

### BENIN - Expelled Persons

Date: May 3-15, 1985

Location: Nigeria-Benin border

No. Dead: Three to seven reported

No. Affected: 350,000

#### The Disaster

Following the Nigerian Government's announcement that all aliens without proper immigration documents would be expelled by May 10, thousands of immigrants began moving to the Nigeria-Benin border. Most of the aliens were Ghanaian nationals, although Beninois, Togolese, and Nigeriens were also among the expellees.

The Nigerian-Benin border was opened on May 3. By May 4, hundreds of people were assembled at the Krake and Igolo border points waiting to leave Nigeria. On May 9, the Government of Nigeria (FMG) allowed convoys of trucks carrying returnees headed for Togo and Ghana to cross the border. Approximately 4,000 to 5,000 returnees crossed that day. However, returnees without transport were not allowed to cross.

Congestion at the Krake and Igolo border crossings intensified by May 10, the deadline for undocumented workers to leave Nigeria. Thousands of immigrants waited at the border, either to be cleared through or to obtain transportation to their home villages. Most were without food, shelter, or funds. Many were held at the border for days while Nigerian border officials processed each expellee individually. As a result, when the border was officially closed at 6:00 p.m. on May 10, thousands of evacuees remained on the Nigerian side of the Benin-Nigeria border waiting to be processed. Several hundred people who made it across before the border was closed refused to leave the area until their friends and relatives were allowed to join them. At one point, those on the Benin side attempted to break through the barriers. Beninois officials were fearful that greater violence would erupt.

BENIN - Expelled Persons

Benin officials estimated that 19,000 people crossed into Benin between May 3 and 10 via Krake, and more than 33,000 via Igolo. However, they estimated that as many as 50,000 people remained on the Nigerian side waiting to be processed when the FMG closed the border at 6:00 p.m. Those returnees were told to return to Lagos where transport would be arranged for them by boat or other means. The evacuees refused to return to Lagos and, at about 9:00 p.m., a number of large trucks crashed through the frontier barricades overwhelming the Nigerian border officials. An estimated 250 vehicles carrying between 12,000 and 15,000 people pushed their way through the border before Nigerian reinforcements arrived on May 11.

Action Taken by the Government of Benin (GOB)

As the crowds of expellees began to gather at the Krake and Igolo border points, the Benin Red Cross set up first-aid posts to treat emergency medical needs. The Government of Benin initiated operations to distribute food to those waiting at the borders and aid pregnant and sick returnees. The GOB acknowledged, however, that due to its limited resources and the combined effects of drought and domestic economic crises, it was unable to satisfactorily meet the needs of the thousands of expellees who lacked shelter, food, water, and medical care.

On May 6, the GOB Foreign Minister appealed for international assistance for the returnees. The GOB proposed to use the assistance provided to transport the returnees from the border as quickly as possible (to avoid deterioration of sanitary conditions) and to provide food and medical care to those awaiting transport.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government

In response to GOB appeal and in recognition of the dire conditions at the border cross points, on May 14 the U.S. Ambassador to Benin determined that a man-made disaster existed. He authorized a contribution of \$10,000 to the Benin Red Cross to purchase medicines, prepared foods, vehicle fuel, and other emergency supplies.

TOTAL                    \$10,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

CRS - donated \$10,000 in cash to purchase food for the expellees.

TOTAL                    \$10,000

BENIN - Expelled Persons

Assistance Provided by the International Community

International Organizations

UNDRO - provided two emergency grants totaling \$20,000.

UNICEF - made a cash grant of \$3,500 to purchase medicines and provided an unspecified quantity of milk products to the Benin Red Cross for distribution to children at the Krake and Igolo border points, value not reported.

WFP - provided rice from an ongoing project.

Governments

Canada - contributed \$7,353 through UNDRO to rent trucks and purchase gasoline.

China, People's Rep. - contributed \$3,106 to the Benin Red Cross.

France - contributed \$2,070 in cash to the Benin Red Cross and provided an unspecified quantity of tents, medicines, and protein tablets, value not reported.

Germany, Fed. Rep. - provided \$16,130 for local purchase of relief supplies.

United Kingdom - provided \$11,399 through UNDRO to rent trucks and purchase gasoline.

Voluntary Agencies

Germany, Fed. Rep., Red Cross - made a cash grant of \$9,000 to the Benin Red Cross.

Soviet Union Red Cross - contributed 2 MT of medicines and medical instruments, value not reported.

TOTAL \$72,558