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CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

# REFUGEE

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## AFRICAN REFUGEES

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BY HOWARD ADELMAN

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In the past we have published several issues devoted to African refugees. The problem does not seem to go away. Africa has about one third of the world's refugee population. We must once again focus on that strife torn continent.

This issue has been produced by research fellows of the Centre for Refugee Studies, with Yohannes Gebreselassie as Guest Editor who organized the contributions. This is unusual. In the past, the Centre for Refugee Studies had the barest capacity to undertake research on the African continent. African researchers now constitute the largest single group of researchers at the Centre. In fact, the Centre has undertaken responsibility for working with the UNHCR to organize a conference on Mozambiquan refugees in June in Malawi with the cooperation of the Malawi government.

This issue begins with an overview of the refugee problem in Africa and the growing numbers of "new" refugees from the continent written by our guest editor. It is followed by analyses of two recent and less widely heard of countries - Ghana and Liberia - which recently produced large numbers of refugees. Another article, an in-depth historical review of the extensive roots of the continuing series of refugee crisis in Uganda,

argues that the roots of the refugee crisis in Uganda in particular and in Africa in general must be traced to political-social-economic structural distortions in the society. The roots of the problem reside in international colonialism; the escape can come only by a new international humanitarian involvement in the human rights abuses endemic to Africa. One could argue, based on these analyses, that in the current Somali crisis, though much larger than the problem in these other three countries, similar factors were present to create the current devastation in that war torn country.

What about solving the problem by the traditional method of settling the refugees in adjacent first countries of asylum? A paper by a Visiting Research Fellow from France on rural settlements in first countries of asylum echoes the generally pessimistic outlook on this so-called permanent solution referred to by the Guest Editor in his article.

Someday we hope to publish a "good news" issue dealing with refugee successes. For now, the news worldwide is too horrible and too little known to provide the leisure to seek out stories of achievement and success. And Africa is one of the areas of the world with some of the worst news.

## AFRICA'S NEW REFUGEES: AN OVERVIEW

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BY YOHANNES GEBRESELASSIE\*

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### INTRODUCTION

By and large, African refugees until recently have been rural to rural migrants covering short distances and settling in the closest neighbouring countries. This phenomenon is now changing, mainly due to better means of transportation and also to the availability of more information about countries of asylum. As a result, African refugees are now covering long distances and settling in places that provide them with better opportunities. Ethiopian, Somalian and Ugandan refugees resettled in Europe and North America are some examples of this phenomenon.

Another significant factor is that African refugees are not only peasants and uneducated farmers with a rural background. There are also many highly skilled and educated African refugees, whose numbers are increas-