



## **Eritrea - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 25 and Friday 26 June 2009**

### **Information on the relationship between Eritrean and Sudan**

The *USCRI* in June 2009 in a document on refugees in Sudan says “Sudan arrested nearly 3,400 refugees and asylum seekers during the year, including 1,200 Eritreans, 1,000 Ethiopians, and almost 1,200 Somalis. Sudan's Advisory Council on Human Rights told the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights this was necessary because refugees had left their assigned camps and created a large foreign presence in the capital.” (*USCRI (17 June 2009) World Refugee Survey 2009 – Sudan*) This report also says

“In March, the UNHCR and the Government launched a registration program for Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in eastern Sudan. By year's end it had registered camp-based refugees, and in 2009 officials planned to move on to refugees living in local communities. This exercise included refugees who had lost refugee status in 2003 when UNHCR declared Eritrea safe for their return. The Government also receiving nearly 500 asylum applications in Khartoum, but there was no independent verification of this” (*ibid*).

Considering ‘Transnational issues’ the *CIA* in May 2009 in a report on Eritrea says “Sudan accuses Eritrea of supporting eastern Sudanese rebel groups.” (*CIA, (27 May 2009) The World Factbook, Eritrea*)

Citing another source a *UK Home Office* paper from April 2009 on Sudan says on page 36 that “Jane's Security Sentinel website, updated on 17 May 2007, stated that: “Sudan, with whom relations have often not been good, borders the west of Eritrea. Recent improvements in relations with Sudan are promising, however, with the sponsoring by Eritrea of talks between the Sudanese government and the rebel group, the Eastern Front, and the signing of a peace deal in October 2006.” (“*UK Home Office (21 April 2009) Country of Origin Information Report – Eritrea*) Pages 138 to 140 deal with the issue of Eritrean refugees in Sudan (*ibid*).

In April 2009 a paper on Eritrea from the *US Department of State* considering ‘foreign relations’ says “Relations with Sudan also were colored by occasional incidents involving the extremist group, Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ)--which the Eritrean Government believes is supported by the National Islamic Front government in Khartoum--and by continued Eritrean support for the Sudanese opposition coalition, the National Democratic Alliance; however, Eritrea normalized relations with Sudan in 2006.” (*US Department of State (April 2009) Background Note: Eritrea*)

Also in April 2009 a paper on Eritrea from *HRW* says on page 21 that “For years Eritrea’s relations with Sudan were also strained by mutual support for each other’s opposition groups, but relations normalized in 2006” (HRW, (16 April 2009), *Service for Life State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea*). This report also says on page 65 “The majority of refugees end up in Ethiopia and Sudan in overcrowded refugee camps. An increasing number try to make it to Europe via Sudan and Libya. They face difficult conditions crossing the Sahara and risk detention and extortion at the hands of Libyan and Sudanese police” (ibid). The same page adds that “in 2007 the UN said that at least 10,000 Eritrean refugees arrived in Sudan and by 2008 this had apparently increased to at least 13,000 known new arrivals, likely a conservative estimate given that many of them do not apply for refugee status and remain in Sudan illegally, in transit for Libya” (ibid). Page 66 of the report says

“After more than a decade of tensions, Eritrea and Sudan normalized diplomatic relations in 2005.<sup>285</sup> The Sudanese government currently has a functional relationship with Asmara and from time to time has forcibly returned refugees to Eritrea. Sudan has hosted hundreds of thousands of Eritreans over the years, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s when Sudanese relations with Ethiopia were at their most difficult and Eritreans fled Ethiopian government attacks.<sup>286</sup> Although thousands of Eritreans returned to Eritrea voluntarily after independence in 1993, many refugees remained in Sudan, some— such as former ELF members—because they feared persecution despite the amnesty extended to individuals.” (ibid)

On page 67 it adds that

“Over the past five years the increasingly cordial relations between the Sudanese and Eritrean governments have resulted in increasing pressure from Sudanese authorities on Eritrean refugees to return to Eritrea, contrary to the longstanding Sudanese reception of Eritrean refugees over the previous decades. According to Amnesty International, some of those returned by Egypt to Eritrea in June 2008 (see below) had previously fled Sudan because they feared being returned to Eritrea by the Sudanese authorities.<sup>288</sup> Currently most refugees who flee Eritrea to Sudan either settle in refugee camps in eastern Sudan or transit onward within the country or to other countries in search of a safer and more stable existence. Those not in camps in Sudan are extremely vulnerable to abuse, in particular extortion and forcible return by the Sudanese authorities— Sudanese security services have links to Eritrean security agents. One woman who escaped to Libya and then Italy had been detained in Sudan in 2004 when she was caught without papers; she described house-to-house round-ups in Khartoum by Sudanese police.” (ibid)

Section 1c of a *US Department of State* report on Sudan issued in February 2009 on events of 2008 says that “Unlike in 2007, there were no reports that police conducted sporadic raids on houses occupied by Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees or migrants.” (US Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Sudan*)

## References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

### **Sources Consulted**

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