

**EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR VALERIE AMOS
PRESS BRIEFING ON LIBYA
4 MARCH 2011**

As of yesterday, over 172,000 people had left Libya, mainly migrant workers returning to their homes. While there are mainly men, there are some women and children among them. Their transit is mainly across the Egyptian and Tunisian borders, with the Egyptian and Tunisian authorities processing arrivals. A couple of days ago, there was a bottleneck at the Tunisian border when about 30,000 people tried to enter in just two days. Such an influx would have been difficult for any country to manage.

The efforts of the UN agencies and international partners, including member states, have been scaled up considerably. A transit camp is up and running on the Tunisian side of the border, where those who have entered wait their turn for onward transport. While the camp is basic, it does provide the migrants with some shelter, water and sanitation and food, including one hot meal per day. Our concern now is that the numbers leaving Libya dropped sharply yesterday. UNHCR has reported that the border on the Libyan side is now manned by heavily armed pro-government forces. We hope that free movement of people can continue.

Several countries have been sending planes to fly people out of Tunisia. We need to see further rotations of planes and ships to help everyone to leave. We appreciate the willingness of Libya's neighbours to keep their borders open to accommodate those crossing, and I want to put on record our thanks to host families and communities in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Niger, who are providing support.

An OCHA-led joint UN assessment mission reached Benghazi yesterday. They report that humanitarian needs in the eastern part of the country are not major at present. However, we do hear worrying reports that supply lines from Tripoli have been cut, which may interfere with supplies of fuel, food and medicines. We don't yet have access to the western part of the country, so we don't know what the humanitarian situation in the west of Libya is. We are looking to get into the country so that we can determine the level of need and provide assistance where required.

I repeat the call made by the Secretary-General yesterday for immediate and unimpeded access by humanitarian workers into Libya. We also remain concerned by reports, although as of yet unverified, that Libyans inside the country and in the capital are being prevented from leaving.

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Tonight, I will travel to Tunisia, I will review the coordination arrangements in place at the border, and I will also look at what further the UN can do to support the Resident Coordinator, UN and other agencies and the government. On Monday in Geneva I will launch the regional flash appeal covering Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Niger. It will focus on the border areas, population movements, humanitarian needs, security, health, water, protection and communication, and will cover a three-month period.

Before I finish I want to say a few words about other humanitarian concerns that must not be forgotten. The situation in western Africa, in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia in particular, is becoming increasingly alarming. In recent days, the number of refugees reaching Liberia has risen to above 80,000. These refugees are hosted in 76 villages near the Cote d'Ivoire border. As the political and security situation remains unstable in Cote d'Ivoire, more refugees are expected to arrive in the coming days and weeks.

The UN, and particularly UNHCR and its partners, have scaled up to meet the needs of the refugees and are registering and providing assistance to them. A camp for 15,000 has been set up and negotiations are under way to set up a new camp. The increasing number of refugees is making conditions more difficult for locals in the area, who are themselves poor but who are nonetheless helping those who have crossed. The long distance between host villages and main towns and the extremely poor road conditions remain a serious challenge to access and the provision of assistance to the refugees and the host populations.

We are also now increasingly worried about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation within Cote d'Ivoire itself. Armed clashes and violent incidents are taking place in Abidjan, Yamasukro, and western Cote d'Ivoire, which have forced many more civilians to flee. Estimates of the displaced vary, but it is clear that now some tens of thousands of civilians have become internally displaced, including within Abidjan. This is the first displacement to take place in Abidjan since the peak of the crisis in 2004.

An inter-agency assessment of 26 towns in the west, centre and east of Cote d'Ivoire recently found that health, agriculture, education and the economy have all been severely affected by the country's post-electoral crisis, and the cutting off of water and electricity supplies to the centre, north and west of the country has put thousands of people at risk, especially children and pregnant and nursing women. The humanitarian community needs \$87 million to respond to the crisis and this figure is currently being revised in light of the growing number of refugees and IDPs. So far, only \$15 million has been provided. I urge donors to support the humanitarian response in Cote d'Ivoire and in Liberia.

I am also concerned about the deterioration of conditions in Somalia. During my recent visit, I was especially concerned about increased displacement and the worrying effects of drought on extremely vulnerable people. My concern has increased further. The current fighting in Belet Xaawo has forced thousands of people to flee, both within the country and across the border into the town of Mandera in Kenya. The people remaining in Belet Xaawo are moving out of the town due to lack of water and food. I am also

concerned about reports from Mandera, which indicate that both parties, the TFG and Al Shabaab, are mobilizing their forces for a possible confrontation. The reports of a rising number of civilian injuries, attributable to all parties to the conflict, are also a growing concern. I again urge all parties to the conflict and AMISOM to comply with international humanitarian law in order to minimize harm to the civilians of Somalia.