexican families with fewer numbers of Colombians, Haitians, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Venezuelans.</p>

## Metering & Asylum Waitlists: May 2022 (continued)

Mexican City <i>List Administrator</i>	Waitlist Status	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Recent Changes
<b>Piedras Negras, Coahuila</b>  <i>N/A</i>	Closed	0 people  <i>April 18 and 19, 2022</i>	<p>The asylum waitlist in Piedras Negras has been closed since March 2020 and no one remains on the waitlist. In anticipation of Title 42 going away on May 23, the municipality is expecting to begin a new list in early May.</p> <p>All shelters in the city remain closed due to the municipal government's COVID-19 guidelines. Despite the mayor's campaign promises to re-open migrant shelters, shelters remain closed. Migrants are primarily sleeping in abandoned houses, churches, the bus terminal, and on the street. Shelters continue to distribute up to 200 meals per day.</p> <p>Between 250 and 500 people are arriving to the city each week, and are primarily from Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba, Honduras, Guatemala, and Haiti. These numbers began rising in March. A few Ukrainian nationals have reached Piedras Negras and were quickly processed into the United States.</p> <p>Legal service providers based in other cities have processed Title 42 exceptions for some individuals in Piedras Negras.</p>
<b>Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila</b>  <i>Civil Protection (Protección Civil): individuals &amp; families</i>	Closed	4,497 people  Individuals: 1,125  Families: ~3,372 people traveling in families (843 families)  <i>April 18, 2022</i>	<p>Civil Protection maintains two lists in Ciudad Acuña: one for families and one for adults. The lists closed on January 18, 2022 and have not accepted any new people since that date.</p> <p>When the lists closed, there were approximately 4,497 people on the lists, including 1,125 individuals and 843 families.</p> <p>Asylum seekers continue to arrive in the city. The majority of these new individuals are from African countries, particularly Angola, and also from Haiti.</p>



## Metering & Asylum Waitlists: May 2022 (continued)

Mexican City <i>List Administrator</i>	Waitlist Status	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Recent Changes
<b>Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua</b>  <i>N/A</i>	Closed	0 people  <i>April 19, 2022</i>	<p>The asylum waitlist in Ciudad Juárez is closed and no one remains on the list.</p> <p>Since mid-April, there has been a slight increase in the number of individuals arriving to the city, particularly from Haiti and Honduras. Currently, there are 25 shelters in the city that are housing about 2,700 migrants.<sup>10</sup> These individuals include not just individuals waiting to request asylum but also people expelled under Title 42 and individuals in the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) program, among others.</p> <p>In mid-April, Ukrainians arriving in the city could travel straight to the U.S. port of entry and be processed into the United States. A local civil society group also manages a waitlist for Title 42 exceptions and facilitates the crossing for a small number of vulnerable individuals each day.</p>
<b>Agua Prieta, Sonora</b>  <i>CAME migrant shelter</i>	Closed	2,500 people  <i>April 20, 2022</i>	<p>The asylum waitlist was closed in August 2021, and 2,500 names remain on the list. If asylum processing begins again on May 23, the list manager plans to re-open the list to new arrivals at that time.</p> <p>Between 150 and 200 people continue to be expelled under Title 42 to Agua Prieta each day. The shelters remain open, but are not at capacity, as the majority of these expelled individuals leave the city within a few days.</p> <p>These individuals are primarily from Guatemala and Mexico (in particular, Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Michoacán). Only one Ukrainian family has reached Agua Prieta to date, and they were immediately processed into the United States.</p>

