

GHANA, SIERRA LEONE & NIGERIA: LIBERIAN REFUGEES

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Latest events

The two ships carrying Liberian refugees from Monrovia are reported to have been refused permission to land in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire by the respective governments and are now heading for Lagos, where they are expected to arrive in two to three days. Living conditions on the boats are also reported to be extremely poor, and the National Societies of Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria have already mobilised their resources to help the refugees presently at sea.

- ***Sierra Leone:*** Yesterday (Sunday 12 May), a representative from the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) organised the loading of two boats with food (bread, sardines), drinking water and medical material, which were brought to the vessel 12 miles off-shore by SLRCS first aiders. These volunteers were then placed on standby, either to repeat the exercise or look after the 1,200 refugees on the Liberian boat if it was allowed to land in the harbour of the capital, Freetown. Present reports indicate that permission for the boat to dock in Sierra Leone have been refused, though the National Society will remain on alert.
- ***Ghana:*** The GRCS Secretary General, Anthony Gyedu-Adomako, is in the harbour town of Takoradi, where he has been assessing the situation and the potential needs of other Liberian refugees on a second boat off the coast of Ghana. Food, water and medicines were transported yesterday to the vessel, provided by a source unknown to the GRCS. Although this boat is also reported to have been denied permission to land in Ghana, the National Society is on standby to provide assistance should it be required.
- ***Nigeria:*** Even though the two boats have only just set sail for Nigeria, the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) is already sufficiently mobilised to receive them — if the government allows the refugees into the country. The NRCS is presently assessing what may be needed in terms of medicines (including cholera kits), water and food. The National Society runs a refugee camp which has been open since 1991 and has room to accommodate the Liberian refugees. It has begun discussions with the Nigerian government to make this camp available if necessary.

The Federation will continue to inform its donors about the developing situation and the actions taken in support of these refugees.

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