

UNHCR
Centre for Documentation and Research



WRITENET Paper No. 05/2000

ERITREA:
CONFLICT AND INVOLUNTARY
POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS

By Assefaw Bariagaber

School of Diplomacy and International Relations
Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, USA

July 2000

WriteNet is a Network of Researchers and Writers on
Human Rights, Forced Migration, Ethnic and Political Conflict

WriteNet is a Subsidiary of Practical Management (UK)
E-mail: writenet@gn.apc.org

THIS PAPER WAS PREPARED MAINLY ON THE BASIS OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION, ANALYSIS AND COMMENT. ALL SOURCES ARE CITED. THE PAPER IS NOT, AND DOES NOT PURPORT TO BE, EITHER EXHAUSTIVE WITH REGARD TO CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY SURVEYED, OR CONCLUSIVE AS TO THE MERITS OF ANY PARTICULAR CLAIM TO REFUGEE STATUS OR ASYLUM. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE PAPER ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHOR AND ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF WRITENET OR UNHCR.

ISSN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION: CONFLICT-DISPLACEMENT NEXUS.....	1
2.	CONFLICT AND REFUGEE FORMATIONS IN ERITREA	4
3.	REFUGEE RESPONSES TO ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE	6
4.	THE CURRENT ETHIO-ERITREAN CONFLICT AND THE DISPLACED	9
5.	POPULATION DISPLACEMENT: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL IMPACT	11
6.	CONCLUSION	16
7.	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	18

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
CP 2500, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

E-mail: cdr@unhcr.ch
Web Site: <http://www.unhcr.org>

1. Introduction: Conflict-displacement nexus

Developments in the latest round of fighting between Eritrea and Ethiopia have moved at an extraordinary speed in the two months extending from 12 May 2000 to 17 June 2000. As I sat down to write this paper in mid-May 2000, the “third round” of the “border” war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which first erupted manifestly in May 1998, had started and Ethiopia had assumed control of some of the disputed territories. A few days later, around 20 May 2000, Ethiopia controlled a large segment of southwestern Eritrea. As a result hundreds of thousands of Eritreans have either been internally displaced or have been exiled to Sudan. Indeed, quoting the World Food Programme, *The New York Times* reported that Ethiopia had “pressed 65 miles into Eritrea, displacing 340,000 people”.¹ Similarly, quoting the Geneva-based UNHCR, Reuters reported that “up to 18,000 Eritrean civilians and soldiers had fled into Sudan” and the numbers were fast increasing.² By the end of May 2000, the war seemed to have subsided with Ethiopia more or less in control of the territories it claims as its own and a large segment of incontestably Eritrean territory. Having apparently accomplished what it wanted, Ethiopia has finally expressed its readiness for a cease-fire and face to face negotiations with Eritrea, something it has adamantly refused to consider over the last two years. Eritrea, on the other hand, has refused this offer and continues to insist Ethiopia withdraw from occupied Eritrean territories before any cease-fire agreement and face-to-face negotiations can be considered.

Although large-scale fighting has subsided for now, the number of displaced continues to rise. Underscoring the massive population displacement the conflict was causing at the time, UNHCR spokesman Kris Janowski had earlier stated that “2,800 refugees had crossed from Eritrea into Sudan [in the last 36 hours] to join some 55,000 Eritreans who have fled in the last few weeks”.³ Most of the displaced, whose numbers were estimated at about 340,000 on 20 May 2000,⁴ a number increased to about 750,000 by 5 June 2000, came from the Gash-Barka region of south-western Eritrea. The displaced now live in various camps, caves, forests, and dry riverbeds inside Eritrea.⁵ The Gash-Barka region of western Eritrea is the most fertile part of the country and has been known as the breadbasket of Eritrea. It is estimated that over 60 per cent of Eritrea’s agricultural produce came from this region and there are worries that the continued displacement will make Eritrea highly dependent on outside aid for a considerable period of time.⁶

On 29 May 2000, barely two weeks after this round of hostilities erupted, both sides responded favourably to a request made by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria to conduct negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Eventually, an agreement to formally cease hostilities was signed on 17 June 2000.

¹ *The New York Times*, I. Fisher, “After victory, Ethiopia looks toward other fronts: Signs all of Eritrea could be battlefield”, 20 May 2000

² Reuters, “Eritrea refugees pour into Sudan from Ethiopia war”, 19 May 2000

³ Reuters, “UN says pace of Eritrea refugee exodus quickening”, 6 June 2000

⁴ *The New York Times*, 20 May 2000

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Eritrea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Town of Tessenei liberated: Ethiopian army suffers major defeat” (news release), 6 June 2000

However, a comprehensive resolution of the conflict has yet to be reached. In its wake, this conflict, and especially the “third round”, has forced population displacements on a massive scale. It has directly contributed to the internal displacement of over one million Eritreans;⁷ it has made refugees of more than 85,000 individuals who crossed the international boundary to seek sanctuary in Sudan;⁸ and it has precipitated the deportation from Ethiopia of more than 70,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean ancestry.⁹ All of these came in addition to the between 350,000 and 800,000 Eritreans who needed humanitarian assistance because of the prevailing drought in the Horn of Africa.¹⁰ There is also the as yet unresolved Eritrean refugee presence in Sudan, estimated at about 315,000.¹¹ Indeed, had it not been for the unexpected war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the voluntary repatriation of about 160,000 refugees was to have been well underway at present.¹²

The above brief discussion highlights several dimensions associated with the humanitarian catastrophe. First, the suddenness and the speed with which people have been displaced may be second only to the 1994 refugee emergency when Rwandans in their hundreds of thousands sought asylum in the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaïre). The dynamics or, to use Kunz’s terminology, “kinetics” of the Eritrean displacement was such that a large number of Eritreans have become totally helpless and dependent on aid, either internally from resources of the Government of Eritrea or externally from outside sources.¹³ Second, the displaced population, estimated at around 1.1 million (those internally displaced as well those who sought sanctuary in Sudan), constitutes about 31 per cent of the total population of Eritrea, estimated at about 3.5 million. As Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund has openly admitted, the sheer numbers of the displaced and the speed with which the displacement happened had caught everybody unprepared.¹⁴ Third, the region from which the displacement has occurred is the most fertile part of the country, which will potentially affect food availability in the region as well as in other parts of Eritrea far away from the conflict. Fourth, the displacement occurred during the critical months of May and June, when fields are prepared for cultivation. Therefore, the challenges are both short term and medium term and a substantial amount of food will have to be made available from other sources for the foreseeable future. Fifth, as mentioned above, the displacement occurred when the Governments of Eritrea and Sudan, and the UNHCR were preparing to repatriate approximately 160,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan. The solution to this residual problem from the

