

NIGERIAN REFUGEES' AFRICAN HELPERS

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Body

To the Editor:

I read with interest your Feb. 5 news article on the plight of the refugees expelled from Nigeria, "The Governments of West Africa Offer Little Help." I thought your readers might be interested in some of the initiatives taken by the Government and the citizens of Togo to help alleviate the refugees' suffering.

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First, Togo's President, Gnassingbe Eyadema, reacted immediately to the news of the expulsion by sending representatives to persuade the Nigerian Government to extend to March 1 its original two-week deadline for all illegal aliens to leave the country, which the Nigerians then did.

Next, the Togolese Government persuaded Ghana to reopen its borders -closed since last September - enabling thousands without ship transportation to return home.

The Union of Togolese Truck Drivers provided free transportation across our country. Villagers along the way set up food and water distribution systems. Our Government arranged for the diversion to the refugees of 32 tons of American-donated food originally intended for the Togolese.

This is just a small sampling of the efforts undertaken not only by Togo but by several West African governments. We are small countries, and the means at our disposal for such crises may not be as great as those available to the United States or other Western nations, but you should be aware of the efforts made, given the circumstances and our limited resources.

YAO GRUNITZKY, Ambassador of Togo, Washington, Feb. 17, 1983

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