



Preliminary analysis of cases recorded by Cristosal regarding individuals deported from the United States to the Salvadoran prison system.

I. Background

On March 16, the deportation of at least 261 individuals from the United States to the Salvadoran prison system was made public, along with their transfer to the Center for Confinement of Terrorism (CECOT)¹. Subsequently, it was reported that 17 additional individuals had also been transferred to El Salvador². An official list of all those detained, as well as information regarding their legal or migratory status, has not been made public. However, various reports indicate that the majority are of Venezuelan nationality, with some being Salvadoran.

Cristosal requested to the General Directorate of Prisons (DGCP) information about the exact number of Venezuelan individuals deported to El Salvador from the United States that were transferred to the CECOT, the list of their names, how many had previously been convicted in the United States, and who were affiliated with the gang known as Tren de Aragua.

On March 27, the DGCP issued a decision denying access to the requested information, arguing that it involves personal (confidential) data and that a restriction has been placed on information regarding individuals who have entered the Penitentiary Information System³.

In this context, Cristosal launched an online form for the families of individuals deported through this mechanism to register their cases and receive guidance on filing habeas corpus petitions before the Salvadoran judicial authorities.

As of April 8, a total of 94 cases have been registered through the online form made available by Cristosal.

II. Profile of the individuals registered through the form.

All of the individuals identified through this tool are men. In contrast, 81% of those who completed the form and provided the relevant information are women. A recurring pattern in the cases analyzed shows that, in most instances, the reports have been submitted by the

¹ Montoya, C. Here are the names of the Venezuelans deported by the U.S. to El Salvador. CBS news. Consulted on April 7, 2025. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/venezuelans-deported-el-salvador-names/>

² Mondragón, L. United States transfers more Venezuelans from Guantanamo to El Salvador. La Prensa Gráfica. Consulted on April 7, 2025. Available at: <https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/Estados-Unidos-traslada-de-Guantanamo-a-mas-venezolanos-a-El-Salvador-20250331-0075.html>

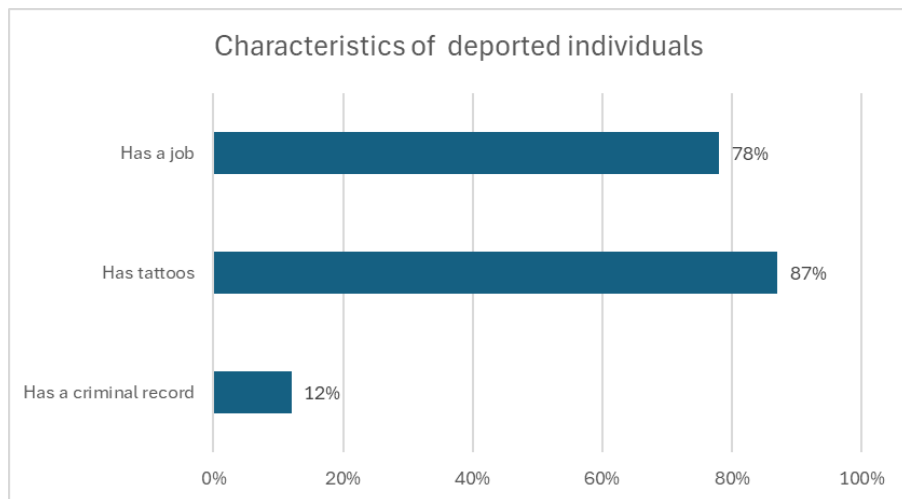
³ General Directorate of Penitentiary Centers. Resolution of the Public Information Access Unit, reference UAIP/OIR/011/2025, dated March 27, 2025.



partners, mothers, or sisters of those affected, while reports from fathers or brothers represent a significantly smaller percentage.