## Metering & Asylum Waitlists: May 2022 (continued)

Mexican City <i>List Administrator</i>	Waitlist Status	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Recent Changes
<b>Nogales, Sonora</b>  <i>Municipal government</i>	Closed	990 people  <i>April 25, 2022</i>	<p>The asylum waitlist in Nogales has remained closed since March 2020 and has not been updated.</p> <p>Migrants continue to wait in Nogales for the chance to seek asylum in the United States and the shelters are near capacity.<sup>11</sup> In April 2022, the Kino Border Initiative counted at least 500 people in the city who have been waiting for more than 6 months to seek asylum in the United States.</p> <p>Shelters report that the number of people arriving with the intention of seeking asylum increased after the U.S. government's announcement that Title 42 would disappear on May 23, 2022.<sup>12</sup> The majority of the arriving individuals are from Mexico, followed by Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.</p> <p>A local civil society group runs a process for submitting Title 42 exceptions, and a small number of people have entered the United States through this pathway in recent months.</p>
<b>San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora</b>  <i>Casa del Migrante La Divina Providencia</i>	Closed	1,798 people  <i>April 18, 2022</i>	<p>The asylum waitlist in San Luis Río Colorado is closed with approximately 1,798 names on the list.</p> <p>Local civil society reports that asylum seekers continue to arrive in the city. These asylum seekers are primarily from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Mexico.</p> <p>The Casa del Migrante La Divina is operating at a 50 percent overnight capacity. However, the shelter is operating at full capacity for daily activities, such as providing meals, clothing, and daytime stays.</p>
<b>Mexicali, Baja California</b>  <i>Grupo Beta</i>	Closed	150 people  <i>April 21, 2022</i>	<p>The asylum waitlist in Mexicali remains closed since March 2020 and 150 asylum seekers are on the list. Most of the individuals remain in Mexicali, where they are waiting to request asylum.</p> <p>The majority of recently arrived migrants are from Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico (mostly Michoacán).</p>

## Metering & Asylum Waitlists: May 2022 (continued)

Mexican City  <i>List Administrator</i>	Waitlist Status	# of Asylum Seekers on List  <i>Date Recorded</i>	Recent Changes
<b>Mexicali, Baja California</b> <i>(continued)</i>			<p>However, most migrants waiting in the city are Haitian nationals. Several shelters are only receiving Haitians and a small encampment in a local park is also housing approximately 100 Haitians. Shelters are over capacity, and migrants are also sleeping on the street, renting rooms, or staying in abandoned houses.</p> <p>In early April, dozens of Ukrainians arrived in Mexicali to cross into the United States through the port of entry. These individuals traveled to the city as the number of Ukrainians waiting in Tijuana reached into the thousands and wait times stretched for multiple days.<sup>13</sup> Since then, most Ukrainians have remained in Tijuana.</p>
<b>Tijuana, Baja California</b>  <i>Grupo Beta / Support from asylum seekers</i>	Closed	9,600 people  <i>April 19, 2022</i>	<p>The asylum waitlist in Tijuana has remained closed since March 2020 and approximately 9,600 names are on the list. A local group also runs an intake form for requesting Title 42 humanitarian exceptions for vulnerable individuals.</p> <p>Over the past month, the largest shift in Tijuana was the arrival and processing of thousands of Ukrainians. On March 16, a group of Russians and Ukrainians began camping outside the San Ysidro port of entry. Around the same time, the U.S. government began accepting Ukrainians at the port of entry and granting them humanitarian parole.<sup>14</sup></p> <p>During the weekend of April 2nd, Tijuana city officials set up a shelter at the Sports Center Benito Juárez with an initial capacity of 300 to 400 people to host the arriving Ukrainians. They also helped facilitate a system for moving Ukrainians from the airport to the port of entry. This system began in the Tijuana airport, when volunteers from largely Slavic churches in the United States would bring arriving Ukrainians to the shelter, and provide them with food and a place to sleep until they could cross to the United States.</p> <p>Within the shelter, the Ukrainians were assigned a number that indicated their turn to enter the United States. By April 6th, CBP officers began processing Ukrainians through the PedWest port of entry. Initially, CBP officers were able to process 620 Ukrainians in just over 24 hours.</p>

## Metering and Asylum Waitlists: May 2022 (continued)

Mexican City <i>List Administrator</i>	Waitlist Status	# of Asylum Seekers on List  <i>Date Recorded</i>	Recent Changes
<b>Tijuana, Baja California (continued)</b>			<p>By April 7th, the shelter coordinator estimated that 300 Ukrainians were arriving each day.<sup>15</sup> The volunteers staffing the site had originally made the waitlist on notepads but then began using a mobile app that had been used for church attendance.<sup>16</sup> Ukrainians were alerted by text message or social media as their numbers approached, and instructed to go to the U.S. port of entry to be processed.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>On April 15, there were approximately 700 people staying at the local shelter and others were staying in churches and hotels. However, by April 19, there were only 100 Ukrainians on the list and they were being processed on the same day that they arrived in Tijuana.</p>

*\*The numbers should be interpreted as a general range rather than an exact figure.*