⁷ Reuters, “One third of Eritreans face humanitarian crisis - UN”, 17 June 2000

⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “News: Horn of Africa update”, 18 June 2000

⁹ Eritrea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “150 Eritreans deported” (news release), 28 June 2000

¹⁰ *The New York Times*, 20 May 2000. See also *BBC World News: Africa*, “Ethiopia captures strategic town”, 18 May 2000

¹¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *1999 Global Appeal: Program overview* (Geneva, 1998), p.121

¹² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Government of the State of Eritrea and Government of the Republic of Sudan, “Joint Communiqué: Tripartite agreement for voluntary repatriation and re-integration of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan”, 7 April 2000 (electronic format e.g. <<http://www.asmarino.com/Prev.News.asp>>)

¹³ Egon Kunz, “The refugee in flight: Kinetic models and forms of displacement”, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1973), pp. 125-146

¹⁴ Reuters, 17 June 2000. The displacement resembles what Kunz calls “acute refugee displacement”.

thirty-year war of independence will now most likely have to be postponed because of the new emergencies. Finally, Eritrea faces integration problems associated with the arrival of approximately 70,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean ancestry expelled from Ethiopia after the present conflict erupted in May 1998. These problems, taken together, constitute one of the most acute humanitarian crises Eritrea has ever faced. Certainly, it would be difficult - indeed impossible - for Eritrea, one of the poorest countries in the world with a small population size, to effectively and successfully manage the impending humanitarian catastrophe on its own.

Although there are hopes that a comprehensive resolution of the conflict may be found, the bitterness this conflict has left on both sides makes a peaceful and comprehensive resolution far from certain. In fact, more recent reports (that is, reports issued after the peace agreement was signed) indicate continued displacements, albeit in small numbers, of more Eritreans.¹⁵ However, the seriousness of the issues raised in this paper is not affected by whether or not the conflict is resolved peacefully. The damage, especially in terms of the massive population displacement in Eritrea this conflict has caused, is already done. Although the numbers of the displaced may well increase if the conflict is not peacefully resolved, there already exists a humanitarian catastrophe of vast proportions that requires massive international involvement. It is in the context of the present conflict, and the still unresolved refugee issues the thirty-year war of Eritrean independence has left, that this paper examines the current displacement and its impact on the political, economic, and social environment in Eritrea. Specifically, this paper addresses the following two critical questions:

- With four categories of displaced persons to accommodate, what are the chances that Eritrea effectively handles the adverse political, economic, and social effects of such displacements?
- The four categories of displaced persons are: (i) potential returnees from Sudan, numbering about 160,000, who left decades ago during the independence struggle and are essentially of rural background; (ii) deportees from Ethiopia, numbering about 70,000, who were relatively well-off and the majority of whom are of urban background (about 20 per cent are of rural background);¹⁶ (iii) internally displaced persons, numbering more than one million, mostly from the rich agricultural lands of southwestern Eritrea; (iv) recent Eritrean refugees in Sudan numbering about 85,000. In addition, there are between 350,000 and 800,000 drought affected persons.
- How and in what capacity should the international community help the newly displaced resume their normal lives and, if possible, assist the over 160,000 prospective returnees successfully to re-integrate into the mainstream political, economic, and social landscape of Eritrean society?

Therefore, this paper explores the present situation in Eritrea, with emphasis on the massive forced population displacements. First, Eritrean refugee movements to Sudan from their flight in the last three decades to their partial return in the 1990s are briefly traced. Second, the effects of the ongoing war with Ethiopia, with particular emphasis on the recent internal displacements and the deportees from Ethiopia, are explored. Finally, an assessment is made of Eritrea's capacity to handle such a large number of

¹⁵ Eritrea. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 28 June 2000

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

displaced and the role the international community should play in effectively managing their peaceful integration and/or re-integration in the economic and social milieu of Eritrea.

2. Conflict and refugee formations in Eritrea

In an article entitled, “Refugees in Africa: The geopolitics of forced displacement”, in the *African Studies Review* in 1989, M. Schultheis noted that Africans have always been on the move.¹⁷ Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to state that no other Africans have been involuntarily displaced as much as the Eritreans have in the last thirty years. Population movements are not unique to Africa, especially the Horn of Africa, or of recent origin. However, massive forced population movements, such as those in the last three decades, have never previously occurred here. Perhaps the geopolitical importance of Eritrea, situated on the western shores of the Red Sea, has made the region an attractive object for outside intervention. Indeed, the Red Sea is an important waterway for ships carrying oil and other important commodities to Europe and the United States, and oil is an important commodity worth including in the equation of national interests of many nations. Moreover, the region, located at the cross roads between the Middle East and Africa, is inhabited by various peoples with distinct religions and cultural orientations and this has made it easy, indeed attractive, for outsiders to exploit existing cultural cleavages for their own ends. Because of these internal and external factors, the Horn of Africa, where Eritrea is located, has had a disproportionate share of conflicts for many years. And as a result of these conflicts many population groups have sought shelter internally, as in Sudan, where many from southern Sudan have migrated north and established residences in and around Khartoum, and in Eritrea, where inhabitants of the southern and southwestern part of the country have sought shelter in the vicinity of Asmara.¹⁸ Many have also sought shelter outside of their country of nationality, as the presence of Eritreans in Sudan indicates. Indeed, as Schultheis has noted, such displacements are “inevitable companions of war, civil conflict and prolonged economic deprivation”.¹⁹ However, the scale of their displacement is such that the Horn of Africa is now seen as home to a perennially destitute population.

What makes the Eritrean displacement case especially acute is its duration and intensity. The first reported exile of Eritreans in Sudan came in 1967 after a series of clashes between the Ethiopian Army and the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in the lowlands of western Eritrea. From its inception, the Ethiopian Government cast the conflict as essentially Muslim-led, and since the inhabitants of the region were Muslims, it took harsh measures directed at pacifying the population. Indeed, it became difficult for the civilians in the region to lead a peaceful life and as a result many crossed the border into Sudan in a series of influxes, especially in 1967, 1969,

¹⁷ Michael Schultheis, “Refugees in Africa: The geopolitics of forced displacement”, *African Studies Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1989), pp. 3-29

¹⁸ Reuters, 17 June 2000. One of the largest camps is in Debarwa, 30 km southeast of Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. It is estimated that there are approximately 65,000 refugees in the camp.

