

PLACE

Ouagadougou

DATE

12 November 2021

Persistent insecurity forces Malian refugees in Burkina Faso out of Goudoubo camp

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is concerned about the rapid deterioration of security in the Sahel region and the latest incidents in Goudoubo refugee camp that drove out the 13,000 Malian refugees, leaving the camp empty.

“We are appalled at attacks targeting a refugee camp. We call on armed elements to respect international humanitarian laws and cease their assaults on refugees and other civilians,” says Abdouraouf Gnon-Konde, UNHCR’s Representative in Burkina Faso.

In March 2020, similar incidents had forced refugees to flee to the neighbouring cities of Dori and Gorom-Gorom, leading to the effective closure of the camp. The Government of Burkina Faso had then strengthened security measures in the area allowing for the progressive and voluntary return of over 6,570 refugees from December 2020 onwards. With new arrivals from Mali and from refugees living in rural areas in the region, the camp became home to nearly 13,000 Malian refugees and asylum-seekers.

The latest incident occurred in the night of 6 November, when armed assailants led an incursion into the camp, located some 18 kilometers from the town of Dori. They broke into common buildings, stealing food and medicine. This comes only a week after a similar raid. Two refugees were abducted and their whereabouts remain unknown, while many refugee men, women and children spent the night hiding in the bush.

UNHCR teams have remained in close contact with refugee community leaders, who are asking for urgent help with food, shelter, water, hygiene, sanitation, and education.

“Everyone was very scared. Once the armed groups had gone, we returned to the camp, packed our things and left,” said Mamadou, a refugee community leader. “Some even dismantled their shelters to make sure they had a place to stay once in Dori. We now have to start our lives from scratch again.”

A joint UN mission visited Dori on 11 November to express solidarity and discuss the current situation and the response with UN personnel, populations and partners. The mission, which was led by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, included sister agencies such as UNICEF, OCHA and WFP, in addition to UNHCR.

At the moment, 2,600 families from Goudoubo camp have now relocated to Dori, a city whose population has more than tripled as displaced people have arrived, adding pressure on resources and basic services.

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“The resilience of refugees and the generosity of the host populations is truly humbling,” said UNHCR Representative, Abdouraouf Gnon-Konde. “We will continue working with authorities and partners to support refugees wherever they have settled. Infrastructures, such as schools and water points, urgently need reinforcing to mitigate the risks of tensions and to help foster peaceful coexistence between communities.”

Violence in the Sahel has forcibly displaced 3,4 million people, including more than 700,000 refugees and internally displaced within the past year. Burkina Faso is the most affected with over 1.4 million internally displaced men, women and children.

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