

A stylized world map composed of a grid of grey dots. Several dots are highlighted in red, indicating specific geographical locations. The title is overlaid on the map.

Migratory and Refugee Movements in and from the Horn of Africa

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- The Horn of Africa – in the broader sense Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, the Sudan/South Sudan – has been an epicentre of immense migratory and refugee movements. These mostly take place within the region, but also affect other regions of Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North America and Australia on a considerable scale.
- These migrations primarily take place in the form of refugee and illegal migration movements. The factors triggering them are political, ethnic, religious and gender-specific repression and persecution, civil wars and conflicts between states, environmental crises, poverty and the search for better prospects and opportunities in life.
- Motives to leave due to warfare, repression and persecution have intermingled with economic motives in such a complex manner in these refugee and migratory movements since the early 1960s that it is no longer possible to draw a clear line separating motives for migration.
- Burgeoning diaspora communities from the countries in the Horn abroad are exerting an additional pull effect on migratory movements. This has in the meantime become almost as important as other factors conditioning exodus and migration in the respective countries of origin.
- No stable solution that could eliminate the causes of exodus and migration in the countries in the Horn is on the horizon. It is highly likely that refugee and migratory movements will if anything tend to intensify in the coming years.

The following overview primarily examines migratory and refugee movements since the beginning of the 1990s.

Eritrea

After liberation from Ethiopian rule in 1991, efforts to establish a stable democratic political system and initiate a process of economic development in Eritrea that could have mitigated exodus and flight on a large scale failed miserably. In the wake of smaller conflicts with neighbouring Sudan, Djibouti and Yemen, a war broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea between 1998 to 2000 that cost a considerable number of lives on both sides. Eritrea's de facto defeat shook the foundations of Eritrean President Isayas Afewerki's power, casting doubt on the policies pursued by the one-party state up until then.

President Afewerki was then successful in silencing his critics in the autumn of 2001, however. This was the beginning of a period of absolute presidential dictatorship that has lasted down to the present day. It is propped up by the secret service and military, police state surveillance of the population and a thoroughgoing militarisation of state and society. Since war broke out with Ethiopia in 1998, the dictatorship has been marked by a lifting of the time limit for mandatory national military service (military and labour service) and subordination of tertiary education, large sections of government service and many areas of the economy to the military. This has at the same time been accompanied by massive repression and persecution of unrecognised religious groupings – primarily those of Pentecostal belief.

The massive hardening of the domestic political situation caused ever-growing numbers of persons to flee the country beginning in the autumn of 2001 and continuing down through the present day. The main factors triggering renewed waves of refugees have been ongoing political and religious persecution, the unlimited time for national service, militarisation of society and the economy and deepening economic stagnation. These factors have interacted to cause hundreds of thousands of persons to believe that Eritrea no longer offers any future prospects for themselves or their families.

In these movements of refugees from Eritrea, a distinction must be made between primary exodus and secondary migration. The former encompasses all those

persons – coming from Eritrea – who seek refuge in a second country, while the latter designates those persons who migrate out of the first country that they arrived in or a transit country. Secondary migration makes it difficult to count the total number of refugees and migrants, as they are frequently counted more than once.

According to UNHCR statistics, there were almost 34,000 Eritreans seeking asylum and another 320,000 Eritrean refugees registered in the middle of 2014. The unreported number of non-registered refugees and migrants worldwide is in the tens of thousands. The Eritrean diaspora in the world is estimated at approximately one to one and a half million. There are approximately 4.5 million people living in Eritrea at present.

The strongest primary refugee movement down to the present has been along the land route to Ethiopia and the Sudan. According to available statistics, it would appear that around 180,000 people have fled to Ethiopia since 2001, of which a considerable number, however, have migrated further over the course of the years. Around 12,000 persons have left Ethiopia legally through resettlement programmes and family reunification, the others, however, illegally.

According to data from the UNHCR, in Ethiopia there are approximately 125,000 Eritreans living in camps in West Tigre and the Afar region as well as several thousand persons living legally in cities. These figures are probably no longer accurate, however, as illegal migration out of the camps into the cities and across national borders is not registered.