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General, “CBP Has Taken Steps to Limit Processing of Undocumented Aliens at Ports of Entry,” October 27, 2020, <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2020-10/OIG-21-02-Oct20.pdf>.
- 2 The order allows Border Patrol agents to immediately expel all apprehended individuals, including asylum seekers, to the nearest Mexican city or to their home countries. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Control of Communicable Diseases; Foreign Quarantine: Suspension of Introduction of Persons Into United States From Designated Foreign Countries or Places for Public Health Purposes,” March 24, 2020. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/03/24/2020-06238/control-of-communicable-diseases-foreign-quarantine-suspension-of-introduction-of-persons-into>.
- 3 It is unclear how asylum processing will look at ports of entry. In September 2021, a federal district court judge determined that metering violated provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). In early November 2021, CBP also rescinded several memos related to metering and issued new guidance.
- 4 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “President Biden to Announce Uniting for Ukraine, a New Streamlined Process to Welcome Ukrainians Fleeing Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine,” April 21, 2022, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/04/21/president-biden-announce-uniting-ukraine-new-streamlined-process-welcome-ukrainians>.
- 5 Rosa Flores, Rosalina Nieves, and Amir Vera, “CBP allows a few hundred vulnerable migrants to seek asylum this week as thousands wait in Mexico for Title 42 to end, sources say,” *CNN*, April 21, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/21/us/vulnerable-asylum-seekers-texas-mexico/index.html>.
- 6 “Los papeles que lleva esta monja revelan las historias ocultas de la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México,” *101 Noticias*, April 13, 2022, <https://101noticias.com/los-papeles-que-lleva-esta-monja-revelan-las-historias-ocultas-de-la-frontera-entre-estados-unidos-y-mexico/>.
- 7 Rosa Flores, Rosalina Nieves, and Amir Vera, “CBP allows a few hundred vulnerable migrants to seek asylum this week as thousands wait in Mexico for Title 42 to end, sources say,” *CNN*, April 21, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/21/us/vulnerable-asylum-seekers-texas-mexico/index.html>.
- 8 Viviana Cervantes, “Condicionan ‘darles’ asilo; deben aceptar traslado a refugio,” *El Mañana*, April 14, 2022, <https://www.elmanana.com/local/reynosa/condicionan-darles-asilo-deben-aceptar-traslado-a-refugio/5528764>.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Hérica Martínez Prado, “Trasladan a albergues a 19 migrantes haitianos,” *El Diario de Juárez*, April 14, 2022, <https://diario.mx/juarez/trasladan-a-albergues-a-19-migrantes-haitianos-20220414-1919775.html>.
- 11 “Migrantes esperan frustrados en Nogales, Sonora, México,” *Cronkite Noticias*, April 18, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcImMaaUEco>.
- 12 Daniel Torres, “Esperan incremento en llegada de migrantes,” *Nuevo Día*, April 19, 2022, <https://www.nuevodia.mx/vernoticias.php?artid=17886&cat=92>.
- 13 Alejandro Domínguez, “Llegan Ucranianos a Mexicali en busca de asilo,” *La Voz de la Frontera*, April 6, 2022, <https://www.lavozdelafrontera.com.mx/local/llegan-ucranianos-a-mexicali-en-busca-de-asilo-8095667.html>.
- 14 Elliot Spagat, “EEUU bloquea a rusos en la frontera, acepta a ucranianos,” *Associated Press*, March 18, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/espanol/eeuu/articulo/2022-03-18/eeuu-bloquea-a-rusos-en-la-frontera-acepta-a-ucranianos>.
- 15 Ana Buil Demur, “Miles de refugiados ucranianos llegan a Tijuana para después pedir asilo en EE.UU.,” *Associated Press*, April 7, 2022, <https://es.euronews.com/2022/04/07/miles-de-refugiados-ucranianos-llegan-a-tijuana-para-despues-pedir-asilo-en-ee-uu>.
- 16 Elliot Spagat, “US speeds entry for Ukrainians as more reach Mexico border,” *Washington Post*, April 7, 2022, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/ukrainian-refugees-find-route-to-us-goes-through-mexico/2022/04/07/e12d6c36-b627-11ec-8358-20aa16355fb4\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/ukrainian-refugees-find-route-to-us-goes-through-mexico/2022/04/07/e12d6c36-b627-11ec-8358-20aa16355fb4_story.html).
- 17 Ibid.