¹⁹ Schultheis

1970, 1974-1975, and 1978.²⁰ Immediately before the onset of the Ethiopian revolution of 1974, therefore, there were an estimated 55,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan, a significant proportion of whom settled in areas around the Sudanese town of Kessela, bordering Eritrea.²¹

Initially, there was some hope that the Ethiopian revolution would create conditions conducive to the peaceful settlement of the Ethio-Eritrean political conflict. After all, the rebellion within the Ethiopian Army against the *ancien regime* started in Ethiopian army barracks in Eritrea. Part of the reason for the rebellion was the failure of the various attempts at pacifying Eritrea, and the Ethiopian Army increasingly became convinced that the only way out of this problem was a negotiated political solution. With the uncertainties the revolution had created and the general paralysis of government forces, the main Eritrean liberation movements - the ELF and the still-nascent Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) - expanded their theatre of military and political operations well into the highlands. By 1978, the balance of forces in Eritrea had changed decisively in favour of the opposition, and Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, was completely cut off from the rest of the country. Even then, the *Derg* (the Amharic language name of the military committee that overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie) was not prepared to accommodate Eritrean demands. As it became clear later, the interpretations of the nature of the conflict by the two sides were so widely different that solutions were hard to come by. Subsequently, Ethiopia was not slow to rearm itself and change the balance of forces in its favour, and, if possible, find a military solution. Although this was short-lived, it succeeded in changing the balance of forces towards the end of the 1970s. However, the much-heralded Red Star Offensive, launched in 1982, which was supposed to bring about a military solution to the question of Eritrea once and for all, miserably failed and the military balance began to change permanently, this time in favour of the EPLF. By the end of the 1980s, the EPLF was successful in liberating almost the whole of Eritrea.

This overly brief account of the military situation becomes relevant only because it is clearly linked with the continuing exile of hundreds of thousands of individuals from various population groups, some internally within Eritrea and others externally in Sudan and elsewhere. Indeed, the military initiatives taken by each side to seek changes in the balance of forces in its favour required military engagements on a grand scale, and many places have changed hands several times as a result of a series of attacks and counter-attacks. But, in their wake, these engagements left the most acute refugee situation on the continent. By the end of 1988, an estimated half-million Eritrean refugees had sought asylum in Sudan.²² Although a detailed discussion of the implications of the refugee situation will follow later, suffice to say here that the flight of such a large number of refugees, many of them students and professionals, continues to exercise negative influences on the overall social, economic, and political situation in contemporary Eritrea.

²⁰ Gaim Kibreab, *Refugees and development in Africa: The case of Eritrea* (Trenton NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1987), pp. 16-18. See also D. Smock, "Eritrean refugees in Sudan", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1982), pp. 451-65

²¹ United States Committee for Refugees, *World refugee report, 1973-74 annual survey* (Washington DC: Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 1974), p. 4

²² Eritrea, Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs, *PROFERI: Phase I, operational plan* (Asmara: Government of Eritrea, May 1995), p. 2

3. Refugee responses to Eritrean independence

At the time Eritrea became independent in May 1991, there were an estimated 500,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan.²³ Some had been exiled to Sudan for almost thirty years and certainly most had been there for at least ten years. Also, most fled because their villages had actually become war zones, which directly affected their personal safety. These two dimensions of the refugee situation - the duration of exile and the mode/manner of flight - are critical in analysing the dynamics of refugee repatriations in Eritrea.

Immediately after Eritrea became independent, many refugees packed whatever they had and went back home. Indeed, given that conflicts impel refugees to leave their places of origin and seek exile elsewhere, resolution of those conflicts should have been reason sufficient to prompt immediate repatriation. By May 1995, therefore, approximately 110,000 refugees had repatriated spontaneously from Sudan, and many have settled in the lowlands of western Eritrea where land is relatively available.²⁴ The rest stayed in Sudan either because they were not ready to return or were looking for some assistance from governments and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. In other words, Eritrean refugees in Sudan had three responses to the cessation of conflict. Probably these responses are a function of many variables, which include, among other things, the duration of exile, political links with liberation movements, political discord between Sudan and Eritrea, and their socio-economic status in the host country.²⁵ Nonetheless, given the necessary resources, it was hoped to resettle and re-integrate the remaining refugees gradually. To this end, the Government of Eritrea, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) made a joint appeal for a US\$ 262 million to help repatriate the remaining refugees under a project known as the Program for Refugee Re-integration and Rehabilitation of Resettlement Areas in Eritrea (PROFERI).²⁶ In a major disappointment to the Eritrean Government and, perhaps, to the UN agencies involved in this endeavour, the amount pledged was only US\$ 32 million, a mere 12.3 per cent of what was required. Therefore, a much scaled-down project to repatriate approximately 25,000 refugees was undertaken.²⁷ By March 1995, an estimated 17,000 refugees had repatriated officially under this programme.²⁸

This pilot project, although more or less successfully completed, was brought to a complete halt apparently because Sudan demanded a revision of the original understanding so as to extract more funds from the repatriation project for rehabilitating the evacuated areas in Sudan. Given the scarcity of funds, Eritrea rejected any revision of the original understanding (which was based on negotiations between the UNHCR and the Government of Eritrea and the UNHCR and the

²³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *1999 Global Appeal*, p. 102

²⁴ Eritrea, Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs, *PROFERI: Phase I*, p. 2

²⁵ Assefaw Bariagaber, "The refugee experience: Understanding the dynamics of refugee repatriation in Eritrea", *Journal of Third World Studies* (forthcoming Autumn 2001)

²⁶ Eritrea, Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs, *PROFERI: Phase I*, p. 12

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13

²⁸ Eritrea, Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs, *Evaluation report on the pilot phase of PROFERI* (Asmara: Government of Eritrea, April 1995), p. i

Government of Sudan) and its substitution with a new tripartite agreement. At the root of this, however, were more serious political disagreements between the governments of Sudan and Eritrea. Eritrea was concerned about the Islamist credentials of the Government of Sudan and its support of Islamist elements in neighbouring countries and it appears Eritrean refugees in Sudan had provided an environment conducive for such endeavour. As a result, Eritrea reciprocated by openly supporting the National Democratic Alliance, an umbrella group that consists of, among others, the main southern opposition group - the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA) - and the main northern political parties - including the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party. Because of this, the repatriation endeavour has been discontinued ever since and hundreds of thousands of Eritrean refugees continue to live in refugee camps in Sudan, hoping they will have the opportunity to repatriate someday. The long-stalled repatriation of Eritrean refugees was about to resume when, unfortunately, the present conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia erupted. Indeed, the recent Joint Communiqué on the Tripartite Agreement for the Voluntary Repatriation and Re-integration of Eritrean Refugees from Sudan, issued on 7 April 2000 by the UNHCR and the Governments of the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Sudan, specifies an initial plan to repatriate approximately 160,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan.

