

Beat: News

VIOLENCE AND THREATS BY ARMED GROUPS CONTINUE TO DISPLACE REFUGEES AND CIVILIANS

In Mali | UNHCR Press Release

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ARAC International StratCom - This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR Representative in Mali, Mohamed Toure – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at today’s press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is calling for enhanced support for those recently displaced in Mali, where violence and threats by armed groups have forced local Malians and refugees to flee for safety.

In N'Tillit village in northern Mali, the attacks have forced more than 3,700 Burkinabé refugees and local Malians to flee to Gao, the nearest city located 120 kilometres away.

The current threat in N'Tillit, where Burkinabé refugees had found refuge in recent years after fleeing Burkina Faso, has displaced them for the second or third time, bringing even greater trauma. Since 2018, Burkinabé refugees have been forced to cross the border to Mali, despite the precarious security situation in both countries. As of 31 December 2022, Mali hosted more than 60,000 refugees, including 25,000 from Burkina Faso. Meanwhile, some 440,000 Malians remain internally displaced due to continued violence and threats from armed groups.

The number of arrivals in Gao town may continue to increase as the remaining population in N'Tillit village fear reprisals after being given ultimatums by an armed group. The majority of displaced – women and children – walked for hours without food, fearing for their lives to find safety.

The displaced are currently living under trees or in makeshift shelters with little food and water. Pregnant and nursing mothers with children, the elderly, people living with disabilities, and separated children urgently need health care. UNHCR and its partners are supporting local authorities in assessing and responding to the needs of forcibly displaced families in Gao.

We are also coordinating the humanitarian response for refugees and internally displaced Malians across the country through emergency shelter, education, food and water supply, cash assistance and programmes aimed at economic empowerment.

Despite these efforts, the needs of the displaced remain enormous as violence by armed groups continues to force people to flee. UNHCR is appealing to the international community to show greater solidarity for the displaced in Mali and in neighbouring countries, through urgent financial support for humanitarian organizations to deliver life-saving assistance.

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