

Influx from Ethiopia to Sudan

26 November 2018

1,176

Individuals who fled
to Sudan since
5 November

1,061

Ethiopian individuals
assisted to return

7

Ethiopian individuals
who sought asylum

104

Eritrean individuals
who sought asylum

BACKGROUND: Inter-communal disturbances between some Ethiopian ethnic groups along the western Ethiopian borders with Sudan have forced 1,167 individuals (1,072 Ethiopians and 104 Eritreans) to flee into Sudan since Monday 5 November, through two crossing points in Gedaref States in East Sudan. Out of this number, 1,061 individuals were assisted to return back to Ethiopia, including 683 individuals from Tigray ethnic group and 378 individuals from Kament ethnic background while 7 Ethiopians opted to seek asylum in Sudan. Apart from the Ethiopian arrivals, some 104 Eritrean individuals who came to Sudan from Ethiopia have sought asylum in Sudan.

ARRIVALS AT GALLABAT LOCALITY: A total of 680 persons from Tigray ethnic group have arrived via Gallabat crossing point into Gallabat locality since 5 November. They were accommodated in UNHCR's reception center in Gallabat and were assisted with food and water by UNHCR and Commission of Refugees (COR). They did not seek asylum in Sudan and requested assistance to be transported back Ethiopia. With the assistance of UNHCR and of the COR, they returned to a Tigray majority region in Ethiopia via Lugdi crossing point in three convoys, on Friday 9 November (265 individuals), on Wednesday 14 November (340 individuals) and on Tuesday 20 November (75 individuals). No other Ethiopian refugees have been reported in Gallabat area as of 25 November 2018.

ERITREAN ARRIVALS FROM ETHIOPIA:

A group of 104 Eritrean individuals who fled to Sudan following the incidents in Ethiopia on 5 November through Gallabat crossing point expressed their intention to seek asylum in Sudan and were transported to Shagrab refugee camp in two convoys (57 individuals on 16 November and 47 individuals on 19 November) in order to go through screening, registration and refugee status determination (RSD) procedures.

ARRIVALS AT BASUNDA LOCALITY:

Another group of 392 individuals including 225 males, 86 females and 81 children, all from Kament ethnic background, crossed the border to Sudan on 6 November 2018. They had been hosted in a school in Al Fazra area. Of these, 378 individuals expressed no intention to seek asylum in Sudan and on 25 November were assisted by UNHCR and COR to return to Ethiopia through the Gallabat-Mettama crossing, following the safe-return assurances they received from the Consul General of Ethiopia in Gedaref and the Chief of

Federal Police of their Zone. Another three individuals of Tigray ethnic group were assisted to get travel permit from the authorities to return to a Tigray majority region through Lugdi crossing point while seven individuals have sought asylum and were transported to Shagrab refugee camp. A group of four Ethiopian individuals who were at Al Fazara have disappeared.



A group of 378 Ethiopian individuals are assisted by UNHCR and COR to return to Ethiopia on 25 November, after fleeing to Basunda in East Sudan, following inter-communal disturbances in the Western side of Ethiopia. Photo: ©UNHCR

RESPONSE

On 13 November an Inter-Agency mission was undertaken to Alfazra area, Basunda locality, including the Commissioner for Refugees (COR), the Assistant Commissioner for Refugees (ACOR) Kassala, the UNHCR Head of Sub-office, the UNICEF Head of office in East Sudan and representatives from WFP and WHO, with an aim to assess the situation of the new arrivals. New arrivals were provided with core relief and non-food items (UNHCR), water bladder containers, 30 emergency latrines and BP-5 compact food (UNICEF), food rations for 15 days (WFP) and necessary medical assistance and drugs (WHO and Ministry of Health).

On 23 November, a joint mission was conducted by UNHCR, COR, the Ethiopian Counsel General in Gedaraf, the Ethiopian Federal Police Commander, and representatives of local authorities, to counsel the Ethiopian new arrivals who had expressed the intention to return.

The individuals received assurances from the Ethiopian officials that the internal disturbances in Ethiopia have calmed down and the majority of the displaced populations have returned to their habitual residences. They were told that internal safe-return arrangements for the group are in place at their point of arrival at Mettama, from where the group will voluntarily decide to return to their villages in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian officials told the individuals that they will be accommodated in temporary shelters in Mettama until they will decide to return to their homes.

UNHCR and COR sensitized the group that each individual has the right to decide whether to return home or to seek asylum, and were informed that those who seek asylum will be transported to Shagarab refugee camp. The group was transported to Gallabat reception centre.

On 25 November, 378 individuals were transported back to Ethiopia through the Gallabat-Mettama crossing point with UNHCR and COR's support. Seven Ethiopian asylum seekers were transported to Shagarab refugee camp.



The Head of UNHCR Sub Office in Kassala delivers non-food items to the Ethiopian arrivals in Basunda locality. Photo: ©UNHCR



Ethiopian arrivals are counselled on 23 November by a joint mission of UNHCR, COR, the Ethiopian Counsel General in Gedaraf, the Ethiopian Federal Police Commander, and representatives of local authorities ahead of their return to Ethiopia. They returned to Ethiopia on 25 November. Photo: ©UNHCR

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