



# From Frying Pan into Fire: The Case of Somali Ogaden Refugees

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# From frying Pan.....

An already intense situation



# .....Into Fire..... To a hellish situation



# Who is a refugee?

- The 1951 Geneva Convention defines a refugee as someone who has *'a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country....'*



# Imagine Yourself as a Refugee

- COULD THIS HAPPEN IN YOUR STREET?



# Imagine if you are one of these..



# Brief Background :

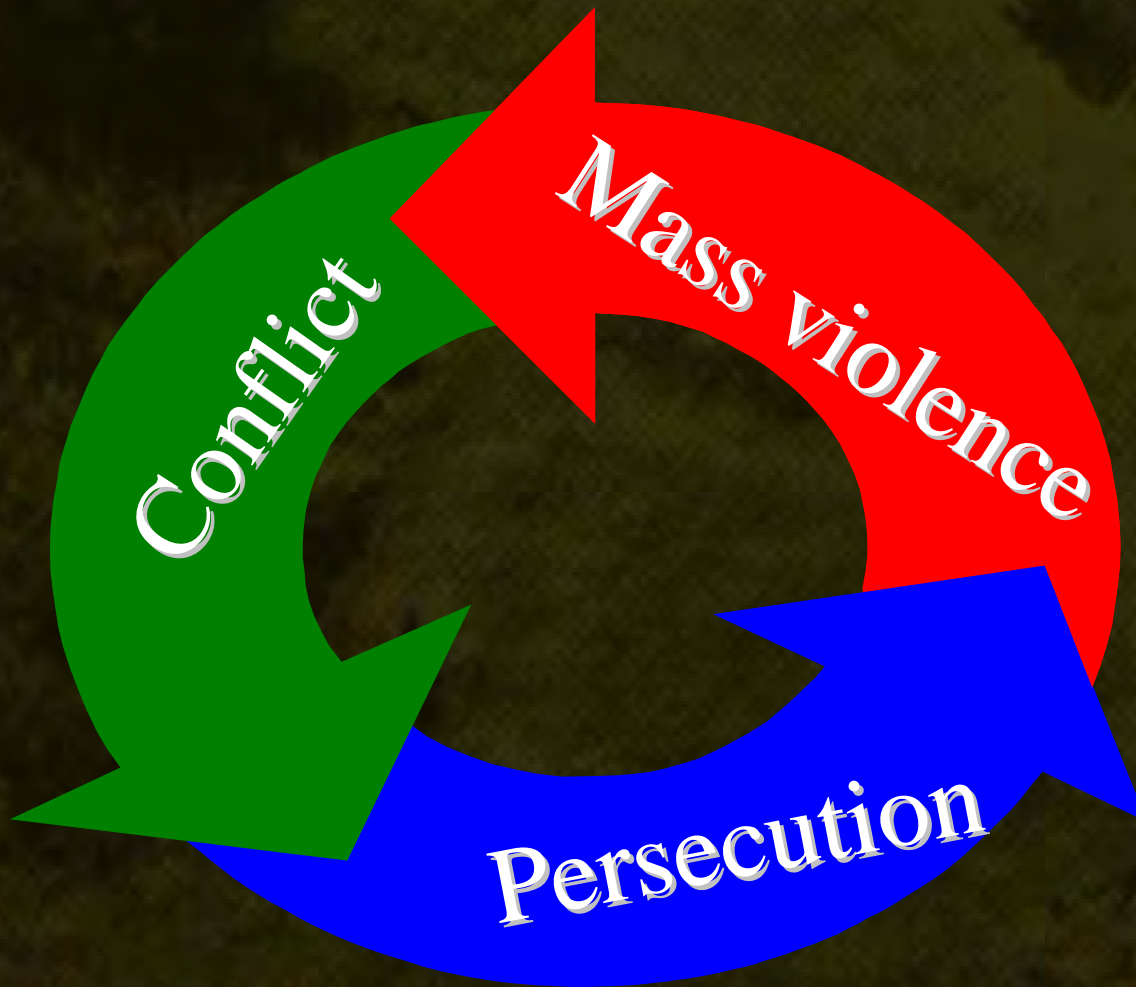
- 1914-1921- dervish resistance movement and Britain caused massive displacement of the Somali Ogaden population.
- 1929-1935- Britain dislocated thousands of civilians in retaliation against the Dervish Movement's attacks.

- 1963-64– Somalia/Homegrown movements-Ethiopian war also caused massive displacement both internal and external.
- 1976 -1978-- Somali-Ethiopian War, again mass exodus never seen before in the region.
- 1991- The involuntary repatriation from the down fall of Somalia.

- June 2007-present—Ethiopia's terror campaign against the civilian population in the Ogaden created massive displacements of Somali Ogaden refugees who are now scattered around the Horn.



