

**61<sup>st</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Item 6: Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Panama**  
**18 March 2026**

*Delivered by: Cristopher de la Torre*

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Thank you, Mr. President.

This is a joint statement of Franciscans International with the Human Mobility Observatory in the Darien and Other Alternative Routes. We appreciate that Panama has accepted 16 of the 17 recommendations concerning the protection of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees—particularly the crucial recommendation to ensure a human-rights-based approach to human mobility and border governance. The challenge now is to effectively implement these commitments on the ground.

Today, a growing "reverse flow" moving south faces a deadly reality. Lacking safe return measures, people are forced into dangerous routes. In February, two women and a man drowned crossing to Colombia<sup>1</sup>. This is a recurring tragedy: an eight-year-old girl died on this same route last year<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, we are alarmed by the ongoing security policy "Plan Firmeza" that also includes large-scale deportations and expulsions of migrants with irregular status<sup>3</sup>. These accelerated processes raise concerns about the lack of individualized assessment and the potential risk of refoulement for those requiring international protection.

We urge the Government of Panama to implement the accepted recommendations to ensure a human-rights-based approach to migration and border governance, including guaranteeing the right to life, ensuring safe transit, upholding non-refoulement, and ending the de facto detention of those seeking international protection.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.infobae.com/panama/2026/02/11/nuevo-naufragio-en-panama-deja-migrantes-muertos-en-rutas-del-caribe/>

<sup>2</sup> [Una niña de ocho años muere en el naufragio de un barco con migrantes en aguas panameñas - France 24](#)

<sup>3</sup> Plan Firmeza <https://www.minseg.gob.pa/planfirmeza/>; See for example: [Panamá refuerza su política migratoria: 1,881 migrantes deportados y expulsados en cinco meses – Ministerio de Seguridad Pública](#)