

Alert

Libya

Violence in Libya Forces Migrant Workers to Flee

Geneva, 2 March 2011

1. Brief description of the emergency

The week-long conflict between Gadhafi's government and opposition forces has resulted in riots and violence in Libya. According to a March 1 report from UN OCHA, around 147,000 have fled Libya since 20 February. The majority (75,000) have crossed into Tunisia - 69,000 went to Egypt and 3,000 people have gone south to Niger. Most of the fleeing people are migrant workers from Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan and other countries who fear for their lives if they remain. In addition, thousands of people are stranded on the Libyan side of the border, trying to cross into Tunisia. The situation is deteriorating and the fear is that it might turn into a humanitarian crisis.

2. Impact

The influx of people fleeing Libya has stretched the capacity of the Tunisian infrastructure to its limits and the situation on the Ras Adjir border crossing has reached a crisis point. The Tunisian authorities have been handing out food and providing medical care. Water and sanitation is a challenge and people who have not yet crossed the border have no access to humanitarian assistance.

The impact of riots and violence in Libya and the region has also had an impact on the communities in Egypt. CEOSS, a partner of ACT member Christian Aid, has carried out an assessment in Alexandria, Cairo, Minia and Beni Sue. The assessment report shows that communities living below the poverty line are in need of urgent support.

3. National and international response

Tunisian authorities, IFRC, OCHA, UNHCR, IOM, MSF and other humanitarian agencies are preparing to respond to the crisis. The focus is on food, health and protection.

Countries of origin of the migrant workers are called upon to provide transport facilities (ships, aircraft) for their nationals to return home.

The Egyptian government is providing with the medical assistance and the support for the transportation. The returnees are not staying on the boarder. They are moving to their home towns on taxis and other hired vehicles. The Egyptian government is also providing some assistance for transportation along with the support of the UN organisations.

4. ACT Alliance response

ACT Alliance member, the Lutheran World Federation is leading a fact finding mission to the Tunisia/Libya boarder area. The team will network with the UN Humanitarian Country Team in Libya, INGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and local initiatives to identify the needs and the gaps in assistance that will then be addressed by the ACT Alliance. Other ACT members which have already indicated their financial and human resource to support the assessment mission and the emergency response are DanChurch Aid, Church of Sweden, Christian Aid and Norwegian Church Aid.

Planned activities

Based on the outcome of the rapid emergency assessment mission, the ACT Alliance Secretariat will issue a preliminary Appeal by mid March which will be followed by a full Appeal at the end of the month.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jean-Daniel Birmele, ACT Chief Finance Officer (Jean_Daniel.Birmele@actalliance.org).

Thank you for your attention.

For further information please contact:

ACT Acting Deputy General Secretary, Barbara Wetsig (phone +41 22 791 6230) **or**
ACT Regional Programme Officer, Josef Pfattner (phone +4122 791 6710)