

# Evidence-Based Review: International Crisis Group’s Eritrean “Exodus” Report

## Introduction

On August 8, 2014, the International Crisis Group (ICG) published a report on Eritrea entitled *Eritrea: Ending the Exodus?* The report expresses grave concern that unsustainable mass emigration of an exceptional nature is taking place in Eritrea as a direct result of the Eritrean government’s policies, while the burden of transnational migration primarily falls upon the downstream nations in the region and Europe. The report proceeds to make specific policy recommendations for “the broader international community, led by the EU and Italy (currently EU president), and coordinated on the ground by the EU Special Representative.”

The intent of this report by the Red Sea Institute (RSI) is to:

- Conduct a critical analysis of the ICG report and its containing policy recommendations with the intent of guiding sound policy and actions by governments, non-state actors, international bodies and the broader international community to most effectively address Eritrean translational migration; and

- Make suggestions to the ICG for future reporting on Eritrea.

## Overview

Since September 2010, nine months after Eritrea was sanctioned by the UN, the ICG has published three reports on Eritrea, with each concluding that the Eritrean government’s policies have failed and painting a rather gloomy picture of the nation’s future (see section: ICG’s Shortcomings). The current report in question echoes in like fashion.

Notably, the report comes in the form of a “briefing update” suggesting a recent status change on this issue. In the overview section the ICG states that there is now “official recognition” of the problem in Eritrea. However, it provides no reference regarding where this claim arises. Though it is commendable that the overview proceeds to make some germane observations regarding the seriousness of the Eritrean migration issue, it also contains a set of unreferenced, erroneous or contradictory claims (not later covered or expounded upon by the report). Thus, RSI has carefully reviewed each of these claims in Table 1.

**Table 1. Review of Claims in ICG’s Overview**

ICG Claim	Review
<b>Claim 1:</b> “The large emigration of youths is the clearest sign of extreme domestic discontent with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki’s government. Social malaise is pervasive.”	According to the ICG, there has yet to be a single report of a protest in Eritrea. As they put it “although there is no open protest, the government cannot take this for granted over the longterm.” <sup>1</sup> If there are no signs of unrest, how can the claim of “extreme domestic discontent” be made? Similarly, no evidence of “social malaise” is given in the report. Undoubtedly, Eritrea faces many serious social challenges but RSI is wary not to assign “social malaise” designation <i>a priori</i> . Lastly, the ICG claims that discontent or social malaise is due to “President Isaias Afwerki’s government” however RSI found no citing of evidence to support this claim.
<b>Claim 2:</b> “Once outside, the ties that bind émigrés to their birthplace are strong and lead them to give financial support to the very system they escaped, through the 2 per cent tax many pay the state as well as remittances sent home to family members.”	RSI finds this claim to be internally contradicting. On the one hand, the ICG’s claims that Eritrean citizens emigrate due to discontent with the government, while on the other hand claiming these migrants then give financial support to that same government through a <i>voluntary</i> tax. Why would a people discontent with a government voluntarily give money to that government? The voluntary nature of this tax is covered in detail by the Coalition of Eritrean Canadian Communities and Organizations. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Claim 3:</b> “The government ostensibly accepts that educated, urbanised youths resistant to the individual sacrifices the state demands are less troublesome and more useful outside the country – particularly when they can continue to be taxed and provide a crucial social safety net for family members who stay home. Meanwhile, those who remain tend to be the more pliant rural peasant and pastoralist population.”	RSI finds this claim to be false due to a logical fallacy, <i>reductio ad absurdum</i> : if it is true that the Eritrean government believes that educated youth are “more useful outside the country,” then the government, in order to maximize their presumed utility, would maximize the flight from Eritrea. Such a result of this rationale is absurd. Additionally, the greater utility of “educated, urbanised youths resistant to the individual sacrifices” is not expounded

<sup>1</sup> According to the ICG: “although there is no open protest, the government cannot take this for granted over the longterm.” *Eritrea: Siege State*. International Crisis Group, Africa Report N°163, September 21, 2010, pg. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Press Release: Canadians of Eritrean Origin Face Discrimination*. Coalition of Eritrean Canadian Communities and Organizations, June 25, 2014. Accessed: August 14, 2014.

	upon, not referenced and RSI has been unable to find support for this claim from any external sources.
<u>Claim 4:</u> "Ending the exodus requires greater engagement with Eritrea – potentially ending a decade of isolation..."	According to Eritrea's Permanent Mission to the African Union (AU), Eritrea currently has 36 diplomatic missions abroad, while Uganda has 31, Ethiopia 39, Tanzania 32, Kenya 50, Sudan 64, and Djibouti 50. <sup>3</sup> Eritrea has only been independent for 23 years yet its scale of diplomatic engagement appears comparable to that of the older nations in the region. Additionally, there have been multiple calls for rapprochement, diplomatic restarts, and reengagement of Eritrea since December. <sup>4</sup>
<u>Claim 5:</u> Eritrea is experiencing "a growing internal crisis."	It is not clear what the internal crisis refers to. If the ICG is referring to internal security, then it would contradict itself again as the report later explains that "there have been few internal security threats." Assuming these concerns are due to "extreme domestic discontent," the ICG contradicts itself by pointing out the lack of protest (see claim 1 above).

## Historical Context

Next, the report moves on to a section that gives some historical context behind Eritrean migration. The section is surprisingly brief, limiting critical context. The ICG explains that Eritrean migration is a problem that goes back to the 1950's, which consequently led to a large global diaspora.

Next, the report explains that after the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) led the nation to liberation in 1991, "hopes were high that a new era of freedom and development had begun, and a growing number started to return home. Yet despite some initial promise, independence did not bring an opening of political space; authoritarian attitudes formed during the guerrilla period persisted." The ICG suggests that domestic politics in Eritrea limited repatriation.

Further examination of the footnote for the claim of "a growing number," the report notes that according to "Crisis Group analyst's interviews and observations in another capacity," there was conversely a limited level of repatriation: "There were waves of return from 1993 to 1998, though few resettled permanently...repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the U.S. proceeded slowly. An estimated 180,000 (of some 342,000) returned from 1991 to 1996" (the latter numbers refer to *global* repatriation). Thus, the footnotes directly contradict the text.

It is critical to note that the ICG's numbers and presumed reasons for low repatriation (i.e. "authoritarian attitudes") contradict the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). First, UNHCR, in an official report on the protracted Eritrean refugee situation, notes that there were actually 500,000 Eritrean refugees in 1991 in Sudan alone, that 342,000 were still there in 1998, and that only 36,600 refugees repatriated between 1993 and 1999.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, few Eritreans returned home even in times of peace.

Second, the reason for low repatriation was explained in 1996 by UNHCR-Sudan chief, who conducted a study and determined "that 80-90 percent of those in camps want to repatriate" but "we (UNHCR) created a monster in Sudan" with "vested interests in keeping the Eritrean refugees. If they repatriate, their refugee empire will collapse."<sup>6</sup> As opposed to the ICG's claim of "authoritarian attitudes," UNHCR's primary stated reason for lack of repatriation is UNHCR's own failure.

The ICG proceeds to explain that "though scepticism slowly grew" among Eritreans abroad about the "EPLF's promises" of "a multi-party system and governance reforms," Eritreans, in response to renewed war with Ethiopia from 1998 to 2000, "united behind the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)—as the EPLF was renamed in 1994—

against what they perceived as renewed Ethiopian imperialism." According to the ICG, Eritrea, following the 2000 Algiers Agreement with Ethiopia, transitioned into a "consequent state of 'no-war, no-peace'" that "continues to be used to justify mobilization and authoritarianism," which in turn has made Eritrea "one of the world's principal sources of refugees."

According to the ICG, the aforementioned historical events are ostensibly the reasons why Eritrea is facing an "exodus" today. However, the ICG does not mention the 342,000 refugees that were still present in Sudan when war broke out in 1998.