It must also be noted that there may exist some refugees who do not wish to return. The UNHCR estimates this number at around 30,000.²⁹ Some of these are refugees who have lived in Sudan for a longer duration of time and have established themselves well as part of the host community. In other words, their reason for not returning is basically economic and, in some cases, driven by the need to avoid uncertainty in what may well be an unfamiliar environment in the country of their birth. The psychological impetus to avoid uncertainty may well be at work here. Others may feel unwelcome because of their past affiliation with Eritrean movements presently in opposition to the Government of Eritrea. Yet others may not wish to return because of their continuing political opposition to the present government in Eritrea. In the latter two cases, the primary reason appears to be fear of persecution if they returned home.³⁰ Although their numbers are small compared to the larger refugee population who have expressed the desire to return, their continued presence in Sudan may periodically exert negative influences on Eritrean-Sudanese relations. Indeed, host governments have often employed refugee populations they harbour in advancing their national security objectives.³¹ On some occasions, refugee origin countries, through their agents in the refugee populations, have also employed refugees in advancing their foreign policy objectives. Indeed, one of the reasons for the deterioration of Eritrean-Sudanese relations in the mid 1990s was Eritrea's accusation that Sudan was directly or indirectly encouraging Eritrean refugees to take up arms against the Government of Eritrea. The U.S. Committee for Refugees reported that the Government of Eritrea was concerned that returnees might have "adopted hard-line religious and political views in asylum and this may potentially

²⁹ United States Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1998* (Washington DC: Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 1998), p. 69

³⁰ Bariagaber

³¹ R. Matthews, "Refugees and stability in Africa", *International Organization*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1972), pp. 62-83

create opposition to the ruling party”.³² But more importantly, opposition groups in exile have often used the refugee community as a reservoir of much needed manpower in their struggle against governments they seek to overthrow.³³

The presence of Eritrean refugee populations in their hundreds of thousands who are willing but unable to return, however, poses a far greater threat to international peace and security. These refugees number approximately 288,000 and mostly live in urban areas such as Kessela and Khartoum, in about 25 settlement camps in eastern Sudan, bordering Eritrea.³⁴ As communicated to this writer by some returnees during a research trip to Eritrea in the summer of 1996, they live in less-than-minimally decent camps, with ever-diminishing humanitarian aid since Eritrea became independent. They are prone to take desperate measures in the hope that these would help them get out of their miserable life. Thus, they tend to respond positively to any group that seeks their services. However, their expressed wish to return to Eritrea is the one enduring and positive aspect of their long presence in Sudan. Therefore, their fears and concerns have to be addressed in such a way that the benefits of repatriation far outweigh the possible loss of a miserable but nonetheless secure and predictable life in refugee camps.

The immediate return of these refugees will have far reaching consequences for the political, economic, and social landscape of Eritrea. Politically, it would help improve the prevailing atmosphere of suspicion between Eritrea and Sudan since it removes one source of contention between the two. Economically, however, their repatriation will be an immediate burden on the State of Eritrea because the economy is not strong enough to absorb hundreds of thousands of newcomers. However, given adequate assistance until they are able to stand on their own, they have the potential to become productive members of society in that exile is often seen as making people more resourceful. Apart from the moral and ethical dilemmas of a continued life as refugees long after the conflict has been resolved, humanitarian organizations would also benefit financially in the long term because timely repatriations would free some resources for other emergencies. That is, at a time when financial contributions needed to sustain them in the refugee camps for an indefinite period of time are drying up because of “donor fatigue”, their repatriation becomes not only an ethical and moral imperative but also an economic and political necessity. Therefore, it is critically important that their repatriation and re-integration be managed carefully so as to produce the desired outcome. One source of concern, for example, is the locality where returnees are to be settled. Hansen warns about the possibility of conflict between returnees and “stayees” if the former benefit at the expense of the latter.³⁵ Hence, resettlement sites and cultivable land for returnees should, if possible, not be at the expense of those who had stayed. It is also advisable to encourage people to settle outside the formally allocated resettlement areas, possibly in their original villages, so as to minimize the conflict that would possibly arise from competition for land in the western lowlands of Eritrea.

³² United States Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1998*, p. 68

³³ Matthews, pp. 62-83

³⁴ United States Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1998*, p. 97

³⁵ Art Hansen, *Current conditions in returnee camps in Gash & Setit Province* (Tesseney: Integrated Food Security Programme (IFSP) Gash & Setit, March 1995), p. 10-11

4. The current Ethio-Eritrean conflict and the displaced

The current Ethio-Eritrean conflict has been hard to explain for many observers. Indeed, it has been variously described as “a senseless war”, “a fight between two bald men over a comb”, “a war about pride”, and, in G. Prunier’s view, a peculiar war that resembled “more of a civil war among Tigreans than an ‘international’ war.”³⁶ Others have appealed to economics, politics, and culture in explaining the roots of the conflict and the manner it evolved. For example, J. Abbink advances the argument that a combination of explanatory factors, including the particular histories of the EPLF and TPLF, the neo-patrimonial elite rule and lack of democratic structure in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the economic problems of the latter have contributed to the onset of conflict.³⁷ Be this as it may, the issue raised here focuses on the impact of the conflict on Eritrea, especially as it relates to the human dimensions of the conflict.

Immediately after the war broke out, the Ethiopian Government embarked on the expulsion of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean descent on the pretext that they were supporters of the Government of the State of Eritrea and a threat to its national security. The deportations began on 12 June 1998, approximately one month after the border war flared up on 6 May 1998.³⁸ An estimated 52,000 Eritreans or Ethiopians of Eritrean descent were expelled over the following seven months.³⁹ The deportees include male and female, young and old, traders as well as professionals. About 45 per cent of those expelled left a spouse behind in Ethiopia and as many as 19 per cent had left underage children behind.⁴⁰ They come from urban as well as rural areas. Those who were deported from urban areas mainly come from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, and a few important towns.⁴¹ Many of the deportees were comparatively well to do and leading stable lives.⁴² Moreover, according to C. Calhoun, many were born in Ethiopia and their ties to Eritrea were minimal. Indeed, reporting on an interview with one group of 102 deportees in Mendefera, a small town about 54 km from Asmara, Calhoun states that dozens had never visited Eritrea and spoke none of the Eritrean languages.⁴³ Finally, the deportations were sudden and many did not have the chance to sell, transport, or make other arrangements regarding the property they were leaving behind. According to Human Rights Watch, “the government ordered the freezing of [the deportees’] assets and revoked their business licenses, stripping them

³⁶ Gérard Prunier, *The Ethio-Eritrean conflict: An essay in interpretation* (WRITENET for UNHCR, 1998)

³⁷ J. Abbink, “Briefing: The Eritrean-Ethiopian border dispute”, *African Affairs*, Vol. 97 (1998), pp. 551-65

³⁸ Amnesty International, “Ethiopia/Eritrea: Amnesty International witnesses cruelty of mass deportations” (news release) (London, 29 January 1999)

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Society for Threatened Peoples, “Mass expulsions of ethnic Eritreans from Ethiopia and its impact on children” (oral statement at the 56th Session of the Commission on Human Rights), *Eritrea Profile*, Vol.7, No. 6, 15 April 2000

⁴¹ Asmarom Legesse, *The uprooted (part two): A scientific survey of ethnic Eritrean deportees from Ethiopia conducted with regard to human rights violations* (Asmara: Citizens for Peace in Eritrea 1999), p. 5

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 7

⁴³ C. Calhoun, “Politics abroad: Ethiopia’s ethnic cleansing”, *Dissent* (Winter 1999), pp. 47-50

and their families of their livelihood".⁴⁴ In other words, this group of deportees had nothing when they arrived in Eritrea and have been dependent on assistance from the Government of the State of Eritrea.