Around 180,000 new Eritrean refugees have arrived in the Sudan since 2001. Because there is an older Eritrean refugee community along with continued migration on a large scale, it cannot be determined how many of the 120,000 new Eritrean refugees registered in the Sudan at the end of 2014 are new Eritrean refugees since 2001.

A relatively limited movement amounting to a few hundred persons have taken the land route to Djibouti. Refugee movements by sea lead both to Djibouti as well as Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Fewer than 1,000 Eritreans have fled to Djibouti and a few thousand to Yemen and Saudi Arabia since 2001.

The total number of Eritreans that have arrived or been registered as refugees in other countries coming directly from Eritrea since 2001 outside the regions of Northeast Africa and the Middle East is also only a few thousand as a result of the restrictive visa practice of Western countries towards Eritreans. Secondary migration of Eritrean refugees then generally takes place illegally along the land route, either out of the Sudan or Ethiopia.

Massive secondary migration by Eritrean refugees from Ethiopia and the Sudan to Egypt as well as via Egypt to Israel got under way in 2005. Egypt has only served as a further transit country since 2008 due to the restrictive practice of Egyptian authorities and the deportation of Eritreans.

Israel, on the other hand, became an important country of emigration for Eritrean refugees and migrants beginning in 2005. Around 36,000 Eritreans came to Israel up until 2013. In 2012 Israel sealed off its borders to African refugees and migrants, however, with fewer than a dozen Eritreans emigrating to Israel since then. There was a secondary migration from Israel to Turkey and from there to Europe on a certain scale until the civil war broke out in Syria.

A weaker secondary migration has taken place along the land route to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Eritrean refugees and migrants have gone via the Sudan and Ethiopia primarily to Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, South Africa and, recently, to Angola as well.

Another secondary Eritrean migration movement has been by boat along the sea route and by plane to South America and from there by land to the USA via Mexico. In some cases Eritrean refugees have also migrated to South American countries via Russia and Belorussia, travelling from there along the land route across Mexico to the USA. A total of several thousand Eritreans have reached the USA via Mexico over the past ten years.

The main thrust of secondary migration, however, has been through the Sudan to Libya and Tunisia, and from there by sea to Europe. Approximately 40,000 Eritreans arrived in Italy along this route in 2014. A large portion of them then travelled on to Switzerland, and after that to Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries.

Attempts by Eritreans to establish an alternative migration route via Chad in the wake of renewed fighting in Libya in 2014 have been unsuccessful. Chad's army has intercepted numerous Eritrean refugees and deported them back to the Sudan.

A massive rise in secondary migration by Eritrean refugees via Ethiopia and the Sudan to Libya and from there across the Mediterranean has been witnessed since the beginning of 2014. Wide-ranging rescue missions in the Mediterranean have had a pull effect. The change in European policy towards Eritrean refugees that has been materialising since the beginning of 2015 appears to have unleashed an additional surge in persons leaving Eritrea and further migration via Ethiopia and the Sudan to Libya and across the Mediterranean. It is highly likely that Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia and the Sudan as well as future refugees still living in Eritrea will attempt in increasing numbers to cross the Mediterranean in the coming months before European measures to stave the flow of refugees begin to have an impact.

Ethiopia

Well above one million Ethiopians fled abroad to escape war and political repression during the period of the military dictatorship (1974–1991). Several hundred thousand found refuge in Somalia and the Sudan, respectively, several tens of thousands in Kenya, the Arab countries and in various Western states. A significant portion of the Oromo and Somalis that fled to Somalia returned to Ethiopia due to deteriorating security in Somalia and a more stable situation in Ethiopia even before Siad Barres' regime was toppled. In the wake of the regime change in Ethiopia in 1991, another ten thousand persons returned from Somalia, with tens of thousands of Ethiopian refugees voluntary coming back to Ethiopia by the middle of the 1990s.

