

25 July 2003

From our special envoy in Savalou (République Bleue)

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS HAS BEGUN

At a press conference given in the Savalou ICRC office, Mrs Denise LaJoy, the head of the ICRC office in Blue has announced that thousands of refugees had started to flood the roads that link Abomey to Orange. LaJoy added that the same phenomenon that had started earlier in Yellow seem to have increased during the last few days. LaJoy confirmed the fact that government forces were operating in Abomey province's rural areas and that the populace seemed to fear for their life.

Yesterday night, during an interview at the Army Headquarters, Colonel Malanguerene, the Blue Chief of Staff, asserted that the nation forces had begun to chase the terrorists who had been trying to take away the oil riches of the country and thus to starve the people. He added that the Blue troops will act in total respect of the rules of the war and that the rights of the innocent inhabitants would be fully respected.

It seems that this declaration did not achieve its objective and that the populace feared that some mission creeps could occur.

Sources indicate that in the Yellow province of Hizan Kogede that borders Blue the flow of displaced persons has also started.

Unconfirmed reports point out that foreign scientists working at the Madje Oil Research Centre might have been threatened. They are accused of having alerted the central government that Chawombas were trying to seize the facility.