

Yei, South Sudan, 11.11.2016

UNHCR is saddened by the abduction and killing of Nuba refugees in Yei

The UN refugee agency is gravely concerned over the recent abduction and subsequent killing of refugees near the refugee hosting area of Lasu Payam. The fatal shooting and machete attack by armed groups killed two and wounded five Sudanese refugees from Sudan's South Kordofan region.

On Saturday 5 November, armed men released seven previously abducted refugees from captivity with their hands tied behind their backs. One refugee was shot dead and six others cut by machetes. Before reaching Yei town on foot, one refugee bled to death from their wounds. UNHCR has airlifted the five wounded refugees to Juba for better medical treatment.

The abduction of 39 refugees, which took place on 19 October, was confirmed to UNHCR by survivors who had returned to the refugee settlement from their hiding places in the bush due to hunger and scarcity of other essential needs. The armed group entered into the settlement and asked refugees to present their food ration cards for food distribution mobilization, allegedly on behalf of the United Nations (UN). To date, four women and 28 children are still in captivity in an unknown location. UNHCR is at present exerting efforts to obtain details about their whereabouts and their captors.

This is not the first attack against refugees in Lasu. In September, armed men went on a looting spree in the camp, firing guns in the air, breaking into refugee homes seizing food items, personal belongings, and livestock, and destroying the medical clinic. This forced thousands of refugees to flee alongside the host community and seek safety in the surrounding dense forest areas.

Prior to the raids in September, Lasu hosted over 10,000 refugees, mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and smaller numbers from Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR). The camp is currently empty, with access to the area extremely challenging due to the ongoing insecurity.

"UNHCR urges the government of South Sudan and armed groups in the refugee hosting areas to respect human rights and take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of refugees, create a secure corridor for movement of displaced refugees and free movement of humanitarian actors to reach refugees with much-needed relief aid," says Vincent Parker, UNHCR's Deputy Representative in South Sudan.

Revived violence in South Sudan's Equatoria region has forced more than 320,000 people to flee South Sudan since July 8, bringing the number of South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries to over 1.2 million. In South Sudan, more than 1.73 million people are internally displaced, and the country also hosts 260,453 refugees from Sudan, DRC, Ethiopia, and CAR.

END

For further information, please contact:

Richard Ruati, Assistant External Relations Officer | Email: ruati@unhcr.org

Caption information:

1. Wounded refugees inside an Ambulance

©UNHCR/Brenda Escalante. Wounded refugees inside an ambulance being taken to the airport for evacuation to Juba.

2. Wounded refugee boarding the plane

©UNHCR/ Brenda Escalante. UNHCR staff assisting a wounded refugee to board the plane during an evacuation at the Yei airstrip.