The overthrow of the military dictatorship and ascent to power by the government party EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) then touched off a new refugee movement, however. Supporters of the toppled dictatorship and opponents of the new regime fled abroad, fearing repression. The overwhelming majority of them went to Western countries, applying for political asylum there. This politically motivated flight was fairly steady after 1992, reaching a new climax in

2005–2006 in reaction to unrest and repression following the May 2005 election, but then tapered off again.

The number of Ethiopians who have fled for political reasons since 1991 has never been precisely quantified, but is estimated at up to 200,000. Because Ethiopians have no longer needed a visa to leave the country since 2004, many persons seeking asylum have exited the country along the land route since then, often with visas. Others have fled to countries where they do not need a visa, or visas are easy to obtain, then travelling on to the country in which they want to apply for asylum.

Another migratory movement has taken place in connection with the American Green Card lottery. More than 10,000 Ethiopians have arrived in the USA legally in this manner each year since 1992 – more than 250,000 since the beginning of the programme. Among these legal migrants have been many persons opposing the Ethiopian regime who would have gone abroad as refugees even without the lottery.

Legal and illegal labour migration of Ethiopians to the Arab world has also risen steeply since 1991. Illegal labour migration to the states of the Arabian sub-peninsula has usually come from Puntland and Somaliland along the sea route to Yemen, branching off there into other countries. It is estimated that the number of legal and illegal Ethiopian labour migrants living in Arab countries on the other side of the Red Sea exceeded 750,000 at the end of 2010.

Saudi Arabia deported more than 150,000 illegal Ethiopian labour migrants in 2013. At the same time, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States stepped up measures to ward off additional illegal immigration. In response, Ethiopia suspended legal recruitment of Ethiopian labourers for work in the Arab States due to the poor working conditions for legal labour migrants there. Mounting turmoil in Yemen, which flared into open civil war at the end of 2014, puts additional brakes on illegal migration by Ethiopians by the sea route over Yemen and from there on to the other states. Several thousand Ethiopians have voluntarily repatriated back to Ethiopia from Yemen since the beginning of 2015.

Refugees and labour migrants have travelled from Ethiopia to South Africa on a much lower scale of no more than 10,000 persons since the beginning of the 21st cen-

tury. Since the peace accord in the Sudan in 2005, there has also been a significant flow of Ethiopians to South Sudan. This migration came to an almost complete halt following the outbreak of the South Sudan civil war at the end of 2013, with many Ethiopian migrants leaving South Sudan to come back to Ethiopia.

Blockage of legal and illegal labour migration by Ethiopians to the Arab world led to a surge in illegal migration beginning in 2013, especially from southern Ethiopia to South Africa and in general from southern Ethiopia via the Sudan to Libya and across the Mediterranean to Europe. Growing xenophobia in South Africa, but also tougher measures by African transit states to throttle the flow of illegal Ethiopian migrants along the route to South Africa, have caused a sharp drop in the numbers of migrants along this route since the beginning of 2015. The migration of Ethiopians across the Mediterranean to Europe, on the other hand, has climbed steadily since the beginning of 2014, even if it has not come close to the scope of Eritrean refugees travelling to Europe.

Somalia

Somali migrants have settled in all parts of the Arab world, but also Great Britain and the USA, since the end of the 19th century. Somali migration to the Arab world has also picked up considerably since the founding of the Republic of Somalia in 1960. Political motives for leaving Somalia also played an increasingly significant role after the regime of Siad Barre came to power in 1969. One wave of political refugees fled from Somalia to Ethiopia, another one to Western countries, with a majority of them going to the Arab states.

The spread of armed conflicts in Somalia since 1988 has triggered a mass exodus of persons fleeing war and tribal repression to Ethiopia, Kenya and the Arab sub-peninsula, with a sizeable secondary migration to the Western world. After Siad Barre's regime was deposed in 1991 and the collapse of state order that has lasted down to the present day, flight from war and repression on a vast scale has encompassed considerable parts of Somali territory. There has not been a steady flow, however, instead coming in waves in rhythm with flare-ups of violent conflict in Somalia and periods of calm.

