

Forced return of Nigerian refugees

Following issues previously reported in the Far North region during the first half of 2017 (*refer to May and June 2017 reports of the same title*), UNHCR Cameroon has found it necessary to provide an update on the issue of *refoulement*, which has again come to our attention.

Various efforts, including advocacy interventions, had been made by UNHCR and its partners throughout 2017 to remind Cameroon of its international obligations with regards to the principle of *non-refoulement*. These advocacy efforts had been met with positive engagement from authorities and monitoring indicated a drastic reduction and a halt of forced returns. However, we have been informed by our office in Kousseri of renewed incidents of forced returns of Nigerian refugees and asylum seekers from Cameroon into northeast Nigeria.

On 6 April, UNHCR Cameroon had been ready to transport a group of 160 vulnerable people – 114 refugees and 46 asylum seekers – reportedly in Waza (Logone et Chari division) since 2014, to Minawao refugee camp when they were halted by local authorities. The group was instead boarded on to trucks, on the morning of 10 April, and returned by the Cameroonian army to the IDP site of Ngala (Borno State) in Nigeria, through the Fotokol border point.

UNHCR Cameroon, surprised by this latest incident, has written a letter of protest to the Minister of Territorial Administration, with copy to the Secretary General of the Presidency, the Minister of External Relations and the Minister in charge of mission at the Presidency.

UNHCR renews its call to Cameroon to refrain from further forced returns and to ensure international protection for all those fleeing insecurity and persecution in northeast Nigeria in accordance with international conventions to which it is party.

UNHCR continues to appeal to authorities in Cameroon to provide unfettered access to asylum for Nigerian refugees and reiterates its support to government to ensure that all those in need of international protection have access to efficient screening and registration procedures.

CONTACTS

Roseline Okoro | Deputy Representative, Protection | okoro@unhcr.org | Tel: +237 691 141 204
Mamady Fatta Kourouma | Head of Sub-Office Maroua | kourouma@unhcr.org | Tel: +237 691 141 212
Kabami Kalumiya | Associate External Relations Officer | kalumiya@unhcr.org | Tel: +237 691 141 226