# What's causing refugees to flee



# The Forgotten Refugees in Africa

- Limited or no support from UNHCR, NGOs and other humanitarian organizations.
- International indifference for Somali Ogaden refugees.



# Abandoned and left to perish in the makeshifts and slums of the Horn



# THE BIG PICTURE IN THE HORN



- A. Hargeisa
- B. Puntland
- C. Kenya
- D. Djibouti

- Ethiopia is both in Somalia and forcing Somali Ogaden refugees out from home country.
- Ethiopia dictates for both Kenya and Djibouti in the name of the war in terror.
- What do we expect the Somali-Ogaden refugees to be in the Horn. Secure or insecure?

# 'Ethiopia forcing untrained civilians to fight rebels, refugees say'

- *Mohammed Abdi, 26, was forced into an Ethiopian government militia to fight separatist rebels in the eastern Ogaden region earlier this year. "I was very worried about being killed," said Abdi, a camel herder who had never fired a weapon except for occasional target practice*



[http://media.mcclatchydc.com/smedia/2007/11/28/16/847-28web-ETHIOPIA-1-MCT.standalone.prod\\_affiliate.91.jpg](http://media.mcclatchydc.com/smedia/2007/11/28/16/847-28web-ETHIOPIA-1-MCT.standalone.prod_affiliate.91.jpg)

- Who knows how many are detained and disappeared every day in the hands of the Ethiopian army?
- What is the role of the international community in stopping these?

## A. Hargeisa Administration:

- Contrary to international law, the Somaliland administration have illegally detained several hundred innocent refugees over the years and later handed over to the Ethiopian government-the same government that these refugees fled from.

## B. Puntland

There's been instances of the assassinations of prominent Somali Ogaden Refugees



## C. Kenyan Government

- Let alone everything else, Kenyan government are selling the Somali Ogaden refugees and citizens to Ethiopian government.

Amnesty International:

There are more than 75 men, women and children of various nationalities detained by the Kenyan government and handed over to Ethiopia. PUBLIC AI Index: AFR 25/009/2007  
04 May 2007

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR250092007?open&of=ENG-ETH>

# Refugees often attacked in camps

- *Family members of a refugee from Ogaden region in Ethiopia sit on the ground in Dadaab, northeastern Kenya, November 16, 2007.*



**REUTERS/Radu Sigheti**  
**December, 30 2007**

## C. Refugees in Kenya

- Nairobi's refugees live “unseen and forgotten” by governments and the UN and are “frequently subjected to the abuse of their most basic rights.”

Human Rights Watch, *Hidden in Plain view: Refugees Living Without Protection in Nairobi and Kampala*, p. 17

## D. Djibouti

- Detention and deportation is the order of the day.





# THE ROLE OF UNHCR

## UN High Commissioner for Refugees

- Established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- Mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.

# THE ROLE OF UNHCR (cont.)

## UN High Commissioner for Refugees

- To safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees (asylum seeking, local integration, voluntary repatriation, or resettlement)



# Ogaden Refugees and the world impression

- The world sees it as  
**INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM**

**WHY?**

# This is the reason:

- UNHCR reported in Sept. 2007 that 50% of refugees who arrived in Yemen by 103 boats, totaling more than 10,000 people in the year 2007 were from the Ogaden region.
- And yet UNHCR does not have programs to consider these crises as nothing more than individual crises

# Situation out of control:

- And the whole world is waiting for UNHCR to take an action and declare the severity of the Ogaden refugees.
- It is time for UNHCR to say the situation in the Ogaden is **OUT OF CONTROL**

# The reality is:

- The Ogaden refugee IS A SOCIETAL PROBLEM
- IT IS A GOVERNMENTAL PROBLEM
- IT IS A REGIONAL PROBLEM
- AS IT STANDS NOW, IT IS GOING TO BE AN INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

<http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/46eab7fd4.html>



Yemeni fishermen prepare to bury the bodies of people who drowned during the boat crossing of the Gulf of Aden from Somalia. More than 50 people have died during the current sailing season. © UNHCR/J.Björgvinsson/SANA'A, Yemen, September 14 (UNHCR) So far in 2007, more than 10,000 people have reportedly arrived in Yemen in 103 boats. A total of 282 people died while 159 remain missing and presumed dead

## FACTS AND FIGURES:

### Gulf of Aden: The dying continues despite multi-agency efforts

*This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Ron Redmond – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at the press briefing, on 14 September 2007, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva*

*The passengers – most of them from volatile areas in Somalia and the increasingly unstable Ogaden zone in Ethiopia – said they paid between \$70-\$150 Dollars to make the crossing.*

# FACTS AND FIGURES

## In 2007

- More than 10,000 people have reportedly arrived in Yemen in 103 boats.
- 282 people died
- 159 remain missing and presumed dead.

