



## **AFRICA/SOUTH SUDAN - 16,000 returnees at risk for lack of funds on behalf of humanitarian organizations**

Juba (Agenzia Fides) - More than 16,000 southern Sudanese returnees stuck in the Upper Nile State are at risk after the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has announced its intention to suspend operations for the next two months, because of lack of funds.

According to reports from the Sudan Tribune website, IOM, before the announcement, had organized a convoy of river barges, which left from the city of Renk to Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan. On board there were more than 2,500 returnees, who were stuck for months in the Upper Nile State. The IOM states that most of the returnees headed towards Renk because of insecurity along the border with Sudan earlier this year and at the beginning of the rainy season.

These people, according to the organization are in need of urgent help to return to their various areas of origin. "With more than 20,000 returnees in South Sudan, the majority of whom are located in Renk, where all the means of communication, with the exception of the River Nile are blocked, it is essential to initiate an emergency transport operation if we are to avoid multiple humanitarian crises in transition points" says Vincent Houver, the IOM chief of mission in South Sudan.

In a statement to Sudan Tribune, IOM, however, contends that its appeal to raise more than \$ 45 million to provide assistance to returnees still in difficulty, including the provision of transport and medical services, was funded only for a sum equal to 12% of the price requested: therefore more than 40 million dollars are lacking. In addition, the rainy season has severely hampered road transport, leaving thousands of returnees stranded in Renk.

An estimated 116,000 people since the beginning of the year, have returned to South Sudan from neighboring Sudan. After the independence of South Sudan, Khartoum authorities have decided to expel the citizens originally from the new State.

In the last year, the IOM reported that it assisted the repatriation of 50,000 people using river barges, boats, buses, trains and planes to allow them to get to their final destinations. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 11/8/2012)