As indicated earlier, these deportees were self-supporting urban dwellers and their needs are different from other displaced persons who are of rural background and for whom land is a necessity. What this category of displaced persons need is capital, in the form of loans and grants to help them start a new life. Immediate and satisfactory resolution of their problem is important because, as city-dwellers, they are likely to stay in Asmara and other towns. Because of their proximity to the centre of political power and also because of their urban background, they are more likely to make articulated demands on the government for assistance such as financial grants, loans, help in retrieving their property in Ethiopia, and representations and/or appeals on their behalf for outside aid. Indeed, because most have been gainfully employed in different sectors of the Ethiopian economy, they are less likely to accept their new status as an unemployed group waiting for handouts from the government and other agencies. Therefore, satisfactory resolution of their problem is critically important for social and political stability in Eritrea.

The other group of deportees mostly came from villages in northern Tigray, mainly from Adiabo, a region that borders Eritrea. These rural deportees have lived there for many generations and have been fully integrated in the social and cultural milieu of the host community. Unlike their counterparts expelled from the urban areas where families were separated, this group consists of entire families. They left all their property behind, including their livestock.⁴⁵ However, their plight has not received the necessary attention because their expulsion occurred in remote areas where international organisations do not have any presence.⁴⁶ Most have been settled in temporary camps on the Eritrean side of the border and are being supported by the government and other humanitarian agencies. Having been farmers before they were deported, the needs of this category of displaced persons revolve around agriculture, including housing, land, and farming equipment. Given that sufficient land is available, the problems posed by this group are easily manageable. However, short term and medium term aid necessary to help them stand on their own must commence immediately. Otherwise, tension with those who may want or claim the same land is a real possibility. Nonetheless, it is important to assist these deportees in the same way as those who had returned from Sudan in the mid-1990s under the Pilot Programme. That is, they will need land and other types of support until they are established in their new environment.

The deportations, which started one month after the war erupted in May 1998, continued, albeit at a slower rate, in 2000. As of June 2000, the number stands at approximately 70,000, most of which are still waiting for the formal cessation of the conflict before their case is permanently settled. Once the conflict is resolved,

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Human rights developments" in *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999: Events of December 1997-November 1998* (New York, 1999)

⁴⁵ Natalie Klein, "Mass expulsions from Ethiopia: Report on the deportation of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia: June - August 1998" (electronic format: <<http://denden.com/Conflict/deportees/klein-0898.htm>>)

⁴⁶ Asmarom Legesse, *The uprooted (part three): Studies of urban Eritreans expelled from Ethiopia, villagers expelled from Tigray and communities in Eritrea displaced by bombardment* (Asmara: Citizens for Peace in Eritrea, 2000) p. 15

however, their problems will have to be addressed with the urgency they require. In other words, due to the continuing conflict, the deportees have been patient, knowing well that the government was not in a position to address their needs before the issue of national security is settled. However, once the conflict is settled, they are likely to demand an immediate and lasting solution to their plight.

Finally, there is a group variously estimated at between 350,000 and 800,000 already in need of food in certain drought-stricken areas of Anseba, Northern and Southern Red Sea Administrative Regions. Their needs have been given lower priority because of the prevailing political situation in Eritrea. They are in a better position compared to the deportees only in so far as they still continue to live in their homes. Their needs are immediate and revolve mainly around food aid that will carry them until the next planting and harvesting season. Failing this, they will likely migrate to other regions in search of food, thus adversely affecting food availability in those regions as well. And it will be immensely costly - both economically and socially, and possibly politically - if measures that would alleviate their needs are not taken before they venture on their own.

5. Population displacement: Economic, political, and social impact

As indicated in the previous sections, there are four groups of people, each with varying needs and interests, the State of Eritrea has to deal with. The first group of displaced persons includes approximately 160,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan (out of an estimated total of 320,000) displaced as a result of the thirty-year war of independence and whose problems should have long been addressed. The second group consists of refugees who have recently sought asylum in Sudan because of the recent war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and number approximately 85,000 refugees.⁴⁷ The third group of people includes those that were expelled from Ethiopia in the last two years, the majority of whom are from urban backgrounds: they number approximately 70,000. The fourth group - internally displaced persons - left their homes for other places within Eritrea as a result of Ethiopian incursions deep inside Eritrea: they are estimated at about one million and constitute approximately a third of the entire Eritrean population. Although their plight is not related to the recent conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, there is also another group of people that need assistance because of drought in Eritrea. They face the same problems as the approximately 13 million people currently affected by the prevailing drought in the Horn of Africa and number between 350,000 and 800,000. Thus altogether, there are approximately between 1.6 and 2.1 million, or roughly between 47 and 60 per cent of the Eritrean population, in need of some form of assistance. Even if the lower estimate is taken, nowhere in the world can one find a displacement of such proportions at present. Moreover, because the social and economic backgrounds of the displaced are diverse, their needs are different. Hence, it is necessary to make targeted interventions to effectively manage problems of this magnitude.

⁴⁷ United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), "Sudan: Fleeing Eritreans Using Border as 'Hovering Zone'", 15 June 2000

It has been repeatedly said that Eritrea is one of the least developed nations on the globe and as such it currently faces the same types of problems as any other developing country. Its Gross Domestic Product for 1999, estimated at about 2,400.6 million Nakfa (US\$ 1 = 8.5 Nakfa, as of November 1999),⁴⁸ is one of the lowest in the world. There are, however, additional problems unique to Eritrea or perhaps to only those very countries which have had the misfortune of a lengthy war. The thirty-year war has caused almost complete destruction of the infrastructure. One need only travel to the northern and western part of the country to see the immense destruction the war has caused: bridges and roads have yet to be repaired, people who were dislocated have to be resettled and re-integrated, and economic enterprises have to be rehabilitated. Indeed, significant progress has been made over the last nine years. However, the enormity of the reconstruction effort is such that a considerably longer period of time with massive capital infusion is needed. In other words, much remains to be done, such as the re-integration of the overwhelming majority of the estimated 320,000 Eritrean refugees still in Sudan. This residual problem is now coupled with the negative consequences of the present drought in the Horn of Africa and the unfortunate war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The latter has especially affected the economic growth of the country negatively as almost everybody between 18 and 40 years of age, the most productive age-group of any society, has been mobilized for the war effort. Moreover, about one-third of the population, most of them from fertile regions, have been internally dislocated. Given problems of such magnitude, one cannot help wondering how a country such as Eritrea can even attempt to resolve them without outside assistance. The need for massive international assistance is therefore self-evident.