Several hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees returned to their homeland following the relative stabilisation of the internal situation in Somaliland and Puntland at the beginning of the 21st century. Hostilities then broke out in central and southern Somalia in 2005, however, with the Al Shabaab militia and a broad coalition of its Somali opponents supported by Ethiopian and African peacekeeping troops facing off against each other. Violent conflict reigniting on a massive scale in central and southern Somalia has caused the number of Somali refugees in Kenya to swell to more than half a million.

The number of Somali refugees in Ethiopia has risen to around 250,000. Several hundreds of thousands of Somalis have also fled to other Arab states via Yemen since 2005. At the same time, there has been a surge in secondary migration of Somali refugees from the original receiving country to the Western world. There are only a relative limited number of Somalis among the migrants travelling across the Sudan to Libya and then across the Mediterranean, but this number is growing.

As a result of the mass exodus of Somalis to Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen as well as secondary migration to other Arab countries and states in the Western world, the number of persons living in the Somali diaspora has soared to over 2.5 million worldwide.

Outlook

No change is in sight with Eritrea. It is highly probable that Eritrea will continue to be a major source of refugees in coming years.

In view of the improvement in the situation in Somalia, on the other hand, there may be possibilities for the return of the enormous numbers of Somali refugees living in Ethiopia and Kenya in the near future. By the same token, the continued pull effect exerted by the large Somali diaspora abroad must not be underestimated. Many Somalis will continue to seek better life opportunities by further migration to Western countries instead of contemplating return to a Somalia left shattered by civil war.

No stabilisation of conditions in South Sudan or Sudanese areas of origin is in sight. These refugee movements are too new, however, for the negative consequences of

seemingly permanent life in camps to be able to lead to secondary migration processes in the near future. If no solution is achieved in the Sudan and South Sudan in the foreseeable future that would enable a return of refugees, illegal secondary migration to Europe is to be expected.

Options for a Solution to or Mitigation of the Effects of Migration

Refugees and migrants from the countries in the Horn of Africa account for a large portion of the refugees and migrants that are arriving in Europe from across the Mediterranean. For them, there are several strategies that could help mitigate the refugee pressure on Europe. A purely defensive strategy that seeks to stop migrants already in North Africa will not suffice to reduce this migratory pressure. Instead, greater efforts are needed to deal with the causes of exodus and migration. The following measures would probably be less costly than purely defensive strategies.

- A) Greater commitment by European countries in the reconstruction of Somalia.** Rapid reconstruction of Somalia and its economic development could increase incentives for Somali refugees in Kenya and Ethiopia to return to Somalia instead of viewing their future to lie in further migration to Europe. To support this, greater support should be provided for education and training programmes in camps for Somali refugees in Kenya and Ethiopia in order to prepare refugees for return.
- B) Intensification of European countries' commitment to promoting general economic development in Ethiopia.** Incipient industrialisation already being witnessed here could bring about a significant growth in jobs, thereby alleviating migratory pressure.
- C) Economic development of Eritrea,** which could cause people there to stay in spite of continued political repression, would probably take more than a decade. Eritrea is therefore the most difficult case, as Western development aid and economic commitment there will not lead to a turnaround in the exodus from the country if there is no profound change in general underlying political conditions. To reduce migratory pressure in the direction of Europe or at

least slow it down, European countries should invest more in educational and training programmes in camps for Eritrean refugees in the Sudan and Ethiopia. The states of Europe which already have strong communities of persons of Eritrean origin should consider relaxing rules for family members to be allowed to come to Europe. An easing of family reunification above and beyond the core family would reduce the psychological and financial strain on relatives living in Europe, lessening the risk that Eritrean refugees *en route* to Europe will become victims of human traffickers or perish at sea, while the original receiving countries would also obtain relief. Eritrean refugees who are already in Europe who have close relatives there should receive a secure right to reside in the country of their relatives without having to go through any asylum procedure.



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