There is no mention of the fact that the war additionally "displaced hundreds of thousands of people" with 95,000 leaving in May 2000 alone.<sup>7</sup> Without this much needed context, one is left to conclude that the more than 450,000 unaccounted for migrants must have newly emigrated from Eritrea *after* the 1998-2000 war, during the 'no-war-no-peace' period in which Eritrea supposedly underwent "mobilization and authoritarianism."

The ICG finally concludes the section by explaining that "according to UN estimates, around 300,000 have fled since 2000, and roughly 4,000 still flee each month." Referring to a 2013 publication by Assefa Bariagaber, the rationale for these dramatic numbers is given in the footnote: "In 2008, Eritrean refugees were estimated at 186,400, 'yet in light of continuous human rights violations in the country this number grew by more than 121,000 persons worldwide over the past five years.'"

If it is in fact true that 300,000 have left in the last 14 years, then that means an average of 21,000 Eritreans must emigrate from Eritrea every year. If 4,000 currently leave per month, then an extrapolated total of 48,000 Eritreans must leave each year. RSI compared these values to UNHCR's own numbers and found serious miscalculations in the ICG's cited numbers.

## ICG Versus UNHCR Data

In order to examine the accuracy of the ICG's emigration numbers, RSI referred directly to UNHCR data instead of secondary UN sources. To reiterate, the ICG endorses the claim that:

- An average of **21,000** Eritreans emigrated from Eritrea every year since 2000; and
- A projected total of **48,000** will emigrate this year.

<sup>3</sup> Kenya Foreign Ministry, <http://213.198.57.244/Kenya-Missions-abroad.69.0.html>; Uganda Foreign Ministry, <http://www.mofa.go.ug/#/>; Eritrea AU Mission's Official Twitter account, <https://twitter.com/EritreaAU/status/439735358666706944>; Sudan Foreign Ministry, <http://www.mfa.gov.sd/index.php/2008-01-24-11-46-41.html>; Tanzania Foreign Ministry, <http://www.foreign.go.tz/index.php/missions/>; Ethiopia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.et>

<sup>4</sup> "Time to Bring Eritrea in from the Cold," African Arguments, Hank Cohen, December 16, 2013.; "Time to Bring Eritrea in From the Cold," Council on Foreign Relations, John Campbell, December 18, 2013.; "Calls for international rapprochement," Economic Intelligence Unit, January 22nd 2014.

<sup>5</sup> *No turning back: A review of UNHCR's response to the protracted refugee situation in eastern Sudan*. UNHCR, November 2011, pg. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Interview of UNHCR-Sudan chief Arnulv Torbjornsen. *ERITREA-POPULATION: Refugees Caught In Political Deadlock*. Jennie Street, Inter Press Service, July 18, 1996.

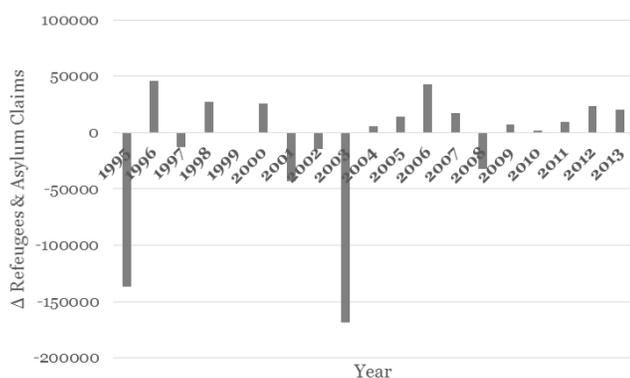
<sup>7</sup> *No turning back*. UNHCR. November 2011, pg. 6.; *UNHCR 2001 Global Appeal*. Sudan, In Short, UNHCR, 31 December 2000.

By tracking UNHCR statistics in their yearly Global Reports issued from 1994 to 2013 for both Sudan and Ethiopia—the two nations where virtually all Eritreans immigrate to first—one can calculate and project Eritreans emigration numbers. It should be noted that UNHCR does not

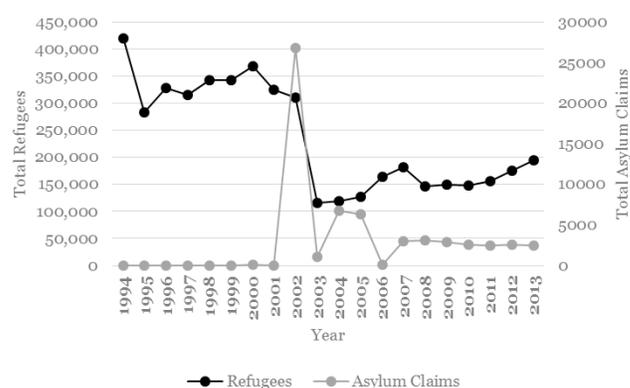
directly track emigration numbers from Eritrea. However, it is possible to estimate the level of Eritrean emigration using raw UNHCR data. All relevant UNHCR data and estimates are tabulated in Table 2 using methodologies employed by UNHCR.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 2. Total Eritrean Refugees, 1994 - 2013**

Year	SUDAN		ETHIOPIA		TOTALS		
	Refugees	Asylum	Refugees	Asylum	Refugees	Asylum	Change (Δ)
1994	419,295	0	N/A	N/A	419,295	0	N/A
1995	282,795	0	N/A	N/A	282,795	0	-136,500
1996	328,307	0	N/A	N/A	328,307	0	45,512
1997	315,030	0	N/A	N/A	315,030	0	-13,277
1998	342,295	4	N/A	N/A	342,295	4	27,265
1999	342,129	0	N/A	N/A	342,129	0	-162
2000	367,735	121	N/A	N/A	367,735	121	25,606
2001	324,546	0	N/A	N/A	324,546	0	-43,068
2002	305,294	26,851	5,130	0	310,424	26,851	-14,122
2003	108,251	1,063	6,800	0	115,051	1,063	-168,522
2004	110,927	6,706	8,700	0	119,627	6,706	5,639
2005	116,746	6,350	10,700	0	127,446	6,350	14,525
2006	150,700	100	13,100	0	163,800	100	42,704
2007	160,500	3,000	20,800	0	181,300	3,000	17,600
2008	124,800	2,400	21,000	700	145,800	3,100	-32,500
2009	113,500	2,400	36,200	470	149,700	2,870	7,000
2010	103,800	2,400	44,800	140	148,600	2,540	1,770
2011	100,500	2,500	54,900	0	155,400	2,500	9,340
2012	112,300	2,600	63,800	0	176,100	2,600	23,200
2013	109,600	2,500	84,400	0	194,000	2,500	20,500



**Figure 1.** Refugee Camp Arrival and Flight, 1995-2013.



**Figure 2.** Total Refugees and Asylum Claims, 1994-2013.

<sup>8</sup> The line of reasoning for creating Table 2 are as follows: (1) UNHCR **does not** directly track emigration numbers from Eritrea or new arrivals to UNHCR camps but rather makes estimates by tracking the yearly total number of Eritrean asylum seekers; (2) the yearly total number of Eritrean asylum seekers is the sum of the yearly total of Eritrean asylum claims processed by UNHCR and the number of “asylum seekers,” which is a legal term that UNHCR selectively assigns to different migrant groups; (3) in 2004, UNHCR officially designated all Eritrean migrants, en masse, as “asylum seekers” such

that all future increases in Eritrean refugees were automatically counted as increases in “asylum seekers,” even if the migrants did not seek asylum; (4) as of 2004, the yearly total number of asylum seekers would be calculated by adding the increase in year-over-year total number of refugees and the yearly total number of asylum claims (i.e. change in refugees + new asylum claims = asylum seekers); (5) therefore, UNHCR estimates total yearly Eritrean emigration by adding the yearly total number of asylum seekers for both Sudan and Ethiopia (the two routes out of Eritrea);

Based on the tabulated data, it is clear that there has been a net *reduction* in the total population of Eritrean refugees from 367,735 to 194,000 since 2000, a total decrease of 173,735. This means that an average of 12,410 Eritrean refugees have left the camps each year. Regarding “asylum seekers,” there is also a net *reduction* by 90,328 (total) and 6,452 (yearly average) since 2000.

