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NELVIN C. CEPEDA UT/FILE

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted Tuesday to declare a humanitarian crisis after more than 8,100 migrants have been dropped off in the region in recent weeks. The board will seek federal support to help asylum seekers.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS DECLARED AT BORDER

San Diego County Board of Supervisors to seek federal aid to support influx of migrants

BY EMILY ALVARENGA

With growing numbers of migrants arriving in San Diego County in recent weeks, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously Tuesday to declare a humanitarian crisis for asylum seekers at the border and request more federal support.

More than 8,100 migrants have been dropped off in the region in the last two weeks, according to the county — an influx county officials say shows no sign of slowing.

After waiting between the layers of fencing at the U.S.-Mexico border to be processed, many mi-

grants are dropped off at transit centers across the county, often without the resources they need to reach their destinations, overwhelming local aid groups.

Supervisor Jim Desmond and Chair Nora Vargas, who proposed the motion together, said the county had recently begun fielding requests from local groups for help. Although some have already received government funding to help asylum seekers, local advocates say it is not enough.

The board's action directs the county Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to send a detailed letter outlining the specific needs

of aid groups and impacted communities to San Diego's federal delegation.

It calls for the federal government to designate resources and personnel to manage asylum seekers and connect them to their sponsors and final destinations in an effort to prevent street releases. It also opposes lateral transfers of asylum seekers from other states and jurisdictions.

And it calls for limiting the number of asylum seekers released into the region in the absence of more federal help.

"While Supervisor Desmond and I may have fundamentally dif-

ferent views on immigration policy, we can both agree on one thing, and that is that this county urgently needs federal resources," Vargas said.

The increase in the number of migrant arrivals in recent weeks is the first significant influx reported since new asylum restrictions were introduced in May, when hundreds of migrants waited between the border walls for the end of a pandemic-era immigration policy that blocked asylum seekers and other migrants from entering the U.S.

The county's motion reiterates
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CRISIS

FROM AN action it took in February to commit to creating an immigration response plan in collaboration with aid groups and local governments.

During public comment Tuesday, that gave some people pause.

"I'm unclear why we are actually here today, because this board passed a resolution authorizing the county to seek federal funds to support ongoing efforts by non-governmental organizations earlier this year," said Kate Clark, senior director of immigration services at Jewish Family Service of San Diego.

Clark was among nearly three dozen people who spoke.

Many were volunteers who spoke of the conditions migrants were facing at the border and in San Diego, without shelter or food and unable to speak English or reconnect with family.

Nearly all of those who supported the county's declaration and request for federal support also called for more to be done in the meantime.

"While we support this resolution to secure a federal response, we'd like to make it clear we cannot wait another day for the county to respond as well," said Caroline Theiss-Aird, of the Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Carlsbad. "The county can act right now by helping with things like Wi-Fi, cell phones that people can use to connect with family, translation services for things

that help people know what their next steps are."

Candice Custodio-Tan, executive director of the Asian Solidarity Collective, also called on supervisors to act.

"You have the power to make the changes that need to be made," she said. "This is what it takes to build true, critical connections and relationships and to practice true community care."

Vargas said the county immigration office will look for more opportunities to support aid groups.

County immigration officials are scheduled to give an update on progress implementing regional immigration integration plans on Oct. 24.

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San Diego County declares humanitarian crisis for asylum seekers at border



Volunteers hand clothing to about 30 women waiting between the two fences at the U.S.-Mexico border to be processed by U.S. Border Patrol agents on Friday, Sept. 22, 2023, in Jacumba, California. (Ana Ramirez/The San Diego Union-Tribune)

The bipartisan declaration comes after a two-week period in which more than 8,000 migrants were dropped off in the region

BY [EMILY ALVARENGA](#)
SEPT. 26, 2023 6:11 PM PT

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The county's motion reiterates an action it took in February to commit to creating an immigration response plan in collaboration with aid groups and local governments.

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<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/border-baja-california/story/2023-09-26/county-declares-humanitarian-crisis-at-border-will-ask-federal-government-for-more-help>