

# ***GUINEA (CONAKRY): SIERRA LEONE REFUGEES***

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### ***The Disaster***

Nine years of civil conflict in Sierra Leone has affected hundreds of thousands of people, provoking massive population displacements internally as well as across borders to neighbouring countries. A particularly brutal aspect of the conflict has been the savage mutilation of thousands of men, women, and children.

The Lomé Accord signed on 7 July, 1999 in Togo by A. Kabbah (the President of Sierra Leone) and Foday Sankoh (the leader of the Revolutionary United Front or RUF) provided Sankoh a high Government position and required the disarmament of the rebel forces.

Responsibility for carrying out the disarmament process was entrusted to the UN Mission for Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which began deployment in late, 1999 and early 2000. Despite high hopes for peace, during the disarmament process rebel forces increasingly presented obstacles, initially preventing UN peacekeepers access to formerly closed areas and eventually escalating the confrontation by taking 500 UN peacekeepers hostage. The renewed conflict has caused terror and panic within the civilian population, provoking new population displacements towards the capitol Freetown and to Guinea.

Some 884 refugees have reportedly arrived at the existing Kalako refugee camp in Forécariah, a city located some 100 kms south of Conakry. An estimated 5,000 new refugees are reportedly waiting to cross the border to the Kalako refugee camp in Forécariah.

While recent reports indicate that the security situation is improving with rebel forces pushed back to their main bases in the interior of the country, some 150 UN peacekeepers freed by the RUF, and a semblance of calm returning to Freetown, the overall situation remains fluid and unpredictable, and continues to evolve.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

#### **Conakry •**

In support of and collaboration with the Government of Guinea (the Minister of Interior and Security) and UNHCR (as lead UN agency for refugees), first aid and emergency workers from the Red Cross Society of Guinea are present at the port of Conakry (Boussoura-Autonome) providing refugee reception services

and immediate care and assistance. It is estimated that 80% of the people arriving by boat are Guinean by origin and are reunited with their families upon clearing customs. Refugees are identified and provided with an initial medical check-up as well as food and water before being transported by UNHCR to the camp.

**Forécariah •**

In addition to the refugees transported from Conakry, refugees arriving by road are registered into the camps and given an initial distribution of food, non-food items and clothing. Registration is carried out by UNHCR with the assistance of Red Cross volunteers. The Red Cross of Guinea and the Federation are then responsible for integrating them into the camps.

UNHCR has updated its contingency plans for the possible arrival of up to 50,000 refugees. The Federation delegation has been invited to participate in the planning process.

Other UN agencies or NGO's active in the assistance operation are WFP (for food), GTZ (construction of camp infrastructure), and the International Rescue Committee (students and education).

## *Needs*

For the time being the Federation Delegation and the Guinean Red Cross have the capacity to handle the incoming refugees with in their existing infrastructure. Any major influx however would require the launching of an additional appeal. Coverage for the 2000 Emergency Appeal however is currently only at an estimated 60% of funds requested. The volatile situation in Sierra Leone reinforces the need for a strong Society and Federation Delegation in Guinea. Contributions to the support of the operations are urgently needed. Non-food items in cash or kind (clothing, shelter, blankets) would be needed in the event of a larger influx.

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**This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>**