Beat: Miscellaneous

Fresh clashes in South Sudan increases refugees

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USPA News - Fresh fighting in Sudan`s Southern Kordofan state between Government forces and a rebel group has unleashed a new wave of refugees, the United Nations (UN) warned on Tuesday. Melissa Fleming, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), spoke during a press conference in Geneva and underlined that as tension is again building up in the border areas, "we remain extremely concerned about the safety of the refugees in Yida settlement, which is located in close proximity to the border."

Intense fighting reportedly broke out between Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People`s Liberation Army (SPLA-North), including ground assaults and aerial bombardments. The violent clashes has prompted the daily exodus of around 100 refugees to flee into the border town of Yida in the neighboring state of Unity. "The presence of a refugee settlement in highly militarized border areas close to a conflict zone hampers efforts to preserve the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum," Fleming added, pointing out that the safety of the refugees in Yida could not be guaranteed and that UNHCR was working with the refugee community to relocate the settlement to a safer location. As fighting and the lack of food continue, the UNHCR was anticipating that the Yida camp would increase dramatically from its current 64,229 inhabitants to an estimated 80,000 by the end of the year. In addition, Fleming voiced concern that some 105,000 refugees could soon be cut off by the rainy season`s heavy downpours and consequent flooding. But the crisis has been further affected by hepatitis E as 23 cases have been registered in South Sudan`s Upper Nile state. Sixteen fatalities have already been documented across the Jamam, Yusuf Batil and Gendrassa camps. The Upper Nile region is largely affected by seasonal rains and is vulnerable to further environmental damage from floodwaters coming from the Ethiopian highlands. There are close to 201,000 Sudanese refugees currently in South Sudan, with more than 170,000 located in Upper Nile and Unity states. They have arrived from Sudan`s South Kordofan and Blue Nile states after fleeing conflict and food shortages over recent months. UNHCR is currently seeking $186 million in funding to provide the Sudanese refugees with assistance. However, the agency has only received 40 percent of this amount.

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