

GUINEA CONAKRY: INFLUX OF SIERRA LEONEAN REFUGEES

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The Disaster

ECOMOG forces have entered the Sierra Leonean capital Freetown and neutralised pockets of resistance. Those carrying arms have been requested to lay them down, observe a cease-fire and refrain from looting and acts of armed robbery. The Federation representative based in Freetown, in co-operation with the Sierra Leone Red Cross — active throughout the crisis — has established preliminary contacts with the present authorities to discuss ways of enabling the National Society to continue to assist the most vulnerable.

Meanwhile the influx of Sierra Leonean refugees has continued into Conakry and the Federation, in co-operation with Guinea Red Cross (GRC), has provided humanitarian assistance.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

On 13 February a boat arrived in Conakry carrying 304 people: 156 men, 84 women, 41 children and 23 infants. A team of GRC volunteers, posted at the port, provided the refugees with food aid. The team also rendered first aid to 60 persons and evacuated two children by taxi to Donka hospital where they died of severe dehydration. Only 225 of the 304 persons counted by the Red Cross were transferred to the UNHCR registration centre for the night.

On Saturday, 14 February, four more boats arrived at Conakry carrying 163 persons: 86 men, 70 women, 104 children and 18 infants. Red Cross first aiders treated 21 persons and evacuated two men to hospital.

On Sunday, 15 February, a third influx of 146 people (73 men, 46 women, 17 children and 10 infants) arrived on three more boats which had left Freetown on the evening of Thursday, 13 February. First aid was provided to 21 refugees. Police controls were strengthened on both land and at sea to prevent persons who might jeopardise the security of the refugees from entering.

Yesterday morning 98 more refugees (40 men, 35 women, 14 children and 9 babies) arrived after a 48-hour voyage.

Between 12 and 15 February, a total of 1,410 persons, of Sierra Leonean and Guinea nationality, arrived in Conakry on 16 boats. In response to these last arrivals, GRC, in co-operation with the Federation:

- { set up two teams of five first aiders each who rotate duty in Boussoura port;
- { assigned four volunteers to the UNHCR registration centre to give food to the new arrivals;

- { gave first aid to 174 refugees and evacuated 18 others to hospitals;
- { distributed food to 855 refugees.

The number of refugees seems to have decreased in the past 24 hours, but the Federation, in consultation with GRC, will keep the first aiders at the scene. The Federation will shortly send a shipment of medicaments donated by British Red Cross from Conakry to Freetown, alongside aid from ICRC and two NGOs. An Information Delegate will accompany the consignment.

Needs

The Federation yesterday sent a technician to the field to help the Delegation and GRC finalise the evaluation of needs and make a report on the situation.

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