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AMERICA/ECUADOR - The plight of Haitians trying to reach Brazil continues, and another 500 of them abandoned at the border

Quito (Agenzia Fides) - Ecuador has become the door of South America to Haitian immigrants who want to go to Brazil in search of a better life than living in their country, devastated by the earthquake of 2010, because the Andean nation does not ask for visa: this is the information released from the NGO, "the Jesuit Service for Refugees and migrants" (SJRM) in Quito. In early January, in just three days, 500 Haitians arrived in Brasileia, a town of 20,000 inhabitants in the Amazon state of Acre, in Brazil, where about 700 countrymen lived in temporary housing. According to Brazilian government figures, about 4,000 Haitians arrived in Brazil after the earthquake in January 2010.
The deputy director of SJRM of Ecuador, Juan Villalobos, said that the majority of Haitians want to go to Brazil and the French Guyana from here, to arrive in France. Villalobos explained that they enter South America through Ecuador because it is the only country in the region, together with Chile, where visas to enter is not asked. However, Chile requires for entry into its territory that one has economic funds, so many decide to go to Ecuador, which does not ask them. The Caribbean nation still "comes from a historical crisis" according to Villalobos: even before the earthquake there were two million Haitians abroad and natural disasters have accentuated this escape. The majority of Haitians who leave the country are young people between 18 and 35 years of age, who want training or a job abroad to send money home to family in Haiti.
They leave from their country towards the Dominican Republic or Cuba, then to Ecuador and from there take different routes to different countries to arrive in Brazil, said the representative of SJRM. However he warned that "in Brazil there is no work for them" and also "the country has imposed a restrictive policy regarding the Haitians entry who cannot leave the state of Acre".
Another concern for SRJM is that many of them "come through the networks of trafficking or human trafficking", in large groups, forced to travel long distances in the region (see Fides /25/01/2012). Villalobos cited as an example the 500 Haitians who were left to themselves in Leticia Tabatinga, an Amazonian city of Colombia, on the border with Brazil and Peru. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 13/2/2012)

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