In essence, this means that there is a much greater efflux than influx of both asylum seekers and refugees. How, then, is it possible that since 2000 there has been an average of 21,000 Eritreans emigrating from Eritrea into UNHCR camps, let alone a projected 48,000 per year? The ICG’s numbers are markedly off.

Although it is clear that there is an influx of Eritrean asylum seekers into Ethiopia over the last decade, the Eritrean refugee and asylum seeker population, on the whole, is diminishing. Given that refugees are leaving camps at a greater rate than asylum seekers (12,410 vs. 6,452), it follows that *a significant number of Eritreans leaving UNHCR camps today are part of the old refugee population in Sudan that still has yet to be resettled or repatriated.* It may even be the case that the entire old refugee camp population may have left the camp while simultaneously being replaced by a camp population of newer refugees. This would constitute a slowly decreasing steady state despite the changing flux of migrants. This may also be better understood when the yearly change in asylum seekers from the rightmost column of Table 2 is visualized on a graph as shown in Figure 1.

Note the significant drop in asylum seekers in 2003. This is the direct result of UNHCR policies the year prior. Since the war ended in 2000, UNHCR invoked the “cessation clause” in 2002 (under Article 1. C. (5) of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees), which terminated Eritrean refugee status that same year unless individual refugees could demonstrate a continuing need for international protection.

Therefore, Eritrean “refugees” were suddenly deemed “migrants.”<sup>9</sup> Hence, the enormous and sudden disappearance of 168,522 refugees. Eritrean migrants, for the first time in their long history of migration, had to apply for asylum on a case-by-case basis in order to obtain refugee status. *All who did not receive refugee status would thus be unaccounted for and would either later resurface as official “asylum seekers” or move onward to other nations as economic migrants. Unsurprisingly, asylum claims went from zero in 2001 to 26,851 in 2002.* These migrants were essentially moved from one column of the ledger to another.

The increase in asylum claims caused by the invocation of the cessation clause led UNHCR to the conclusion that conditions must be worsening in Eritrea. As a result, UNHCR took on a new 2004 policy position on Eritrea that re-designated all Eritrean asylum-seekers with ‘prima facie’ status (i.e. automatic recognition of Eritreans en masse) on the grounds that there were human rights abuses in Eritrea.<sup>10</sup> All the former refugees who lost legal status were still in Sudan and would later be reclassified as “asylum seekers.” This is a significant source of asylum-seekers that often goes ignored.

As UNHCR-Sudan indicated as late as 2008, “it is urgent to define the legal status of nearly 70,000 Eritreans who lost their refugee status with the application of the cessation clause in 2002-2004. These people, who remain of concern to UNHCR, lack legal documents, limiting their access to basic services and rights...UNHCR’s strategy for the protracted refugee situation in Sudan includes searching for the most suitable durable solutions for 150,000 long-staying Eritrean refugees”<sup>11</sup> Note that there were still 70,000 without legal status in 2008 and likely many more in 2002.

Figure 2 illustrates the results of these policy changes by UNHCR. Note the decrease in refugees and simultaneous increase in asylum claims following 2002. The decrease in refugees significantly outpaces the increase in asylum claims by orders of a magnitude.

### Eritrean Migration: An Exceptional Case?

The ICG presents emigration from Eritrea as an exceptional case. The report’s conclusion states, “though clearly part of a larger global socio-economic phenomena, the Eritrean youth exodus is particularly acute.” The use of the hyperbolic terms like “exodus” highlight this point. Though Eritrean emigration and “brain drain” is undoubtedly a serious challenge for Eritrea, as it is for many developing nations, it must be noted that Eritrea, unlike other nations, faces unique and highly detrimental policies by international bodies that have served to worsen the degree of the problem.

The ICG makes passing mention of the ease in which Eritreans receive asylum. The ICG’s downplaying of this fact, possibly inadvertent, is manifested in by its passive mentioning and burial within the footnotes: “anecdotally at least, Eritrean migrants appear to have an advantage over other Africans in receiving political asylum on the grounds of resisting military conscription and political or religious persecution.” The reality is that increased asylum recognition rates of Eritreans over other African groups is not anecdotal but rather a recognized fact.

As aforementioned, UNHCR’s adopted a 2004 policy position on Eritrea that designated all Eritrean asylum-seekers with prima facie status (i.e. automatic recognition of Eritreans en masse).<sup>12</sup> Eritreans and Sudanese are the only African groups that are accepted by UNHCR without questions asked. Even Somalia, which remains locked in a civil war between Al-Shabaab and the government does not have such a designation for its migrants. Thus, Eritreans do in fact have an asylum processing advantage over other African groups.

Furthermore, the ICG fails to recognize the consequence of Eritreans’ prima facie status: many African groups, particularly Ethiopians, claim Eritrean identity and commit asylum fraud in order to resettle in third nations. Multiple accounts of this have been reported in Israel, England, Sweden, the United States and other nations.<sup>13</sup> In Israel, a reporter for Ynet went undercover in a predominantly Eritrean and Sudanese neighborhood to further shed light on the pervasiveness of Eritrean asylum fraud:

My cover story has not been finalized yet, but luckily I run into Jeremiah, who’s been in Israel for three years now. “What do I tell those who ask how I got into Israel?” I ask him. “Lie,” he says. “Don’t tell the whole story. The Israelis, and mostly the non-profit groups working with the infiltrators here, like to be lied to.”...“Say you were a soldier, and that if you return to Eritrea you’ll get a death sentence. Keep in mind that you must be consistent with your story. *The bottom line is that everyone uses the story I’m telling you here, and this way they fool everybody,*” he says. “Almost none of them arrived on foot from Egypt to Israel. None of us crossed any deserts...it’s all nonsense.”<sup>14</sup>

A Ha’aretz article explains that false claims of Eritrean citizenship in Israel were so common by Ethiopian “infiltrators” that the Interior Ministry began to seek “documents issued by the Ethiopian consulate...to attest to the fact that asylum seekers in Israel who claim to be Eritreans [were] entitled to Ethiopian citizenship and [were] therefore not eligible for asylum...the Ethiopian consulate’s documents

<sup>9</sup> *No turning back.* UNHCR. November 2011, pg. 6

<sup>10</sup> “Position on Return of Rejected Asylum Seekers to Eritrea.” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. January 2004.

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009 – Sudan, UNHCR, December 1, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> “Position on Return of Rejected Asylum Seekers to Eritrea.” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. January 2004.

<sup>13</sup> “Israel detains Eritrean refugee for 18 months because he couldn’t prove his identity.” Weiler-Polak, Dana. Ha’aretz. May 24, 2011.; “Eritreans turned down for asylum after Ethiopia claims refugees as their own” Neshet, Talila. Ha’aretz. October 24, 2011.; “Former Miss Ethiopia unlawfully held by British immigration.” Daily Telegraph. June 16, 2009.; “Swedish Resident Charged with Terrorism in US Court.” Radio Sweden. March 10, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> “The dark side of Tel Aviv.” Ynetnews. Adino Ababa, Danny. June 7, 2012.

are routinely issued *in almost every case* in which the documentation is sought by the Israeli Interior Ministry.<sup>15</sup>

UNHCR has not yet officially recognized or investigated this issue for reasons that are not understood and the ICG fails to consider the serious implications resulting from aggregate false asylum claims by African migrants purporting to be Eritreans. Naturally, this may substantially inflate the Eritrean asylum seekers numbers, leading groups like the ICG to falsely come to the conclusion that Eritrean migration is relatively greater than that of other African groups.

