



---

Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic

## REFUGEES FROM SOUTH DARFUR ENTER THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

*Bangui, 29 May 2007*, on Monday 28 May a rapid needs assessment mission led by UNHCR and composed of BONUCA, OCHA, WFP, the NGO Triangle and the government visited the town of Sam Ouandja, located in the Haute Kotto prefecture at some 950 kms from Bangui and 80 kms from the Sudan border in north-eastern CAR.

The purpose of the mission was to evaluate the humanitarian needs of a reported influx of Sudanese refugees from the Sudanese town of DaFak (approximately 15,000 inhabitants), 120 km from the border with CAR and 350 km south of Nyala (South Darfur).

According to the refugees, Sudanese government forces backed by armed militias described as « Janjaweed » attacked DaFak between 12 and 18 May triggering the forced displacement of civilian populations towards South Sudan and various locations in north-eastern CAR, including AmDaFok and Sam Ouandja.

A preliminary census of the refugee population undertaken by the Mayor's Office in Sam Ouandja reveals the presence of some 1,500 individuals by 27 May with the influx of Sudanese refugees still ongoing. The refugees have to walk for up to 10 days to reach Sam Ouandja from DaFak, a 200 km path passable only by foot or donkey. The majority of the refugees are of African origin, belonging to the Masalit, Fur, Dojou, Tama and Kara tribes.

« We did not find evidence of the presence of armed elements in the group and the refugees assured the mission that everyone originates from DaFak in Sudan and no Chadian nationals among them », stated Bruno Geddo, the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. « We will continue to monitor the situation closely to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of the operation », he added.

« Considering that the majority of the refugees appear to be women and children, WFP will provide emergency food assistance, while at the same time carry out an assessment of the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable individuals among the local population in Sam Ouandja », stated Mr. Jean-Charles Dei, Representative of the United Nations World Food Programme in CAR.

« Beyond the need for humanitarian assistance, the United Nations remains highly concerned about the protection of civilians and calls for the national authorities to continue to facilitate humanitarian access to displaced populations in need », stated Jean-Sébastien Munié, Head of the United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. « The arrival of these refugees from Sudan is another evidence of the spill-over effect and the regional dimension of the conflict in Darfur », he concluded.

The rapid needs assessment mission will be followed by a more in-depth inter-agency evaluation mission in the coming days including UNICEF and WHO, to plan for additional humanitarian interventions in the areas of protection, security, food, shelter, health, water and sanitation.