



Press release



1 seule personne forcée à fuir
c'est déjà trop.

Niger

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Worrying situation at the Lake Chad level and in the region of Diffa (Niger)

The ongoing insurgency in the three northeastern Nigerian states of Yobe, Adamawa and Borno has displaced many thousand civilians, both internally inside Nigeria, but also created a constant refugee outflow into the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.

The region of Diffa in Niger has been the principal destination of the forcibly displaced population from Nigeria. Diffa is a remote region, near Lake Chad in the far east of the country. It is 1,200 kms away from the nation's capital Niamey, sparsely populated due to its dry and desertic character. Its population lives along the Komadougou Yobé River which also marks the border to Borno state (Nigeria) in the south.

Bosso is one of the main towns right on the river banks. Here, refugees from Nigeria cross the river every day seeking sanctuary from the internal conflict.

Last July aid organizations counted 6,400 displaced persons. By September 2013 the number had risen to 37,000. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is monitoring the influx and has counted more than 2,000 persons during the last four weeks only. Today, as nobody has a complete and real time overview on the daily arrivals that affect more than 100 villages, even cautious estimations put the number of displaced as well above the 40,000 mark.

The Nigerian press has been reporting major incidents near Borno's state capital Maiduguri in recent days. But Maiduguri is more than 250 kms away from Niger and the violence there has no major impact on the refugee flow into Niger. This begs the question: where do the refugees arriving in Niger come from and what makes them flee?

Eye witness reports point at another major theatre of violence that does not hit the headlines: the shores and islands of Lake Chad inside Borno state. A refugee women from Madaï village interviewed was still under shock when describing the situation back home: « I have never seen anything like this in my life: Corpses were everywhere, in the houses and floating in the water. Everyone runs for his life. If you can't find your relatives you assume they are dead. Our biggest remorse is that, we can't even bury the dead family members. »



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Another women added: « We were lucky to live in a remote part of the village. When we heard the shooting we grabbed the children and ran away. We couldn't take anything with us. Many families got separated. » Other reports suggest that women and children were kidnapped and taken away by the assailants.

UNHCR is paying homage to the government of Niger for its « open door » policies towards the forcibly displaced population entering the country from Nigeria and to the local population which keeps on hosting and sharing their meager resources with an ever increasing number of refugees.

UNHCR and all humanitarian actors also express their gravest concerns as regards the violence in Nigeria and in particular in the areas along Lake Chad. They call on all belligerents to spare the lives and properties of the civilian population and to respect the international conventions on the conduct of armed conflict There is also a need for the international community to mobilize and to come to the rescue of the displaced population and the inhabitants of Diffa region who, despite of rampant poverty, desertification and a looming food crisis, keep on hosting their neighbours from Nigeria.

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