The economic issues facing Eritrea at present are indeed daunting. This is especially true of food production, where the main food producing area of southwestern Eritrea is still occupied by Ethiopian troops. In fact most of the displaced - as refugees in Sudan and as internally displaced within Eritrea - lived in this area and, thus far, they have been unable to prepare the land for cultivation. Hence, chronic food deficit is not only a present reality but will also linger for the foreseeable future. Even at the best of times, Eritrea would be hard-pressed to produce enough food for its needs. For example, the grain deficit for 1997/98 and 1998/99 was, respectively, 324,084 and 27,000 metric tons.⁴⁹ While these figures indicate that Eritrea has a long way to go before feeding its population, the difference between the deficits for the consecutive two years suggests significant progress can be made to meet the food needs of the country. Moreover, the figures suggest that given the necessary investment and a stable political climate such deficits could be a thing of the past. Therefore, the flow of food to the hundreds of thousand of Eritreans in need is not only a moral imperative for the Eritrean Government and the international community but will also have a positive impact on the overall stability of Eritrea and the Horn of Africa. It is not hard to imagine the social and political consequences of acute food shortages. As A.

⁴⁸ International Monetary Fund, "Eritrea: Statistical Appendix", *Imf Country Report*, No. 00/55, 11 May 2000, p. 24

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28

Ahmed has succinctly stated, “poverty turns men into beasts”,⁵⁰ even in societies that adhere to strict social mores, such as Eritrea.

As already indicated, the problem posed by the deportations from Ethiopia of approximately 70,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean descent needs to be addressed immediately. It has been buried because of the recent fighting, which induced refugee movements in the tens of thousands into Sudan and the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands. Those who were deported from urban areas in Ethiopia are expected to stay mostly in the urban areas of Eritrea: they will likely be more assertive in their demands for redress of the wrongs committed against them. Although they may come to terms with the inability of the Eritrean Government to give much from its own resources, they will most likely find it hard to understand why the international community failed them should this be the case. Therefore, the need to resolve their problems must assume the urgency that it requires. This can be done by assisting them to reclaim their possessions in Ethiopia or, failing that, through a combination of grants and loans. Otherwise, if this problem persists without a satisfactory solution, it will likely disrupt the social fabric of the community.

Individuals belonging to this group are not likely to be influenced by opposition groups and other opinion formers in their perception of the problem and the steps needed to resolve it mainly because they are relatively outside of the reach of these groups. Indeed, the presence of opposition groups in the urban areas of Eritrea has been minimal thus far. Moreover, other opinion formers, such as the mass media, are either controlled by the government or are supportive of the government. Hence, their impact on how this group of individuals perceives its own situation is not markedly different from what the government says. Consequently, the behaviour of members of this group is not expected to be hostile to the government. Because of their proximity to the centre of power, however, they are likely to make concerted efforts to push the government to find solutions to their plight.

The situation of those expelled from the rural areas of northern Ethiopia is markedly different from their counterparts expelled from the urban areas. Because of their rural background, they will probably settle in the rural areas of Eritrea. Their demand for land is, therefore, crucial and the Government of Eritrea can and must resolve this issue at the earliest. Indeed, the impact of opposition groups and other opinion formers on how members of this group perceive their situation may be contingent on whether or not land is immediately made available to them. They will also demand other forms of immediate aid until they can begin harvesting. If their demands are not met some may migrate into the cities, thus adding to the already existing high unemployment rate, and others may cross the border into Sudan in search of a better life. The latter may even join opposition movements as their way of independently and unilaterally solving their problems. Indeed, opposition groups have easier access to this group because the latter is mostly dispersed in the rural areas of western Eritrea. Nonetheless, it is important to note that opinion formers, and especially opposition groups, will most likely have a hard time in shaping the perception, and hence the behaviour, of this group simply because the opposition is seen as Ethiopian supported and, of course, Ethiopia is seen as the source of their present predicament. That is

⁵⁰ Akbar Ahmed, “‘Ethnic Cleansing’: A Metaphor for Our Time”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (January 1995), Pp. 1-25

probably why the opposition is “just watching ... and talking” and hoping the situation will further deteriorate.⁵¹

The issue of the more than one million internally displaced persons is perhaps easy and daunting at the same time. It is easy because they can go back to their villages and re-start their livelihood once Ethiopian troops have left: they have their own land ready to cultivate and their immediate needs include food support until they reap their first harvest. It is daunting because of the sheer numbers of the displaced. Their situation, as they are likely to understand it, is the result of Ethiopian incursions. However, many are scattered in caves, river-beds, and forests of southwestern Eritrea and are easily reached by opposition groups, especially in the aftermath of the void created after Eritrean troops retreated. There may also be a sense of desperation and resignation at the apparent inability of the Eritrean Government to protect them. Indeed, as the *Indian Ocean Newsletter* has stated, “[i]n some towns, Eritrea’s civil administration has difficulty getting going again and not just for technical reasons”.⁵² At any rate, this group needs massive short and medium term aid until they can stand on their own feet. Failing this, they may become good candidates for recruitment by the opposition. Reports of increased activity by groups opposed to the Eritrean Government in the lowlands of Eritrea during the Ethiopian occupation is an indicator of the extent to which the opposition is aggressively looking for and exploiting all windows of opportunity that would help extend its influence.⁵³ Thus, their perception of the situation and the way members of this group will likely behave depends on whether or not they receive timely assistance.

Perhaps the needs of those affected by drought in Eritrea are the easiest to handle. This is because their needs are no different from the needs of those in southwestern Ethiopia or northern Kenya or Djibouti. However, they are likely to suffer more because of the immediate problems posed by the current conflict-related humanitarian crisis. In other words, their counterparts in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti are likely to receive more attention because they do not have competitors for aid as is the case in Eritrea. (It must be noted that Ethiopia also has people in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, displaced as a result of the war and an estimated additional 10 million people affected by drought. However, the extent of war displacement in Eritrea, estimated at about one-third of the population, is comparably much higher.) If aid is not forthcoming, this category of people will migrate to the cities or, in extreme cases, may cross international borders in search of food and employment opportunities. Again, like their counterparts discussed above, they may attract the attention of opposition groups while in exile. However, while inside Eritrea, their perception of the situation as God-made will endure, and external agents will have a hard time convincing them otherwise.