### Reasons For Emigration

The report moves on to make the argument that Eritrean national service is the primary cause of Eritrean emigration and dedicates an entire section on the national service program.

The ICG explains that “the government used the border stalemate to maintain mass conscription and – much less convincingly – justify postponement of the new constitution’s implementation, including introduction of a multi-party system. In 2001, prominent tegadelay (liberation fighters), who became known as the “Group of 15” (G15), criticised the government’s handling of the war and its aftermath, prompting a wholesale and enduring crackdown against dissent.” No reference or further elaboration for any of these claims is provided.

The ICG essentially argues that the Eritrean government is using the ongoing border crisis with Ethiopia as an excuse for repression. In a 2009 interview with the Financial Times, President Isaias Afewerki explained the reasons for continued national service in the context of the ongoing border crisis:

FT: Well, as you say, you’ve still got the border issue with Ethiopia. There’s still a threat there. That’s why national service is important.

IA: Not at all. It’s a matter of contingency for us. We decided early on not to be held hostage to this reality. Yes, we have a contingency. We would like to be vigilant all along, we’d like to be prepared all along but we shouldn’t be held hostage, meaning our human capacity will have to be engaged on some other productive activity. That’s where the army and national service are being engaged in productive activities...We could have done better without this psyche of having a conflict that is not resolved, being prepared for any eventuality. That limits your resources but, again, you don’t have any other choice. The best choice for you is to not be held fully hostage to this circumstance and find other productive activities that will ultimately benefit the whole population.<sup>16</sup>

In essence, the president’s argument seems to be that although the nation is obligated to heavily militarize itself against the nation’s wishes, it refuses to be held hostage to the crisis—that would otherwise cripple Eritrea’s economy—by engaging the mobilized population in productive work.

It may perhaps be argued by the ICG and opponents of national service that there are better methods to ensure both security and economic development (e.g. rapid mobilization schemes) but there currently exists no independent, evidence-based literature on this topic, unfortunately.

However, there seems to be a growing recognition within academia of the necessity of mobilization of African armies to fight poverty.

Harvard Professor Calestous Juma argues that “the biggest threat to Africa is not invasion by neighbours; it is poverty.” Explicitly recognizing the positive work in Eritrea and other African states, Juma explains that “Senegal has a very long established tradition of the military helping to build infrastructure, while large sections of the armies in Eritrea and Ghana are also engaged in development activities.”<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the report, the ICG maintains the argument that national service is a violation of the Eritrean people’s human rights and the primary driver of emigration, stating in the report’s conclusion that “though clearly part of a larger global socio-economic phenomena, the Eritrean youth exodus is particularly acute, exacerbated by the government’s proclivity for [large scale] social engineering like the Wefri Warsai Yika’alo campaign [for national service] and powerful vested interests’ unwillingness to demobilise a sizeable standing army.”

For reasons that are unclear, the report does not elaborate on the “larger global socio-economic phenomena” and focuses almost exclusively on the human rights abuses from national service that is presumably driving emigration.

Though the ICG argues that national service is a human rights abuse, it does not equally acknowledge or consider the role of other concurrent human rights issues in Eritrea like poverty. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) holds “that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner on the same footing and with the same emphasis.”<sup>18</sup>

Echoing Professor Juma on the seriousness of poverty, however, OHCHR also notes that “no social phenomenon is as comprehensive in its assault on human rights as poverty.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, given that Eritrea absorbed a decimated economy in 1991, returned to war in 1998, and bears the ninth lowest per-capita GDP in the world, the poverty in Eritrea places it in a virtual state of humanitarian crisis.<sup>20</sup>

Despite Eritrea’s current state of poverty, it should also be noted that Eritrea’s ability to remedy this issue through economic growth—whether through national service or any means—has often been challenged as a result historic and ongoing notions forwarded by successive Ethiopian regimes for international public consumption about Eritrea’s economic “non-viability.”<sup>21</sup> Given that Eritrea was the second most industrialized nation in Africa after South Africa during colonization, Eritrea’s economic potential may still be quite significant. In fact, it does appear that national service is showing signs of success, however, as Eritrea’s GDP has been growing an average of 7-8% per year since 2011, among the world’s fastest.<sup>22</sup>

Although it may certainly be argued that the Eritrean government’s policies in response to the ongoing dual issues of poverty and Ethiopian occupation are insufficient or erroneous, this argument by the ICG or other entities would have to first adequately acknowledge the full seriousness of these unresolved crises. Furthermore, arguments for or against these policies must avoid total deferral to the analysis of experts and should focus also on evidence-based approaches for greater critical analysis. This is not to suggest that expert opinions are not needed and desired but rather to indicate that deferring exclusively and entirely to the opinions of experts, as opposed to the actual evidence that they cite, is not indicative of sound evidence-based analysis.

The question thus returns: “What are the root causes of Eritrean emigration?” Unlike the ICG report, RSI feels it is important to consider and analyze the argument about causes of emigration that directly arise

<sup>15</sup> “Eritreans turned down for asylum after Ethiopia claims refugees as their own.” Talila Neshar. Ha’aretz. October 24, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> “Interview with Eritrea’s Isaias Afewerki.” Barney Jopson, Financial Times, September 18, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> “Thinking outside the box: an innovative solution for Africa’s infrastructure woes.” How We Made It In Africa, Dinfin Mulupi, May 13, 2013. Website accessed on August 14, 2014: [www.howwemadeitinafrica.com/thinking-outside-the-box-an-innovative-solution-for-africas-infrastructure-woes/26433/](http://www.howwemadeitinafrica.com/thinking-outside-the-box-an-innovative-solution-for-africas-infrastructure-woes/26433/)

<sup>18</sup> Endorsed by OHCHR after it was adopted by the UNGA in 2006. General Assembly. Resolution 60/251, April 3, 2006, preamble, paragraph 3.

<sup>19</sup> Report on the importance of social protection measures in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. OHCHR.

A/65/259. Accessed on OHCHR website on August 14, 2014: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/poverty/>

<sup>20</sup> National Accounts Main Aggregates Database, December 2013, United Nations Statistics Division. Accessed on May 20, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> “The Economic Viability of an Independent Eritrea.” Araia Tseggai, Doctors Dissertation, Department of Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1981.

<sup>22</sup> “Insider selling in the U.S., Eritrea’s growth, and the year in commodities,” David Milstead, The Globe and Mail, Dec. 27, 2010.

from Eritrean officials as opposed to secondary sources that interpret the Eritrean position. As such, the Eritrean presidential advisor Yemane Gebreab argues that “Eritrea is a victim of human trafficking” and that “for a number of years now, some people have felt that one way that they could weaken Eritrea would be by encouraging Eritrean youths to leave the country in larger numbers.”<sup>23</sup>

He later makes the argument that “for Eritrea, the defining reason for [migration and trafficking] is that Eritreans are given preferential treatment and are treated not as economic migrants, but as political asylum seekers. This is a deliberate policy that has been well documented.”<sup>24</sup> Are his claims of politicized migration valid? Is there a systematic effort to drive youth out of Eritrea?

In a 2012 speech on human trafficking Clinton Global Initiative, U.S. President Barack Obama said, “I recently renewed sanctions on some of the worst abusers, including North Korea and Eritrea. *We’re partnering with groups that help women and children escape from the grip of their abusers. We’re helping other countries step up their own efforts.*”<sup>25</sup>

In a somewhat surprising admission, the U.S. president endorsed active state involvement in Eritrean human smuggling activities, which is a violation of the *Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air* adopted by U.N. General Assembly with resolution 55/25 and entered into force on January 28, 2004. President Obama, however, did not make clear the precise nature and logistics of Eritrean smuggling operations.