Of the total number of cases registered through the form, only one of the individuals identified is Salvadoran; the rest are Venezuelan. The average age of those registered is 28, with ages ranging from 18 to 41 years old. It has also been identified that 5 individuals—representing 7% of the total—have a disability: two are reported to have visual impairments (they wear glasses permanently), and three have physical or intellectual disabilities. Among the latter is an individual who experiences frequent seizures and requires specialized medication. Additionally, 22% of the cases report that the detained individuals suffer from a chronic illness.

An analysis of the characteristics of the individuals identified through the form also reveals that 78% of the cases involve people who were employed at the time of their arrest. Additionally, 87% of the families who reported cases indicated that the deported person has tattoos. In 30% of the cases, families stated that the reason for the arrest—or the alleged link between their relative and criminal structures—was based solely on the presence of tattoos, even though the tattoos are not related to gangs or criminal organizations.

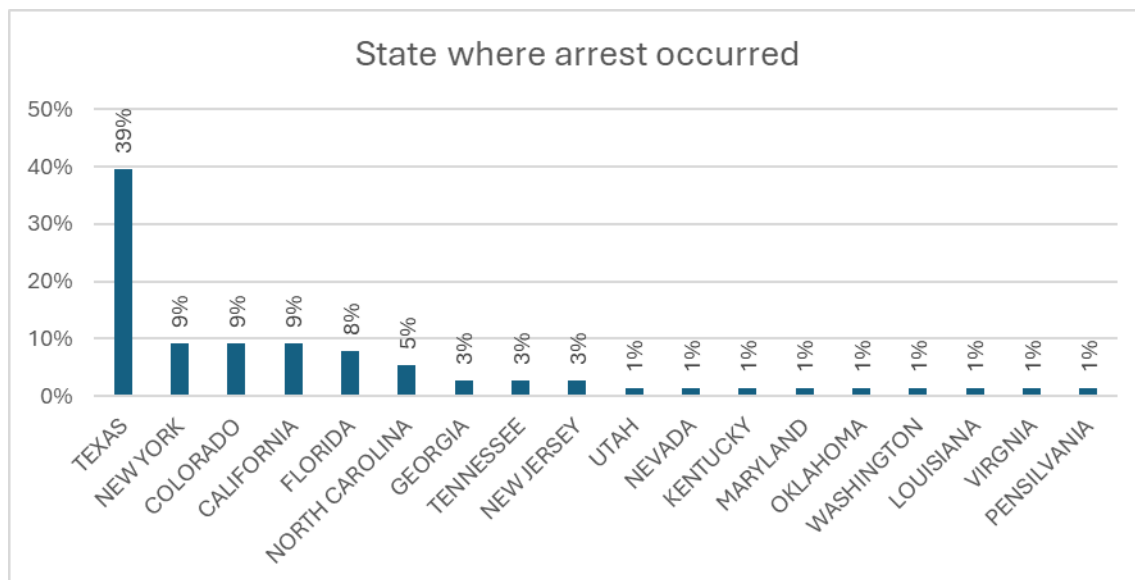


Graph 1 - Source: Created by the author

II. Legal Status of the Reported Individuals

Regarding the legal status of the deported individuals, a noteworthy detail is observed: 48% of the records mention that the detained individual is being accused of committing a crime. However, upon further examination of the charge, almost all cases refer to the generic accusation of belonging to a gang (Tren de Aragua). On the other hand, only 13% of the cases report that the individual has a criminal record.

According to the information provided, all individuals registered through the form were detained in the United States. Some of them reportedly surrendered at the Mexico border. The state with the most reported arrests is Texas, followed by California, New York, and Colorado. However, there is a 23% of cases where the state of arrest is unknown.