## In 2006,

- Nearly 29,000 people were recorded arriving in Yemen in 237 boats.
- At least 328 people died and
- 310 were recorded as missing last year.

Source: © UNHCR/J.BjörgvinssonSANA'A, Yemen, September 14

## FACTS AND FIGURES

UNHCR still posts in its home page the old version of the Somali Ogaden refugee status in Somalia in 70s and 80s, when Somalia's president, Siad Barre was exploiting the refugees' human resource and forcing them to join his army.

Source: UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/3ae6ad0f44.html>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

# The Somali Ogaden Refugee problem is

As believed by Soroos, 1990 (310-311) and Nagel, 1990 (303)

- A Moral Issue
- A Security Issue
- A Developmental Issue
- Environmental and natural resource issues

# 1. The Moral Issue

- It's past time for the world to recognize the Somali Ogaden refugee problem once and for all and address it.
- UNHCR should declare the Somali Ogaden refugee problem as 'out of control' and put in place resolutions to the problem.
- The international community should recognize the crises, and force Ethiopia to stop the Darfur - like genocide.

## 2. The Security Issue

- UNHCR should take urgent actions to keep the rights of refugees to seek asylum in a safe haven
- UNHCR should consider for now that repatriation is not an option, and countries should not deport the Somali Ogaden refugees by force.

## 2. The Security Issue (cont.)

- Somali Ogaden refugees seeking resettlement in a third country should be given priority for security reasons
- The Human Rights Organizations should be aware of the plight of the Somali-Ogaden refugees in the Horn of Africa and advocate on their behalf
- The international community should force the Ethiopian government to stop the causes of the flee.

### 3. Developmental Issue

- The international community should pressure Ethiopia to build the region and use its human resources as a key for development.
- Somali-Ogaden refugees should be given a chance to develop their lives in their country of asylum and be prepared for repatriation when the situation changes.

## 4. Environmental Issue

- Somali Ogaden Refugees should be taught to learn the issue of the environmental degradation and they should be given a chance to get other mechanism of survival.

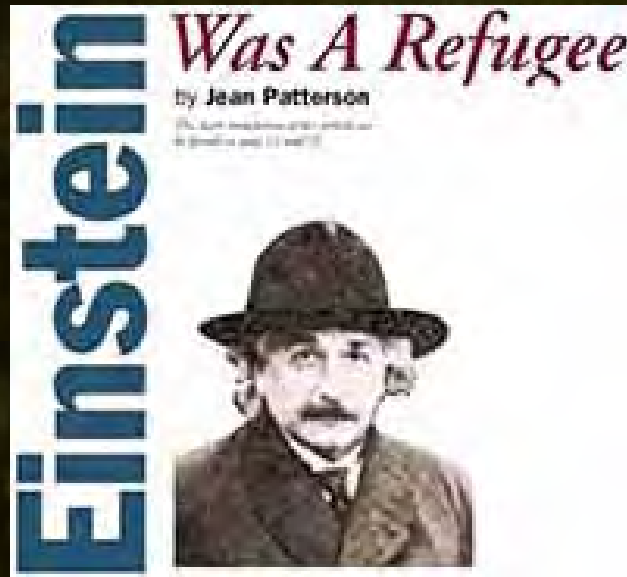
## 4. Environmental Issue (cont.)

- The international community should stop Ethiopia from burning villages and the forests and poisoning the water wells.

# Conclusion

- When refugees are given an opportunity to rebuild their lives, knowing the horrors they went through, they become a productive members of the society.

# 'Einstein was a refugee'



[http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/51\\_folder/51\\_articles/51\\_einstein.html](http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/51_folder/51_articles/51_einstein.html)

# Refugees need your support

- Academics
- Students
- Business people
- Common Citizen

It's a noble cause to support.

# ‘political solutions must be found’

- “In countries where people have to flee their homes because of persecution and violence, political solutions must be found, peace and tolerance restored, so that refugees can return home. In my experience, going home is the deepest wish of most refugees.”

~ [Angelina Jolie](#) goodwill Ambassador for the UN Refugee Agency

<http://www.betterworld.net/quotes/refugee-quotes.htm>

‘It is a virtuous cycle that deserves nurture and support.’

- The challenge of ending displacement is inseparable from the challenge of establishing and maintaining peace. When wars end, farmers return to their fields; children return to school; violence against women declines; trade and economic activity resume; medical and other services become more accessible, and the international focus changes from relief to development and self-sufficiency. All this makes new wars less likely. It is a virtuous cycle that deserves nurture and support.

-- **Kenneth H. Bacon** -- president of Refugees International

<http://www.betterworld.net/quotes/refugee-quotes.htm>

**END**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
TIME**