The issue of the 85,000 refugees who recently sought asylum in Sudan is more complicated than the previous groups in terms of their overall impact on the situation in Eritrea. It appears this group crossed the border into Sudan either because they were refugees who went back to Eritrea after it became independent and hence were familiar with being a refugee, or because the border was close and secure enough to

⁵¹ *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, “Eritrea: The Morning-After Effect”, No. 912, 13 July 2000

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

warrant such behaviour. Be it as it may, this group will come under numerous influences during exile, especially opposition groups with relatively easy access to the refugee camps. Although this group will continue to blame the Ethiopian Government for its plight, it will also be exposed to alternative views, especially those of the opposition who will put the blame squarely on the Eritrean Government. Whether the refugees will be receptive to this depends on how long they will remain in Sudan: the longer they stay the more they tend to associate with the opposition. And this will potentially have detrimental effect on Eritrean-Sudanese relations. Therefore, timely assistance to help them repatriate would not only go a long way in diffusing political instability in the Horn of Africa but also in reconstituting the households destroyed when Ethiopian forces occupied large parts of Eritrea.

Finally, it appears the fate of the more than 160,000 prospective returnees from Sudan will continue to occupy the attention of Eritrea, Sudan and the UNHCR for some time to come. With all the problems that Eritrea faces at present, it would be extremely difficult to undertake effective repatriation under current conditions. The logistical needs of this category of displaced persons far surpass those of the others. This includes making the necessary preparation and registration of those who volunteer to return, transportation from Sudan, housing, land, schools, clinics, farming utensils, and continued support until they are able to start harvesting. It is, indeed, unfortunate that this endeavour has to be postponed again but there seems to be no other way of effectively managing the proposed organized repatriation at present. For a better outcome, it is imperative to assist those that are inside Eritrea first and then proceed to the more daunting task of re-integrating those who have been absent for a long period of time. The negative side to the possible postponement of this endeavour is that many of those who had expressed the desire to repatriate may no longer want to, especially after the recent conflict and the ensuing displacement of hundreds of thousands of their compatriots. Stories of Ethiopian occupation and the retreat of Eritrean troops is likely to be usefully narrated either by the newly-exiled or by opposition movements. The possibility of getting a receptive audience is, indeed, real. Nonetheless, effective management of the plight of those displaced as a result of the recent conflict will have a positive impact on whether or not the final repatriation of “old” refugees from Sudan is conducted successfully.

The social impact of the conflict is no less important than the political and economic impact discussed above. Although the literature on integration focuses on the economic and political dimensions only - and this is understandable because both variables can be manipulated easily - the social sphere is also critically important. There may not be an easy way of directly helping the displaced resume their social lives. External agents are certainly able to facilitate economic and political integration, while social integration is internally driven because of the need to fulfil basic spiritual needs. Indeed, extended displacement erodes patterns of social relationships necessary in rural environments and this should not be allowed to happen. The motivations behind the need to revive old social relationships are amply demonstrated in many studies. For example, Bascom’s study of Eritrean refugees in Sudan demonstrates that Eritrean refugees were keen on reconstructing the household and reactivate social and cultural networks eroded during exile simply because they were indispensable

components of agrarian life.⁵⁴ It is, therefore, imperative that the displaced be assisted in returning to their homes at the earliest possible date. The longer they stay displaced, the more existing social mores and accepted social behaviour breaks up, and this, in turn, negatively affects their capacity for cooperative behaviour within and between villages.

The speed at which the conflict evolved has other negative effects. The level and intensity of the conflict was such that “families have lost husbands, wives and children. The break-up of families and communities has increased the danger of losing some of the traditional coping mechanisms and strategies, which are vital in supporting emergency relief effort.”⁵⁵ In other words, the dynamics of the conflict has brought life to a complete standstill and led to the loss of a “sense of identity” of the displaced.⁵⁶ Simply put, unless sufficient economic aid is made available to the displaced, the long-term social effects will be the eroding of the social mores that more or less kept Eritrean society intact during the trying thirty-year war of independence. And if this happens, it is not impossible to imagine the possible breakdown of law and order in the rural areas, which may be difficult to contain later. The political and social impact of the displacement is, therefore, a function of the economy and the way the displaced are assisted. The more assistance the displaced get to enable them resume their normal lives, the less the social and political impact of the displacement will be.

6. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explain the political, economic, and social impact of the present conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, with emphasis on the displaced and other persons who need humanitarian aid. Perhaps the most central characteristic of the conflict has been its scale and intensity, and the resultant displacement of a large segment of the population. Although the war is over for now, many have yet to return to their homes. The following statement, made on 27 June 2000, ten days after both sides formally agreed to a ceasefire, is a poignant description of the situation: “Basically, there is nothing there and that is why a lot of people are reluctant to go back because they fear for their food security and also there are still people coming out of there.”⁵⁷ This statement was made by Kris Janowski, UNHCR spokesman, in reaction to reports that refugees were returning back from Sudan. There is one fundamental issue this statement raises: displaced persons do not simply return to their homes at the end of hostilities. One has to overcome fear to be able to return. The task therefore, is to allay this fear.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Bascom, “Reconstructing Households & Reconstructing Home Areas: The Case of Returning Eritreans” In T. Allen (Ed.), *In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight & Homecoming in Northeast Africa* (London: James Currey and Trenton: Africa World Press, 1996), Pp. 66-79

⁵⁵ The Community of the University of Asmara, “From ‘Border Dispute’ to Open Invasion: A Report on Ethiopia’s Aggression Against Eritrea and Its Consequences”, June 2000 (Electronic Format: <[Http://Www.Dehai.Org/Uoa/Uoa.Html](http://www.dehai.org/Uoa/Uoa.html)>)

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Voice of America, “UNHCR-Eritrea”, 27 June 2000

In general, people leave their places of residence because of “push” forces and settle, often involuntarily, in other places because of the existence of comparatively stronger forces of “pull”. Thus, the displaced in Eritrea left their homes because of fear and lack of security, both personal and economic. The return of the displaced to their places of original residence, per force, requires creating conditions in which the forces that pull them to their homes become greater than those that would make them stay where they are. In other words, the security/military and economic conditions brought about by the recent conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea need to be reversed. This may be easier said than done. Indeed, there are issues where outside intervention will not make much difference. One such issue is the repatriation of about 30,000 refugees in Sudan who seem to have opted to stay in exile. There are, however, many critically important and easily manipulable variables which, when effectively managed, would bring about the immediate return of refugees and other displaced persons to places of their original residence.

First, since land is publicly owned in Eritrea, the government should immediately make available land for housing and farming to those who were deported from rural areas of Ethiopia and a few others deported from urban areas who may wish to live in rural areas. This should take into account the interests of those who had stayed and should be done in such away that conflict between the newcomers and the “stayees” is minimized.