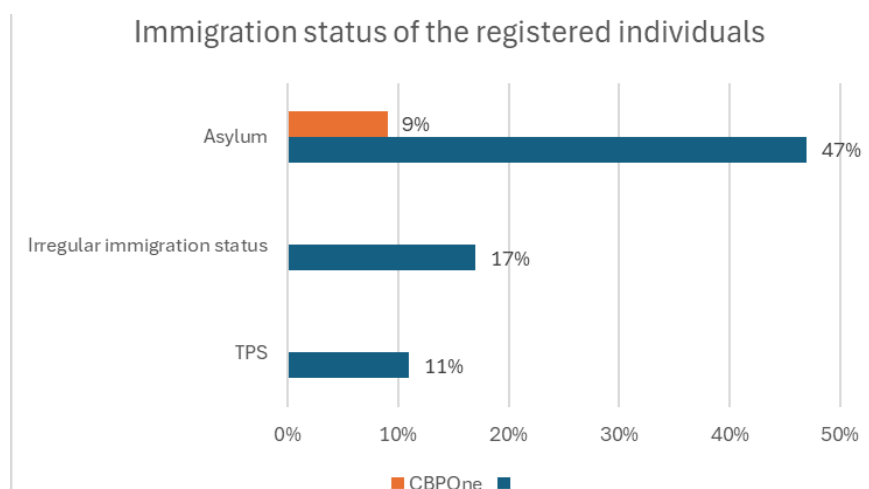


Graph 2 - Source: Created by the author

The majority of the detentions were carried out by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In 94% of the cases, the arrest procedure involved ICE, while the remaining 6% were executed by local police or in collaboration with other federal agencies.

Another clear pattern is the lack of communication with the detainees after their transfer to El Salvador. In 95% of the cases, the families of the detained individuals knew where they were housed in the United States prior to deportation, and 33% of them were able to communicate with their detained relative while they were in the U.S. However, this communication has been nonexistent following their transfer to El Salvador.

In none of the reported cases have the families or lawyers been able to communicate with the detainees after their deportation to El Salvador, nor have they received any information from Salvadoran authorities.⁴



Graph 3 - Source: Created by the author

⁴ Of the total cases registered as of the cutoff date, there are two records where this data is still pending confirmation. In the remaining 97%, the response is consistent regarding the lack of communication with the detained individual.

Regarding the immigration status of the deported individuals, it is noted that 47% of the families or relatives declared that their relative had asylum status or an open asylum application process, while 9% had applied for asylum through the CBP One app. In 11% of the cases, it is reported that the individual held Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and only 17% of the cases reported that the individual was in an irregular immigration status.

Another noteworthy point is that in none of the cases is it reported that U.S. authorities informed the individuals about their transfer to El Salvador beforehand. On the contrary, 46% of the cases indicate that the individual was misled prior to deportation. It is also important to highlight that only 30% of the reported cases indicate that the individual had completed a legal process and had an active deportation order.

This element is particularly relevant, as 24% of the registered cases stated that the deported individuals would be at risk if they were forced to return to Venezuela.

II. Conclusions

According to public information and reports from various media outlets, at least 278 individuals were transferred from the United States to the Salvadoran penitentiary system. Cristosal, through the online form directed at family members or relatives of these individuals, has registered 94 cases as of April 8, accounting for 34% of the known total.

Based on the reported case data, a large majority of the deported individuals to the Salvadoran penitentiary system are Venezuelan and have no known criminal records, primarily profiled by ICE. A consistent pattern is that most of the deported individuals have tattoos, and according to their families, this is the sole reason for identifying them as members of criminal structures.

Another important element to highlight is that in 47% of the registered cases, the individual was either granted asylum status or in the process of applying for asylum, which should protect them from deportation procedures, while less than 30% had a deportation order.

This implies that the measure of transfer or deportation has been applied regardless of the individuals' immigration status, based on the generic accusation of belonging to the Tren de Aragua gang, which, according to the available data, appears to be unfounded in the vast majority of cases.

It is also important to note the communication blackout affecting those transferred to El Salvador. Families report that they have received no notification about the status of their relatives and have been unable to communicate with them since the deportation. Additionally, neither the U.S. nor the Salvadoran government has published or provided a complete list of the individuals affected by this measure or their current status.