In a May 5, 2009 leaked diplomatic cable entitled “Promoting Educational Opportunity for Anti-Regime Eritrean Youth,” the then US Ambassador to Eritrea, Ronald K. McMullen further clarifies the nature of politicized migration of Eritrean youth, explaining that “Post plans to restart visa services (completely suspended in 2007) for student visa applicants; *we intend to give opportunities to study in the United States to those who oppose the regime.*”<sup>26</sup>

He also admits to breaking Eritrean visa and consular laws, which violates UNGA resolution 55/25 on human smuggling. State involvement by the U.S. is concerning for the fact that UNHCR policies on Eritrean migrants, including the 2004 *prima facie* designation, are based on the U.S.’s annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports and human rights reports.

Quoting an Eritrean official, the ICG downplays U.S. involvement in Eritrean smuggling by indicating that there is only a “germ of truth” to the claim that “human trafficking is a crime against Eritrea ‘conceived and orchestrated by the United States with other collaborating states, organisations and agencies.’” The ICG limits this germ of truth to the “relatively welcoming asylum policies of the U.S.” instead of acknowledging violations of international law.

Beyond the U.S., there is also evidence of smuggling by the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE), which was present in Eritrea from 2000 to 2008. U.S. Chargé d’Affaires in Eritrea, Jennifer McIntyre, revealed that “what has been an on-going problem is human smuggling” and that “smuggling cases have predominantly

involved local staff crossing the border in UNMEE vehicles. In one case, upon arrival in Ethiopia the local staff called UNMEE headquarters in Asmara to inform UNMEE staff where in Ethiopia they had abandoned the vehicle.”<sup>27</sup>

Investigation by RSI on the etiologies of Eritrean emigration (and human trafficking) suggests that the issue is multifactorial in nature cannot be reduced down to merely national service, as the ICG contends, or state-sponsored politicized migration, as the Eritrean government contends. All of the following etiologies must also receive equal consideration:

- (a) **Natural economic migratory patterns.** According to the Harris-Todaro theory of migration, migrants make a rational decision to increase their welfare or utility by moving to another place where they can expect to earn a higher income.<sup>28</sup> This is evident all throughout Africa and is likely a factor in Eritrea, which has the ninth lowest per-capita GDP in the world. Since 2004, UNHCR has refused to consider the possibility of Eritrean “economic migration.”
- (b) **Ethiopian occupation of Eritrea.** Ethiopia is currently occupying Eritrea and has attacked Eritrea multiple times since official demarcation in 2008, in violation of international law (see section: ICG’s Focus on Ethiopia). This remains the Eritrean government’s primary stated reason for continued mass mobilization and militarization of the nation.
- (c) **Internally displaced people (IDPs).** Returning refugees had to compete for resettlement with the 210,000 IDPs that were already present in 2000. This cannot be ignored, considering that there were still 45,000 IDPs in 2005, who would not be fully resettled until mid-2008.<sup>29</sup> Many of them were among the 80,000 Eritrean-Ethiopians “ethnically cleansed” from Ethiopia by the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who told the press that his government could “expel anyone even if we don’t like the color of their eyes.”<sup>30</sup>
- (d) **Protracted refugee situation.** Eritrea has the second longest refugee situation in the world.<sup>31</sup> The presence of a decades-long UNHCR administered refugee program in East Sudan has created an economy and culture that inhibits its termination. In fact, various refugee camps economies were so successful that they became self-reliant and transformed themselves into villages.<sup>32</sup> In addition, various camps were seen as assets to the Sudanese Government, as large local mechanized farms became dependent on the cheap labor of Eritrean refugees.<sup>33</sup>
- (e) **Reduced UNHCR donor funding.** With the war over, donors expected Eritreans to return home and were reluctant to pledge more funds for East Sudan.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>23</sup> “Eritrea Calls for Lifting of Sanctions.” Clotney, Peter. Voice of America News.. October 17, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> “Lampedusa Boat Tragedy a Crime Against Eritrea, Says Official,” Peter Clotney, Voice of America, October 15, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> “Remarks by the President to the Clinton Global Initiative,” Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, September 25, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Diplomatic cable leaked to Wikileaks website. Promoting Educational Opportunity For Anti-regime Eritrean Youth. Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen, U.S. Embassy Asmara, Eritrea. Accessed on August 14, 2014: <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=09ASMARA146>

<sup>27</sup> Diplomatic cable leaked to Wikileaks website. *UNMEE: Confronting Sexual Abuse And Exploitation*. Jennifer McIntyre. Embassy Asmara. January 18, 2007. Accessed on August 14, 2014: <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=07ASMARA56>

<sup>28</sup> “Views on Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa: Proceedings of an African Migration Alliance Workshop.” Catherine Cross, Derik Gelderblom, Niel

Roux and Jonathan Mafukidze. Human Sciences Research Council. Apr 1, 2007. Pg. 104.

<sup>29</sup> *Eritrea: Uncertain future for thousands of returning IDPs*. Report. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, June 13, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> “Ethiopia’s Ethnic Cleansing.” Calhoun, Craig. Dissent. pg. 47-50. Winter 1999.

<sup>31</sup> *Norway’s policy towards UNHCR*. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accessed online on August 14, 2014:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/FN/profilark2011/E886\\_E\\_UNHCR.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/FN/profilark2011/E886_E_UNHCR.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> *The Protracted Refugee Situation in Eastern Sudan*. Dominik Bartsch and Mohamed Dualeh. Refugee Cooperation, March 1, 2011. Accessed online on August 14, 2014: [www.refugeecooperation.org/publications/Sudan/07\\_bartsch.php](http://www.refugeecooperation.org/publications/Sudan/07_bartsch.php)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> *In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight & Homecoming in Northeast Africa*. Edited by Tim Allen. First Africa World Press, 1996, Pg. 58.

- (f) **Recurrent droughts.** During periods of drought Eritrean families often relocate to the Sudan.<sup>35</sup> Families living in the Gash-Barka region bordering Sudan are among the most vulnerable.
- (g) **UNHCR-Sudan's ineffectiveness.** UNHCR ignored the aforementioned self-criticism by Arnulv Torbjornsen in 1996. It was only in later publications—when the damage was already done—that UNHCR realized its general ineffectiveness. One UNHCR official writes, “the internal factors which have visibly affected the operation in eastern Sudan include UNHCR’s recurrent financial crisis; lack of consistent long-term vision compounded by a lack of institutional memory; changes of senior management without effective accountability, bringing about frequent changes of direction.”<sup>36</sup> He adds that “disregarding the history of the operation has invariably led to repeated reinventions and ultimately the waste of opportunities and resources.”

In line with RSI’s findings on Eritrean emigration, it appears that the European Union and a growing constellation of international bodies are realizing the necessity of a more holistic approach towards the issue rather than the highly limited one forwarded by the ICG. According to the conclusion of a 2009 study conducted by the Global Forum on Migration and Development:

Migration is not a phenomenon that happens only in Eritrea. It is a global issue that needs global collaboration for a viable solution acceptable to all parties involved. Eritrea is a poor country and therefore this circumstance serves as a main factor for migration. To make migration a positive contributing force to development, Eritrean migration policy needs to be more flexible and up-to-date....There is a need for planned and dynamic handling of the benefits of migration. This has to be done without compromising the rights and economic status of citizens by promoting openness and freedom of movement but at the same time not compromising the national interest. Therefore, the policy has to aim to address the manpower needs of the country emphasizing creation of jobs (following labour intensive technology in production) and In-country Human Resource Development Schemes as well as encouraging remittance and technology transfer.<sup>37</sup>

### ICG’s Focus on Ethiopia

Like past reports, the ICG’s latest report dedicates a sizeable focus on Ethiopia vis-à-vis Eritrean reporting. Although it is true that the Ethiopian occupation of Eritrea is the primary stated reason by the Eritrean government for the mobilization of Eritreans, which is presumed by the ICG to be the cause of flight, there appears to be an inconsistent and selective process in which the ICG covers Ethiopia in relation to Eritrea.

