

PLACE

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Niger faces refugee influx as violence increases in neighbouring states

Tens of thousands of new refugees have arrived in Niger in the last four months to escape attacks by armed groups in neighbouring countries. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is concerned by these rising numbers as attacks on civilians prompting displacement increase in both frequency and violence.

From January to mid-April 2022, Niger registered more than 36,000 new arrivals from Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso - an average of more than 2,500 new arrivals every week.

“I’m afraid that we will be getting regular influxes into Niger for as long as there is trouble in the countries surrounding us,” said Emmanuel Gignac, UNHCR’s Representative in Niger. “It is imperative that we, as UNHCR, and our partners develop and maintain a very strong emergency response capacity.”

The new arrivals from Mali are fleeing fighting between the EIGS (Etat Islamique au Grand Sahara) and the MSA (Mouvement pour le Salut de l’Azawad) in the Gao and Menaka regions. Nigerian refugees are fleeing increased looting, expropriation of property, assault and kidnapping by armed bandits in the states of Katsina and Sokoto, in the northwest of their country, while displacement from Burkina Faso is caused by ongoing and spreading insecurity.

The refugees, who are mostly women and children, need shelter, food and water, non-food items and access to basic services such as healthcare and education. The fact that they are arriving and settling in some of Niger’s driest areas makes their situation even more precarious: food prices have risen dramatically in Niger and the ongoing food security crisis triggered by a poor 2021 farming season is putting further at risk already vulnerable refugees and local communities alike. Some refugee children are acutely malnourished while adult members of their families struggle to feed them.

There are 580,000 forcibly displaced people in Niger, including 360,000 refugees.

“As much as we remain committed to delivering life-saving aid and working closely with the local authorities and host communities on the front lines of the response, stabilisation and development interventions must kick-in early and quicker. As humanitarians, we are reaching our limits,” Gignac said.

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