

Eritrea

Response to Information Request Number:	ERT01001.ZSF
Date:	4 October 2000
Subject:	Eritrea: Information on expulsion from Eritrea of individuals of mixed Ethiopian-Eritrean origin
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	Eritrea / Ethiopia / Citizenship / Deportation / Discrimination based on ethnic origin / Discrimination based on national origin / Displaced persons / Minorities / Mixed marriage / Nationality / Population transfers / Passports / Right to a nationality / Travel documents

Query:

Would an individual with an Ethiopian father be in danger of expulsion from Eritrea to Ethiopia? The individual's Eritrean passport is annotated on page 29 that the bearer/bearers of this passport is an Eritrean and stamped by Head of Passport Section.

Response:

Background

According to a representative of the Embassy of Eritrea in Washington, D.C., anyone with an Eritrean passport is an Eritrean citizen (Embassy of Eritrea, 29 Sept. 2000).

Specific information on the likelihood of expulsion from Eritrea of individuals who are Eritrean citizens yet are of mixed parentage, particularly those with an Ethiopian father could not be found among the sources consulted by the RIC. However, there has been a great deal of intermarriage between persons of Ethiopian origin and persons of Eritrean origin. The following information on expulsion of individuals from Eritrea may be of use.

Expulsion of Ethiopians from Eritrea

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in June 1998, there were an estimated 100,000 Ethiopians working in Eritrea, many of whom worked in the Red Sea port of Assab. Many lost their jobs when the conflict erupted and Ethiopian trade was rerouted to Djibouti. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) assisted some 22,000 Ethiopians to return to Ethiopia by January 1999. However, Amnesty International concluded that while there were incidents of private citizens and police officials violating the rights of individual Ethiopians, the organization did not find "a systematic policy of ill-treatment of Ethiopians by the government of Eritrea or its security forces" (AI, 21 May 1999). Similarly, a Human Rights Watch investigator considered that while some measure of coercion may have been involved in the exodus of Ethiopians from Eritrea (making the departures less than fully "voluntary"), what was missing was an official policy? the "bureaucracy of deportations" (HRW Representative, 10 July 2000). Recent press reports, however, detail the rounding up of over 7,000 Ethiopians for expulsion. The Eritrean authorities claim this is for the protection of the Ethiopians while the Ethiopian government views the detentions as revenge for recent Eritrean setbacks in the two-year border war (AP Online, 6 June 2000). In mid-July 2000 (after the signing of a peace agreement between the two nations)

Agence France Presse reported that 92 Ethiopian women? mostly domestic workers? were detained for 17 days and then put on an Ethiopian boat and expelled from the country "wearing almost no clothes" to the coast of Djibouti, some 100 miles north of Djibouti City (*Agence France Presse*, 17 July 2000).

There has been a torrent of mutual accusations of grave human rights violations by Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities, including expulsions, in the aftermath of the signing of the cease-fire agreement in mid-June 2000. There are corroborated reports that a very large number of Ethiopians were expelled from Eritrea in the months of July and August 2000.

Ethiopian radio claimed on 3 August 2000, that Eritrean authorities deported 3,000 Ethiopians, forcing them to cross the border through an area that had been mined by Eritrea, and that on 30 July 2000, Eritrean officials had deported 550 women and children (BBC, 5 Aug. 2000). These expulsions of Ethiopians from Eritrea in late July and early August 2000 were confirmed by the ICRC, which stated that 2,700 Ethiopians were dropped 40 kilometers from the Tsorena front line from where they had to walk 18 hours before they reached Ethiopian territory. Four men and one woman apparently died from illness during the journey. The ICRC reported that two other groups of Ethiopians, numbering 567 and 240, were also deported across the demilitarized zone without the knowledge and involvement of the ICRC. The Red Cross concluded that the deportations did not comply with international law. The ICRC also said that it had supervised the safe return of nearly 10,000 Ethiopians since repatriations began in mid-June 2000 (AP Worldstream, 10 Aug. 2000; *Agence France Presse*, 8 Aug. 2000).

The Eritrean Embassy in Washington argued that the repatriation of Ethiopian citizens living in Eritrea was on a voluntary basis, although it also claimed there were a small number who had to be sent home because they lacked the legal status for residence (Embassy of Eritrea, 16 Aug. 2000).

The Ethiopian news agency ENA claimed a further 1,000 Ethiopians were deported via Rama (northern Ethiopia) on 15 August 2000, without the ICRC being informed (BBC, 18 Aug. 2000). On 18 August 2000, *Agence France Presse* reported claims by Ethiopian officials in the Tigre region that 2,200 Ethiopians living in the Eritrean capital Asmara and the central town of Keren were forced on August 16th to cross the Mereb river along their common border. The latest expulsions brought to 9,000 the number of Ethiopians forced to leave Eritrea since July 30, according to a tally from figures given by Addis Ababa (*Agence France Presse*, 18 Aug. 2000).

On 21 August 2000, the Ethiopian national news agency ENA reported that Eritrea had expelled 541 Ethiopians into northeastern Ethiopia (*Agence France Presse*, 22 Aug. 2000). And on 22 August 2000, Ethiopian Tigray radio reported that 3,792 Ethiopians, residents of Asmara, its environs and some towns in southern Eritrea, were deported in two separate rounds. The report claimed that since the signing of the Algiers temporary cessation of hostilities in mid-June the Eritrean government had deported 19,000 Ethiopians (BBC, 24 Aug. 2000).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee or asylum status.

References

Agence France Presse. 22 August 2000. "Eritrea Expels 541 Ethiopians: Addis Ababa." (NEXIS)

Agence France Presse. 18 August 2000. "Over 2,000 More Ethiopians Expelled from

Eritrea: Addis Ababa." (NEXIS)

Agence France Presse. 8 August 2000. "Ethiopia, Eritrea Must Settle on Route for Returning Refugees: ICRC." (NEXIS)

Agence France Presse. 17 July 2000. "Eritrea Deports Ethiopian Women to Djibouti Coast." (NEXIS)

Amnesty International (AI). 21 May 1999. *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Human Rights Issues in a Year of Armed Conflict*. [Internet] URL: <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1999/AFR/16400099.htm>

Associated Press (AP Worldstream). 10 August 2000. "Red Cross Reports that Eritrea Forcibly Deporting Ethiopians." (NEXIS)

Associated Press (AP Online). 6 June 2000. Craig Nelson. "Ethiopians Feel Safer in Camp." (NEXIS)

British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts (BBC). 24 August 2000. "Eritrea Deports Further 3,972 Ethiopians Across Mereb River." (NEXIS)

British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts (BBC). 18 August 2000. "Eritrea Deports Over 1,000 Ethiopians--Ethiopian Report." (NEXIS)

British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts (BBC). 5 August 2000. "Eritrea Reportedly Deports 3,000 Ethiopian Nationals." (NEXIS)

Embassy of Eritrea, Washington, DC. 29 September 2000. Telephone interview with Information Officer.

Human Rights Watch (HRW). 10 July 1992. Telephone interview with Representative.

United Nations (UN) General Assembly, 19 August 2000. "Ethiopia has an Obligation to Receive its Own Nationals." [Internet] URL: <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/3a81e21068ec1871c1256633003c1c6f/e206fe2148d9cf2ec125694a004cd7d9>
OpenDocument

Last Modified 06/14/2002