This inconsistency and selectivity with Eritrea’s southern neighbor is significant primarily for the fact that the two nations are trapped in what amounts to a bitter cold war among historical enemies, often dubbed a “no-war-no-peace” situation. As was revealed by the American Charge d’Affaires in Ethiopia quoting Joseph Legwaila of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, “PM Meles had told him that

Ethiopia’s strategy was to isolate Eritrea and wait for it to implode economically.”<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, all reporting on Ethiopia-Eritrea must be wary not to appear to favor one party over the other such that it plays into the cold war and various isolation strategies, which may embolden certain parties to flout the terms of the 2000 Algiers Agreement. This in turn would lead to an escalation of tensions and mobilization within Eritrea.

Regarding the ICG’s reporting inconsistencies, there appears to be two sets of standards by which ICG covers Eritrea and Ethiopia. For example, compare the latest ICG report on Eritrea to recent ICG reporting on Ethiopia. In a 2013 report, ICG appeared to downplay the Ethiopian government’s internationally acknowledged “genocide” of the Ogadeni people,<sup>39</sup> which has led to a yearly mass migration of Ogadeni people from Ethiopia by orders of a magnitude greater than that experienced in Eritrea.

In 2013 Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) reported that “record numbers of migrants from the Horn of Africa are crossing into Yemen...Ethiopians make up the majority of these migrants: Of the 107,000 recorded migrants crossing the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden into Yemen in 2012, around 80,000 were from Ethiopia.” Despite these record numbers, ICG was and remains silent on the issue. Unlike the Eritrea report, absent was the incendiary label of “exodus.” The word “genocide” also was not used despite the world’s recognition of the genocide in Ogaden.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, ICG fails to mention the ongoing illegal Ethiopian occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory. In fact, ICG did not use the word “occupation” once in the report. As Agence France-Presse indicates, “Ethiopia still occupies land ruled by a UN-backed court as belonging to Eritrea, and the threat from the far larger and more powerful neighbour concerns many.”<sup>41</sup>

RSI believes that it is reasonable to conclude that the looming and unresolved threats from Ethiopia, which bears a population 15 times Eritrea’s size and is financially and militarily supported by the U.S., is a critical factor in the continued mass mobilization of Eritrea’s population. One may even make the argument that Eritrea is trapped in what may be classified as an “existential crisis,” challenging its very survival. Despite this reality ICG, does not adequately acknowledge the Ethiopian “occupation,” which is a violation of the Algiers Agreement, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and the Geneva Convention IV.

However, it does appear that ICG’s report may have overlooked the occupation as a result of a flawed misunderstanding of the Eritrea-Ethiopia crisis. The report states that “Ethiopia’s talented diplomatic corps continues to evade its country’s commitments to demarcate the border according to the EEBC decision.”

As of 2008, however, the border was officially “demarcated” by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), meaning that Ethiopia’s continued presence in Eritrea would become an occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory in violation of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the Geneva Convention IV. Thus there are no “commitments to demarcate the border” as the report states. Instead, both nations must submit to their respective obligations outlined in the 2000 Algiers Agreement.

Also, highlighting “Ethiopia’s talented diplomatic corps” and overlooking the powerful diplomatic cover provided to Ethiopia by its partner in the global war on terror, the U.S., obscures one of the most serious obstacles to solving the occupation of Eritrea: the guarantors’ neglect of enforcing the terms of the Algiers Agreement. The U.S. not

<sup>35</sup> “UNHCR Global Appeal 2004 - Eritrea.” UNHCR, June 1, 2005.

<sup>36</sup> “UNHCR’s operation in eastern Sudan, 1967-2009: lessons learned.” R. Ek, UNHCR, March 2009.

<sup>37</sup> *Eritrea and European Community: Country Strategy Paper And National Indicative Programme For the period 2009-2013*. Report. Global Forum on Migration and Development, 2009, pg. 59.

<sup>38</sup> “UNITED NATIONS REQUESTS USG ASSISTANCE TO MONITOR AND RESOLVE ERITREA-ETHIOPIA CRISIS.” Diplomatic cable, American Charge d’Affaires Vicki Huddleston, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,

November 1, 2005. Wikileaks website, accessed on August 14, 2014:

[https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05ADDISABABA3725\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05ADDISABABA3725_a.html)

<sup>39</sup> *Ethiopia: Prospects for Peace in Ogaden*. International Crisis Group. August 6, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> “Genocide Alert: Ethiopia.” Genocide Watch. December 06, 2012.

Accessed on August 14, 2014: <http://genocidewatch.net/2012/12/06/genocide-watch-emergency-ethiopia/>

<sup>41</sup> “The good, the bad and the very ugly.” Jenny Vaughn, Agence France-Presse, August 19, 2013.

only neglects obligations but has actively worked to undermine the agreement at the behest of Ethiopia, using its influence in the UN.<sup>42</sup>

To better understand the role of the U.S.'s support for Ethiopia vis-à-vis Eritrea, consider the words of Richard Reid of School of African and Oriental Studies at the Woodrow Wilson Center regarding the 2009 UN sanctions on Eritrea:

"Recently, I heard similar mutterings in the UK Foreign Office, that there have been correspondence passing across desks to the effect that it really would not have mattered what Eritrea would have done. Eritrea is going to be punished...Even though some voices in the U.K. Foreign Office said 'this is a disastrous idea, sanctions should not go ahead,' The push was coming from above somewhere. Ethiopia needs to be right. Ethiopia needs to be the stable center. Eritrea is now becoming, to be blunt, a pain in the ass. It will be punished. I had heard similar stories that the US is actually an obstacle to the Boundary Commission. The US preferred Ethiopia. It preferred Ethiopia for all sorts of reasons. Eritrea was seen as a bunker state; they were less easy to control...Given this, it is extremely worrying but not entirely surprising. Not only did the US not pressure Ethiopia but it actually decided it was better to keep Eritrea at arm's length and not bring it in through the stabilizing of the northern border. I think this is now proving to be counterproductive."<sup>43</sup>

This came as a surprising admission, as Reid has been quite critical of the Eritrea up until that point in time.

Additionally, the report states, "there have been a number of border incidents with Ethiopia since the 2000 ceasefire. In 2008, Eritrea also had border skirmishes with Djibouti...The UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Eritrea in 2009 for its refusal to withdraw troops from the contested borders." RSI finds it surprise oversight that ICG passively mentions Eritrea-Ethiopia border incidents but fails to elaborate on these "incidents" and instead immediately proceeds to highlight a wholly unrelated border issue involving alleged Eritrean intransigence. Thus, RSI elaborates on some of these "incidents" as follows:

- **April 29, 2011:** Ethiopia openly called for the overthrow of the Eritrean government through armed groups acting on behalf of the Ethiopian government, violating resolution 3314 (XXIX)(3)(g) of the UNGA.<sup>44</sup>
- **March 15-17, 2012:** Ethiopia initiated unprovoked attacks on Eritrea without previous and explicit warning, which is a violation of Article 1 of the 1907 Hague Convention (III) relative to the Opening of Hostilities. Officials from "Ethiopia said it had raided three military bases inside Eritrea that it said were being [used] to train an Ethiopian rebel group."<sup>45</sup> There were no reports of an Eritrean counterattack.
- **August 9, 2014:** In an interview broadcast on Ethiopian Radio station Radio Tsinat in Washington, D.C., Ethiopian Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn called for a new strategy of regime change against Eritrea. Discussing the Ethiopian opposition, Ginbot 7 and their recently arrested leader Andargachew Tsige, the Prime Minister explained that the Eritrean government was sending Ginbot 7 to attack Ethiopia and warned that "if Shaebia [Eritrean government] sends one of these groups to attack Ethiopia one more time,

we will be removing Shaebia."<sup>46</sup> Again, this is a violation of resolution 3314 (XXIX)(3)(g) of the UNGA.

RSI believes that these acts of aggression will likely promote and justify continued militarization and mobilization within Eritrea. Thus, the ICG should cover these aggressions in adequate detail.

