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14 January 2010

ETH103319.FE

Ethiopia: The treatment of Eritreans by the Ethiopian government authorities (2008-2009)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Treatment of displaced Eritreans in Ethiopia

According to a report published on 30 June 2008 by Refugees International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Washington, DC that provides advice on issues regarding refugees and displaced persons (Refugees International n.d.), in June 2008, Ethiopia provided refuge to approximately 80,000 "refugees" mostly from Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. A report published in 2009 by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) indicates that, in 2008, there were approximately 42,000 Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. A report published by Human Rights Watch (HRW) on 8 May 2009 indicates that, each month, hundreds of Eritreans leave their country for Ethiopia. According to Refugees International, that number means about 600 newcomers arrive every month (30 May 2008). According to an article published on 10 March 2009 by the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), the Ethiopian government and the Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated at a meeting in Addis-Abeba that the number of Eritrean newcomers can sometimes reach 900 per month. According to the UNHCR and the Ethiopian government, there are more than 30,000 Eritrean refugees in various camps in northern Ethiopia (ENA 10 Mar. 2009).

The USCRI indicates that the Ethiopian government requires nearly all refugees, including Eritreans, to live in camps set up near their respective borders (2009). To access medical care or higher education, refugees must obtain a permit that specifies the travel time granted (ibid.). The Ethiopian government also issues "location-specific Orange Cards to Eritreans it allows to leave the camps" (ibid.). The Ethiopian government now gives greater freedom of movement to some Eritreans with family members living outside the camps (ibid.; Refugees International 30 May 2008). For example, the government allows them to live with their relatives in urban areas and to study in higher learning institutions at their own expense (ENA 18 Jan. 2008).

Treatment of Eritreans residing in Ethiopia

According to an article published by Refugees International on 30 May 2008, although Ethiopia welcomes Eritrean refugees, "Eritreans living in Ethiopian society still face marginalization." In a report published on 11 May 2009, the

Swiss Refugee Council (Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés, OSAR) cites a specialist who stated that people of Eritrean origin living in Ethiopia face difficulties, such as:

[translation]

constant animosity from a large portion of the population;

discrimination when dealing with lower-ranking public employees;

the risk of persecution in cases of increased tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea, such as the onset of new hostilities (11 May 2009, 5).

In an article published in May 2009 by the *Revue des Migrations forcées*, author Katherine Southwick wrote that the confusion regarding the status of citizenship after the creation of Eritrea enabled Ethiopia to [translation] "deprive thousands of Eritreans and people born of mixed couples of many of their basic rights" (Southwick May 2009, 16). Although the Ethiopian government enacted a new citizenship law in 2003 that was intended to allow Eritreans living in Ethiopia to reclaim Ethiopian citizenship (Southwick May 2009, 16; Refugees International 30 May 2008), many people did not easily reacquire their Ethiopian citizenship (OSAR 11 May 2009, 5). According to an Ethiopian expert cited by OSAR, the laws in Ethiopia are not rigorously enforced, which means that the organizations responsible for enforcing them generally do so in a [translation] "random and highly arbitrary" manner (ibid.).

However, according to unidentified sources consulted by Refugees International, many Eritreans living in Ethiopia have reacquired their Ethiopian citizenship by virtue of a nationality proclamation enacted in 2003 (Refugees International 30 May 2008). Nevertheless, in addition to dealing with problems related to obtaining national identity cards-particularly three-year delays and interrogations-Ethiopian citizens of Eritrean origin often hide their origins because they fear being discriminated against (ibid.; Southwick May 2009, 16), especially in the workplace (Refugees International 30 May 2008).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Africa Action, Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP), African Development Bank (ADB), Afrik.com, Agence France-Presse (AFP), AllAfrica.com, Amnesty International (AI), Ethiomedia, France 24, Freedom House, The Heritage Foundation, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), International Crisis Group, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Panapress (PANA), Radio France internationale (RFI), Reporters sans frontières (RSF), Reuters, Syfia Grands Lacs, United States - Department of State, Voice of America (VOA), World Bank.

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