

UN agency 'alarmed' again by forced refugee returns to Nigeria from Cameroon

29 June 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency is alarmed by a fresh incident of forced returns of refugees from Cameroon into northeast Nigeria due to an absence of conditions to make such movements safe and sustainable.

"The involuntary return of refugees must be avoided under any circumstances," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi in a press release issued today by his Office ([UNHCR](#)).

"In addition, returns to Nigeria put a strain on the few existing services and are not sustainable at this time. A new emergency, just as the rainy season is starting, has to be avoided at all costs," he added.

In March, UNHCR raised concerns over incidents of forced return from the border areas. More recently, the agency warned that large numbers of refugees were returning from Minawao camp to conditions dangerously unprepared to receive them.

In the latest incident happened on 27 June, some 887 Nigerian refugees, most of them children, were rounded up and forcibly removed to Banki in Nigeria in desperate conditions. They were repatriated in six trucks provided by the Nigerian military and Cameroonian police from the Kolofata border site. This happened after Cameroon gave the refugees seven days' notice on June 19 to return.

Inside Nigeria, insecurity is preventing refugees from returning to their places of origin. UNHCR has repeated its appeal to the authorities in Cameroon to allow newly arrived Nigerian refugees to reach Minawao camp, where some 58,000 are currently being hosted, with another 33,000 living in nearby villages.

UNHCR has renewed its call on Cameroon and Nigeria to refrain from further forced returns, urging both to take urgent steps to convene a meeting of the Tripartite Commission, established under a recent agreement with UNHCR to ensure a facilitated voluntary return process in line with international standards.

Northeast Nigeria has been plagued by violent attacks carried out by the Boko Haram terrorist group.