Lastly, it is important to highlight the ICG's shortcomings in separating analysis on Eritrea from that of Ethiopia. Although all nations are affected by neighboring nations, analysis of a given nation's issues should only include analysis of neighboring states when necessary. However, in the ICG's analyses, Eritrean issues are considered Ethiopian issues by default.

This is best highlighted by the recognition that every ICG report on Eritrea is filed under the "Ethiopia/Eritrea" section of its website. In fact, with the exception of Israel/Palestine, Eritrea is the only nation on the ICG website that does not have its own dedicated section and is paired with another nation. Considering that successive Ethiopian regimes have worked to undermine Eritrean sovereignty, the ICG expresses a seeming lack of regard for the ongoing challenges to Eritrean independence and sovereignty. RSI only finds this important for the fact that the ICG makes recommendations to the Eritrean government and thus must, at minimum, present a veneer of neutrality to ensure compliance.

The ICG report's effect on and relevance to Ethiopia-Eritrea dynamics is clearly signified by the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry's statement on the report. It endorses the ICG's cited Eritrean migration "rate of over 4,000 a month."<sup>47</sup> The statement's closing remark seems to agree with the ICG that "the ball certainly is very much in Eritrea's court" but warns that "until Eritrea is prepared to change, the ICG should realize that no recommendations and suggestions, however sensible or desirable, can have the desired effect."

### Criminality and Human Trafficking

The ICG states that Eritrean President turned to Brigadier General Teklai "Manjus" Kifle to use "shoot-to-kill" policies to stop Eritreans attempting to cross the border but the General "allegedly sub-contracted border policing to remnants of the Rashaida paramilitary groups" because Eritreans "targeting peers and undermined morale." To support these claims, the report cites a 2012 report by the U.N. Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG).

The SEMG, in turn, makes these claims by citing as evidence 1,300 testimonies of which "61 were from Eritreans who identified the names of Rashaida smugglers."<sup>48</sup> The testimonies were acquired in a closed process and presented in the report as short vignettes. No names were given such that any claims could be verified. It bore photos of body wounds of two unnamed and faceless torture victims. The annex was only three pages long, filled with photos, and had nothing to do with human trafficking allegations.

The weakness of the SEMG report is concerning for the fact that support for the ICG's claim of involvement by Eritrean officials and "official complicity with illegal networks" comes entirely from the cited report. However, it is clear that the report is unverifiable by any independent bodies. Recalling the prevalence of African migrants using a false Eritrean identify for asylum fraud, this becomes an even greater concern.

<sup>42</sup> From a leaked diplomatic cable, we learn that the "US was pressing hard to delay the [UNSC] resolution" which was an "endorsement of demarcation of the border without dialogue." "ETHIOPIA: MELES SAYS UNSC DRAFT RESOLUTION ON BORDER JEOPARDIZES PEACE." American Charge d'Affaires Vicki Huddleston, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 3, 2005. Accessed on August 14, 2014: [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05ADDISABABA3760\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05ADDISABABA3760_a.html)

<sup>43</sup> Webcast by the Wilson Center: *Eritrea's External Relations*. Richard Reid, Woodrow Wilson Center, January 22, 2010. Webcast Accessed on August 14, 2014: <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/eritreas-external-relations>

<sup>44</sup> "Eritrea Calls Ethiopia's New Stance a 'Declaration of War'" William Davison, Bloomberg, April 29, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> "Ethiopia stages fresh attacks inside Eritrea." Al Jazeera, March 17, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Interview of Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn. Radio Tsinat, Washington D.C., August 9, 2014. Audio on TesfaNews website accessed on August 14, 2014: <http://www.tesfanews.net/ethiopia-outlined-new-strategy-to-oust-eritrean-government/>

<sup>47</sup> "The International Crisis Group's suggestions for ending the exodus from Eritrea." Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia, August 15, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2002 (2011)*. UNSC S/2012/545, 13 July 2012.

The SEMG, which is a “monitoring group” beholden to the 2003 Stockholm Process adopted by the 2003 U.N. Security Council, falls short of its obligations: “While recognizing that it might sometimes be necessary to uphold the confidentiality of sources of information available to expert panels or monitoring groups...the Stockholm paper notes that the credibility of the findings and the integrity of the process required that evidence be as *transparent and verifiable as possible*....based on concrete evidence of violations of international law or Council obligations, and not based on presumptions, media reports or motivated allegations.”<sup>49</sup>

RSI finds the ICG’s support for findings not based on evidence to be quite concerning. There is equal concern for the report’s failure to highlight, or merely identify, the role of human traffickers and smugglers. Though it mentions the presence of “criminal networks,” it only identifies the names of *alleged* traffickers within the Eritrean government. Not only does the report fail to identify these suspected traffickers and smugglers, it even goes as far as citing them as sources (see section: ICG’s Sources)

### Eritrean Government’s Response

The ICG report states that “recently the Eritrean government’s calculations of the cost of exodus versus the benefit it accrues from émigrés appear to be changing” and that now, consequently, “Asmara is keen to absolve itself from any political or criminal responsibility for the exodus and accompanying racketeering.” However, the report fails to cite any sources indicating evidence of any *recent* shifts in policies or outlook on human trafficking by the Eritrean government.

The evidence over the past decade seems to paint a different picture. Actions by the Eritrean government suggest both an awareness of and active engagement in combatting human trafficking and migration. The government’s record is as follows:

- **June 2007:** Eritrea was one of 11 countries in Africa that attended a conference under the U.N.-led Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking in Persons that was commenced in March 2007.<sup>50</sup>
- **December 2008:** The American Charge d’Affaires in Eritrea, Matthew D. Smith, stated that “Government of the State of Eritrea is very keen to break these human smuggling rings and dispatches agents to pose as potential customers. Other agents pose as facilitators, making all of the supposed smuggling arrangements prior to having the unsuspecting person arrested.”<sup>51</sup>
- **July 2011:** Following SEMG report, accusing the Eritrean government of state-sponsored trafficking of Eritreans, President Isaias Afewerki met with Ban Ki Moon on the sidelines of South Sudan independence celebrations to discuss issues brought up in the report, which included human trafficking.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> “Stockholm Process Findings – Year-Long Study on Targeted Sanctions – Presented to the Security Council.” Press Release. Security Council. 4713th Meeting, SC/7672, February 25, 2003.

<sup>50</sup> “EAST AFRICA: Human trafficking ‘on the rise.’” Integrated Regional Information Networks, June 21, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> “How To Escape From Eritrea.” Diplomatic cable, American Charge d’Affaires Matthew D. Smith, Asmara, Eritrea, December 4, 2008. Wikileaks website, accessed on August 14, 2014:

<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=08ASMARA575>

<sup>52</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 1916 (2010)*. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, Security Council, S/2011/433, July 18, 2011. ; “As S. Sudan Joins UN, Machar Speaks of Darfur & Eritrea, Ban Silent, No Q&A.” Matthew Russell Lee, Inner City Press, July 14, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> *Letter to Ban Ki Moon*. Eritrean President, Isaias Afewerki, February 5, 2013. Publish Eritrean Embassy website, accessed on August 14, 2014:

[http://www.embassyeritrea.org/press\\_statements/2013\\_Feb05\\_Letter\\_fm\\_PI\\_A\\_2\\_SG.pdf](http://www.embassyeritrea.org/press_statements/2013_Feb05_Letter_fm_PI_A_2_SG.pdf)