Second, since the Eritrean economy is not yet strong enough to provide the necessary support for the displaced, international governmental and non-governmental organizations should provide assistance until the hundreds of thousands of the displaced are returned home and are able to support themselves. This assistance may take two forms: immediate or short-term assistance consisting of funding for food, tents, water purification equipment, medical supplies, and the like, and medium-term support consisting of funds for food until the first harvest and additional funding for reconstruction of schools, health facilities, water wells, and other support needed to make transition to normal life smooth. Indeed, considering the scale of displacement, a lot of money and other resources will be required. It is imperative, therefore, that an international conference be convened to solicit the necessary funds. The type of support outlined above, if provided, will have the effect of allaying the fear that the displaced have been subjected to. It will make the “pull” motives greater compared to the forces that tend to keep the displaced in temporary camps.

Third, given the scale of the current displacement in Eritrea, decisions concerning Eritrean refugees who were about to return as a result of the signing of the Tripartite Agreement between the UNHCR, Sudan, and Eritrea need to be postponed. Indeed, if this problem is to be resolved satisfactorily - and it has to because it has lingered longer than necessary - careful preparation is required. The current situation makes it difficult, if not impossible, to undertake an endeavour of such magnitude. However, it should be conducted as soon as possible because it would help remove possible political problems between Sudan and Eritrea. Hence, it is an international security issue. It is also a moral imperative because living in refugee camps for generations puts into question the nature of our civilization at this moment in time.

Fourth, the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and other influential actors should provide Eritrea and Ethiopia the necessary moral and material support. Funds made available to stabilize their economies will go a long way in encouraging the conflicting parties to resolve their problems and co-exist peacefully.

These interested parties should also be ready to bring the needed pressure to bear upon the two parties should this become necessary in facilitating serious negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive and just resolution of the problem.

7. Bibliography

Abbink, J. "Briefing: The Eritrean-Ethiopian border dispute". *African Affairs*, Vol. 97 (1998).

Ahmed, Akbar. "'Ethnic cleansing': A metaphor for our time". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1995).

Amnesty International. "Ethiopia/Eritrea: Amnesty International witnesses cruelty of mass deportations" (news release). London, 29 January 1999.

Bariagaber, Assefaw. "The refugee experience: Understanding the dynamics of refugee repatriation in Eritrea". *Journal of Third World Studies* (fc Autumn 2001).

Bascom, Jonathan. "Reconstructing households & reconstructing home areas: The case of returning Eritreans" in T. Allen (ed.), *In search of cool ground: War, flight & homecoming in Northeast Africa*. London: James Currey and Trenton: Africa World Press, 1996.

BBC World News: Africa. "Ethiopia captures strategic town". 18 May 2000.

Calhoun, Craig. "Politics abroad: Ethiopia's ethnic cleansing". *Dissent* (Winter 1999).

The Community of the University of Asmara. "From 'border dispute' to open invasion: A report on Ethiopia's aggression against Eritrea and its consequences". Unpublished manuscript. June 2000.

Eritrea. Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs. *PROFERI: Phase I, operational plan*. Asmara: Government of Eritrea, 1995.

_____. *Evaluation report on the pilot phase of PROFERI*. Asmara: Government of Eritrea, 1995.

Eritrea. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "150 Eritreans deported" (news release). 28 June 2000.

_____. "Town of Tessenei liberated: Ethiopian army suffers major defeat" (news release). 6 June 2000.

Hansen, Art. *Current conditions in returnee camps in Gash & Setit Province*. Tesseney: Integrated Food Security Programme (IFSP) Gash & Setit, 1995.

Human Rights Watch. "Ethiopia: Human rights developments" in *Watch World Report 1999: Events of December 1997 - November 1998*. New York: 1999.

Indian Ocean Newsletter. "Eritrea: The morning-after effect", No. 912. 13 July 2000.

International Monetary Fund, "Eritrea: Statistical Appendix". *IMF Country Report*, No. 00/55, 11 May 2000.

Kibreab, Gaim. *Refugees and development in Africa: The case of Eritrea*. Trenton NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1987.

Klein, Natalie. "Mass expulsions from Ethiopia: Report on the deportation of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia, June - August 1998" (electronic format: <<http://denden.com/Conflict/deportees/klein-0898.htm>>).

Kunz, Egon. "The refugee in flight: Kinetic models and forms of displacement". *International Migration Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1973).

Legesse, Asmarom. *The uprooted (part two): A scientific survey of ethnic Eritrean deportees from Ethiopia conducted with regard to human rights violations*. Asmara: Citizens for Peace in Eritrea, 1999.

_____. *The uprooted (part three): Studies of urban Eritreans expelled from Ethiopia, villagers expelled from Tigray and communities in Eritrea displaced by bombardment*. Asmara: Citizens for Peace in Eritrea, 2000.

Matthews, R. "Refugees and stability in Africa", *International Organization*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1972).

The New York Times. I. Fisher. "After victory, Ethiopia looks toward other fronts: Signs all of Eritrea could be battlefield". 20 May 2000.

Prunier, Gérard. *The Ethio-Eritrean conflict: An essay in interpretation*. WRITENET for UNHCR, 1998 (UNHCR/CDR RefWorld Databases).

Reuters. "One third of Eritreans face humanitarian crisis - UN". 17 June 2000.

_____. "UN says pace of Eritrea refugee exodus quickening". 6 June 2000.

_____. "Eritrea refugees pour into Sudan from Ethiopia war". 19 May 2000.

Schultheis, Michael. "Refugees in Africa: The geopolitics of forced displacement". *African Studies Review*. Vol. 32, No. 1 (1989).

Smock, David. "Eritrean refugees in Sudan". *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. Vol. 20, No. 3 (1982).

Society for Threatened Peoples. "Mass expulsions of ethnic Eritreans from Ethiopia and its impact on children". Oral statement at the 56th Session of the Commission on Human Rights. *Eritrea Profile*, Vol.7, No. 6 (April 2000).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Government of the State of Eritrea and Government of the Republic of Sudan. "Joint communiqué: Tripartite agreement for voluntary repatriation and re-integration of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan". 7 April 2000 (electronic format e.g. <<http://www.asmarino.com/Prev.News.asp>>).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "News: Horn of Africa update". 18 June 2000.

_____. *1999 Global Appeal: Program overview*. Geneva, 1998.

United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN). "Sudan: Fleeing Eritreans using border as 'hovering zone'". 15 June 2000.

United States Committee for Refugees. *World refugee survey 1998*. Washington DC: Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 1998.

_____. *World refugee report, 1973-74 annual survey*. Washington DC: Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 1974.

Voice of America. "UNHCR-Eritrea". 27 June 2000.