

## **UNHCR: Burundi refugees to be repatriated in...**

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in Dar es Salaam yesterday that it expects all Burundi refugees in Tanzanian camps to voluntarily return to their home country in two years.

UNHCR country representative Chrysantus Ache told reporters that the prevailing relative peace in the country would encourage the refugees to return home voluntarily.

He said that the installation of a new government on August 29 had encouraged about 10,000 refugees to return home.

He said that if the current repatriation pace is sustained, the 190,000 refugees still in Tanzania would eventually return home in two years.

Ache said: `UNHCR continues to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Burundi refugees from Tanzania. About seven convoys leave the camps every week.`

Ache said that, about 200,000 refugees have returned home since the operation started in March 2002.

He said that refugees are helped to transport their property, including the cattle and other property such as the milling machines.

He said the number of returnees had decreased this month owing to a storm over Lake Tanganyika, which is used by the refugees to cross to Burundi.

`In November, the number of returnees dropped due to a storm in Kigoma and Kasulu on Lake Tanganyika. It may take about three months to ebb, but we believe that more refugees will return home next year,` he said.

The UNHCR official said the exercise faces funding challenges as the repatriation would also impact on rehabilitation and reintegration activities in Burundi.

Tanzania still hosts over 200,000 Burundians who fled their country from 1972, when the country first plunged into civil strife.

\* SOURCE: Guardian