

Situational Context

Tensions continue to heighten in southern Cameroon's English speaking regions following the recent deportation of 47 asylum seekers including leaders of the pro-independence movement by Nigeria. According to the new arrivals, the Government in Yaoundé has also reinforced its military presence with deployment of troops, imposition of curfew and restrictions on travel by Anglophone Cameroonians. These developments continue to trigger population movements toward Nigeria in search of safety and international protection. Government security forces have been repeatedly accused of killing civilians while the secessionists are also accused of complicity in the deaths of more than 10 security personnel since the unilateral declaration of independence on October 1, 2017. The interim leadership of the pro-independence group has asked the government of President Paul Biya to allow international human rights organisations access to their leaders and members of their community who were deported to Cameroon by Nigeria to prove that they are still alive. The government said the detainees were currently undergoing interrogation and their lawyers would have access to them after the process.

New Arrivals

More Cameroonians are arriving at Danare in Boki, Cross River State and Gembu, Taraba State. However, some of the new arrivals are reluctant to be interviewed and registered on grounds that they fear being deported to Cameroon by Nigeria. Other asylum seekers already registered are requesting UNHCR to relocate them to a third country for fear of being returned to Cameroon against their will. The latest batch of arrivals is mainly from Cameroon's Kwa-Kwa Mbonge Sub Division in the South-Western Region. Residents fled their homes following clashes between security forces and separatists in the area and accused the military of excesses including arson attacks on their homes.

Response & Advocacy Efforts

In order to reinforce UNHCR's response, the High Commission on 6 February declared a Level 2 Emergency for the Cameroonian refugee influx into Nigeria. The declaration will remain in force for an initial period of six months. UNHCR Nigeria has already deployed the Head of Operations for the Emergency in the three affected states. The UNHCR Emergency Unit in Geneva will provide additional support staff to beef up the current capacity on the ground. Meanwhile, UNHCR is working with the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) to identify two camp sites in Cross River and Benue States with the capacity of 40,000 to move the arrivals away from the border areas to temporary camp settings in the two states.

On 1 February, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency issued a statement condemning Nigeria's unilateral action to return to Cameroon 47 individuals, most of whom had already submitted their asylum claims. UNHCR termed the action, a violation of international law which prohibits governments from returning asylum seekers against their will. Prior to the deportation, UNHCR had been assured by authorities in Nigeria that the asylum seekers would not be returned to their country of origin. Meanwhile, the statement also urged the Government of Cameroon to ensure that the group is treated in accordance with human rights law and standards.

Between 22 January and 3 February, UNHCR and its main government counterpart, the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) biometrically registered **2,804** asylum seekers in Cross River, bringing to **14,056** the total number of refugees and asylum seekers recorded in Cross River, Benue and Taraba States since the beginning of the influx in September 2017. Women and children account for about **77** percent of those registered so far in the three states. Meanwhile, UNHCR remains concerned by the lack of resources, which is impeding the capacity of aid agencies to adequately respond to the conditions of this critically needy population. Despite the unfortunate incident involving the deportation of some asylum seekers, UNHCR remains engaged with Nigerian authorities to safeguard the rights of those fleeing the crisis and facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance in safety and dignity.

On 3 February, UNHCR conducted a training for 20 enumerators in Calabar as part of efforts to enhance the registration of asylum seekers in Cross River, Benue and Taraba States. The training focused on data collection and data entry as well as protection principles including protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The additional enumerators will help to boost UNHCR and the NCFRMI's capacity to register new arrivals who are yet to be covered in the three receiving states.

External Mission

2 German Embassy staff based in Abuja visited Cross River State during the reporting period to see first-hand the conditions of some asylum seekers and efforts by UNHCR to support the new arrivals. The team held discussions with the UNHCR team about the influx and also met with some asylum seekers and the Nigerian military in the area.

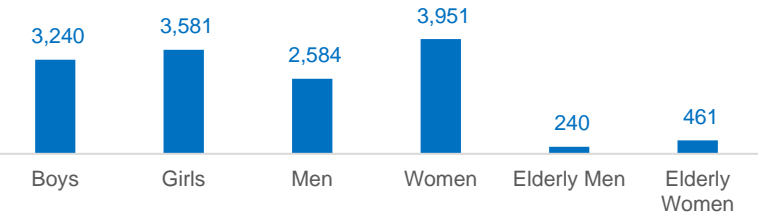
CONTACTS:

Elizabeth Mpimbaza, Snr. External Relations Officer, mpimbaza@unhcr.org, (+234) 8090161438
Hanson Ghandi Tamfu, Public Information Officer, tamfu@unhcr.org, (+234)703 608 3285
Tom Winston Monboe, Associate Reporting Officer, monboe@unhcr.org, +234 809 0160763



14,057 REGISTERED ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM CAMEROON

ASYLUM SEEKERS BY AGE AND GENDER



AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWN OF ASYLUM SEEKERS PER LGA

LGAs	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Elderly Men	Elderly Women	Total
Boki	591	644	545	647	43	70	2,540
Etung	423	402	642	409	25	35	1,936
Ikom	150	200	205	317	7	13	892
Obanliku	1,596	1,878	698	1,769	127	263	6,331
Odukpani	-	4	-	1	-	-	5
Akamkpa	463	434	439	752	34	76	2,198
Calabar	17	19	55	56	4	4	155

REGISTERED ASYLUM SEEKERS PER MONTH



METHODOLOGY

UNHCR in collaboration with the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI) launched a registration exercise for newly arrived Cameroonian asylum seekers in Cross Rivers State. The information helps identify vulnerabilities among the asylum seekers population as well as baseline data in order to plan and coordinate the humanitarian response.

