

FORCED RETURN FIGURES

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2015

12 000

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2016

76 525

JANUARY - MAY 2017

3 400

Due to the fluidity of population movements and the existence of multiple unofficial entry points, it is possible that there may be irregular movements with the result that an individual is arrested and returned to the border before returning to Cameroon again. The overall figure is thus indicative of the total number of persons taken back to the border but does not necessarily reflect the exact number of refugees that may have been refouled.

SPONTANEOUS RETURN FIGURES

RETURN AREAS



APRIL 2017

1 754

MAY 2017

10 448

As of 31 May 2017, 12 202 Nigerian refugees had returned spontaneously. No spontaneous returns were recorded between the two periods. Their main areas of return are Banki, Pulka, Mubi and Bama in north-eastern Nigeria.

UNHCR APPROACH

UNHCR's current approach is to manage relations with the government to avoid a further stiffening and to deflect any negative impact on refugees. In the face of these developments, UNHCR Cameroon and Nigeria have taken initiatives to jumpstart the tripartite consultations, such as the recent joint mission from UNHCR Nigeria and the Nigerian government.

COMMITMENTS

The commitment taken by Cameroon at the national level must be upheld at the local level to ensure that all returns remain voluntary. UNHCR has carried out advocacy at regional, national and international levels.

JOINT PROTECTION COMMITTEES

Refugees living outside the camp and who had been pre-registered by UNHCR and the Joint Protection Committees in November 2016 in the three districts of Mogode, Makary and Kousseri have neither been harassed nor sent back across the border. As a reminder, UNHCR and the Joint Protection Committees had carried out a joint mission at that time and had pre-registered 21,886 refugees in these districts.

KEY MESSAGES

1

SECURITY CHALLENGES

UNHCR has acknowledged the security challenges facing Cameroon and stands ready to support the authorities in developing enhanced screening, status determination and registration mechanisms for those in need of protection, particularly through the set-up of transit centers in key localities.

2

COMMITMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS

These deportations are contrary to Cameroon's regional and international obligations in the area of refugee protection and the Tripartite Agreement signed on 2 March by Cameroon, Nigeria and UNHCR

3

SPONTANEOUS RETURNS

UNHCR has not sanctioned these returns as we have yet to establish whether areas of return are indeed safe. These will be determined under the authority of the Tripartite Commission as it is the only body competent to sanction voluntary repatriation.

SENSITIZATION

UNHCR and partners continue to sensitize refugees in Minawao camp about the potential risks of return and to await the take-off of the Tripartite Commission. According to the Nigerian side, they envisage convening the first meeting in the first half of June 2017.

AREAS OF RETURN

Despite information circulating that areas of origin are now back to normal, reports indicate that a good number of the spontaneous returnees have ended up in IDP camps, pending a return to their areas of origin, and some others have returned to Cameroon.

REASONS FOR SPONTANEOUS RETURNS

Refugees have been returning on their own accord and by their own means. Information reaching UNHCR Cameroon indicates that refugees have been swayed to believe that conditions are back to normal in their areas of origin. Refugees have apparently been led to believe that they can safely resume economic activities and are therefore making arrangements to return before the planting season.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS RELATED TO FORCED RETURNS

