
Press Release

Worsening displacement crisis in eastern Chad requires concerted response

GENEVA, 11 July 2007 – As the violence in Darfur continues, the scale of the crisis facing people displaced by conflict in the neighbouring regions of Chad is only now becoming clear. Recent estimates suggest that around 170,000 people have been forced to flee their homes, including more than 120,000 during the last seven months alone, and a report released today by the Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) describes how a combination of factors has left them vulnerable to attack from all sides, and increasingly deprived of access to food, water and healthcare.

Though cross-border attacks attributed to Sudanese Janjaweed militias continue, the government of Chad has been more concerned with quelling internal dissent, and has withdrawn army units from the affected eastern regions. "The government has an obligation to ensure security and address the root causes of the inter-ethnic violence, to ensure that the displaced people can return to their areas of origin," said the Norwegian Refugee Council's Secretary-General Tomas Colin Archer.

Local inter-communal violence has flourished, and has reportedly even been fuelled by the government. Targeted attacks against civilians, mainly women and children, have included arbitrary killings, mutilations, and rape. Rebel and militia groups and the Chadian army itself are reported to be recruiting children in IDP sites to fight for them. Civilians have often had their houses, livestock and other property destroyed or stolen, while humanitarian workers have also been subjected to attacks and physical threats.

Until recently, the assistance provided by many organisations in Chad focused on the refugees arriving from Sudan's Darfur and neglected host communities and IDPs. The international community is only now starting to form a response commensurate to the scale of the displacement crisis in Chad itself. "The immediate challenge is to ensure the physical security of civilians and humanitarian operations. The international agencies will have to adopt a much more concerted approach to protect the civilians displaced more effectively," Archer said.

The IDMC is calling on the government of Chad to improve its efforts to protect IDPs, and is urging all parties, including donor states, to support projects focusing on longer-term goals of conflict resolution and reconciliation in the displaced people's areas of origin.

Regularly updated information on all situations of conflict-induced displacement is available from the IDMC's website at www.internal-displacement.org.

For more information contact Jens-Hagen Eschenbächer, NRC Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva. Tel. (41) 22 799 07 03; mobile (41)-79 79 79 439.

The Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide.