



Expanded refugee protection for some: Understanding the application patterns of the Cartagena refugee definition in Mexico

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Since the entry into force of Mexico's new Law on Refugees, Complementary Protection and Political Asylum in 2011, it has been praised as an exceptionally progressive norm. A core aspect of the new law is the inclusion of the expanded refugee definition derived from the Cartagena Declaration. At the same time, implementation gaps tend to persist between Mexico's laws and policy practice. This paper seeks to analyze in practice, how far Mexico has applied the Cartagena definition to alleageable asylum seekers. In order to fulfill this objective, we implemented a monitoring mechanism of the asylum system in Mexico through which we can identify patterns in the RSD administrative and legal reasoning such as the lack of application of the Cartagena definition to Central Americans, on the one hand, and the 99% refugee recognition rate under Cartagena of Venezuelan asylum seekers, on the other. Twenty in-depth elite interviews with authorities of different levels of government and NGO representatives shed light on the determinants of this differentiated application, which in practice, results in the regional refugee definition only benefiting a select group of people.

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