- **February 2012:** President Isaias Afewerki sent a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to open an investigation into human trafficking of Eritreans. President Isaias Afewerki wrote, “The Government of Eritrea emphatically requests the UN to launch an independent and transparent investigation of this abominable affair [of human trafficking] so as to bring to justice the culpable parties.”<sup>53</sup>
- **June 2012:** The Eritrean Ambassador to Israel, Tesfamariam Tekeste, told the Israeli press that “Eritrea will not accept the forced repatriation of its nationals living in Israel.” According to the Jerusalem Post, “Tekeste said his government’s position remains that it will welcome those who choose to return” and “would ensure the safety of those returning and would not prosecute them for leaving the country.” The Post also notes that he showed them a list of the “names of hundreds of Eritreans who had come to his office in the past year to arrange their voluntary return home.”<sup>54</sup>
- **April 2013:** Eritrea held a tripartite meeting with Egypt and Sudan to discuss ways of curbing human trafficking. Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and the Eritrean Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab were both present.<sup>55</sup>
- **May 2013:** In order to combat trafficking, Eritrea sent Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and the Eritrean Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab to the U.N. General Assembly’s “High-Level Meeting on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking.”<sup>56</sup>
- **May 2013:** Egypt finally sent troops to the border after requests by Eritrea, suggesting that the Tripartite meetings were actually fruitful.<sup>57</sup>
- **April 2014:** Eritrean police in Teseney, Eritrea apprehended a fugitive charged with human trafficking.<sup>58</sup>
- **May 2014:** From the 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month, Eritrea participated in the AU-sponsored “Regional Conference on Human Trafficking and Smuggling in the Horn of Africa” held in Khartoum, Sudan.<sup>59</sup> According to the meeting minutes obtained by RSI from AU diplomats, Eritrea is considered one of the “core countries” that will consult with UNHCR, IOM, Italy and the EU under the leadership of AU to forward the initiative.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, Eritrean involvement in combatting migration and trafficking is an extension of past efforts and is part of a larger growing international effort. Perhaps it may be the case that Eritrea’s anti-trafficking efforts are only now becoming visible due to a recent groundswell in global awareness of human trafficking, deemed “modern slavery,” that is now commensurate with efforts by frontline states like Eritrea.

### ICG’s Sources

<sup>54</sup> “Eritrea won’t accept forced citizen repatriation.” Ben Hartman, Jerusalem Post, June 26, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> “Morsi holds talks with Eritrea and Sudan.” Emily Crane, Egypt Daily News, April 16, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> *Sixty-seventh General Assembly 77th Meeting*, GA/11369, New York, USA, May 13, 2013.

<sup>57</sup> “Egypt Sends Show of Force to Sinai After Kidnappings,” Ben Hubbard, New York Times, May 20, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> “ኣቲ ሸያጠ. ሰብ ተታሒቲ.” Dehai News, April 15, 2014. Accessed online on August 14, 2014:

[http://www.dehai.org/archives/dehai\\_news\\_archive/2014/apr/att-0182/...pdf](http://www.dehai.org/archives/dehai_news_archive/2014/apr/att-0182/...pdf)

<sup>59</sup> “Khartoum prepares for international conference on human trafficking,” Sudan Tribune, May 19, 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Meeting minutes from AU diplomat present at the joint meeting, which included representative from Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, the AU, UNHCR, IOM, Italy and the EU.

A careful review of the ICG report's references, raises some serious issues. A significant number of sources stem primarily from Skype interviews with persons, who are said to be Eritrean and whose identities are unverifiable. Thus, no independent analyst can scrutinize the source. This cannot pass for evidence-based reporting, upon which good migration policy should rest.

Even more concerning is the ICG's use of politically-motivated sources that have a clear history of exploiting vulnerable Eritrean migrants in order to influence Eritrea's domestic politics. Take for example the report's citation of a journal article by Dan Connell. It must be recalled that Connell, in a May 2013 speech to a group of Eritreans in Washington, D.C., stated that:

"What's going to generate the most response from a wider public that is not familiar with Eritrea? And what would weaken Isaias' ability to govern? I don't think you can organize a campaign for regime change but you can organize campaigns that can make regime change more possible...I would certainly suggest an end to unlimited conscription into national service partly because it's so easy to tie that together with so many other issues: the refugee issue, the trafficking issue, and so on. *And partly because the pressure on Isaias would weaken his ability to govern....* A campaign should be simple direct and uncomplicated. Other obvious issues that can be in some way linked, *focusing our attention on the trafficking issue and always linking it to the source of the refugee flows. This trafficking issue is a consequence of the situation inside Eritrea. No other issue is likely to generate attention and support from the American public.* Calls for increased financial and technical support for refugees in the support and for far better security in the camps are also simple issues to link them to this. Pressure on the US, Canadian, European and Israeli asylum seekers is another one that comes directly out of this."<sup>61</sup>

In essence, Connell called for making "regime change more possible" and weakening the Eritrean president by organizing an anti-human trafficking campaign, blaming human trafficking on the Eritrean government's national service policies, and calling for "an end to unlimited conscription into national service partly because it's so easy to tie that together" with national service.

Thus, Connell publicly admitted to holding an ulterior motive behind his anti-human trafficking campaign. Note the concordance between Connell's stance and the ICG's stance on national service and human trafficking. It is quite concerning that the ICG chooses to use Connell's written works on Eritrean migration and human trafficking as a reference. In fact, he is the most cited reference in all of the ICG's reports on Eritrea.

Also concerning is a reference made to Kjetil Tronvoll, who, along with Tekeste Negash, co-authored the book "Brothers at War: Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War." Tronvoll, who questions Eritrea's 1993 independence referendum, has taken extreme positions on Eritrea, often using hyperbole in his analysis.

For example, in October 2013, Tronvoll co-authored an opinion piece for Al-Jazeera, comparing Eritrea to pre-collapse Somalia and predicting Eritrea's coming "collapse," descent into "civil war," and coming "security crisis of enormous proportions." He attributes this prediction to the unsustainable "exodus" in Eritrea. Interestingly, the ICG uses the same hyperbolic terminology in its latest report on Eritrea. Like Connell, Tronvoll is frequently cited in past the ICG reports on Eritrea, with the 2013 report likewise predicting state collapse. Thus, referencing Tronvoll and Connell brings into question the ICG's neutrality of analysis.

The ICG proceeds to reference a host of politically-biased characters with publications carrying predominantly negative views on Eritrean government policies, including Gaim Kibreab, Petros Ogbazghi, and others.

News sources of questionable credibility are also cited. The ICG makes multiple references to Awate.com, which falsely published reports about the death of the Eritrean president in 2012 and, more recently, falsely reported that Chinese firm Wanbao Mining withdrew from Eritrea despite never operating in Eritrea to begin with.<sup>62</sup>

Multiple references are also made to Asmarino News, which plagiarized a BBC story on the rape of women in South Africa to support the claim of the rape of women in Eritrea's national service program.<sup>63</sup> Asmarino also published unsubstantiated reports based on what it admitted to be "rumors" and "speculation" about the hospitalization of the Eritrean president due to "complications with his liver, a chronic ailment" in November 2013.<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, the report's repeated citations of Rachel Humphris' "Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt" further illustrates the critical weakness of cited sources, which in turn cite even weaker sources.<sup>65</sup> Humphris, a student intern at UNHCR at the time, claimed that there were growing ethnic tensions among Eritreans in refugee camps. Investigating her reference for this claim, the report cites an "unpublished paper" by a character named "Mehari, K" (Mehari, K. 2010. 'Desert in Disorder' unpublished paper). Scrutiny of such a reference is impossible.

Humphris also cites Meron Estifanos, whose organization Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (EMDHR), was a recipient of funding from Dan Connell's Grassroots International.<sup>66</sup> She was integral in propagating false claims of a "coup" in Eritrea on January 21, 2013, using it as a springboard for the "Forto 2013" campaign that organizes advocates of Eritrean regime change around anti-trafficking measures.<sup>67</sup> In fact, Connell explicitly stated in his aforementioned D.C. speech that the anti-trafficking campaigners should "take a lesson from Forto."

Lastly, testimonies of Eritreans living at home and abroad, who can serve as verifiable sources, are noticeably absent from the ICG's analysis. Without verifying the source, observers with legitimate concerns about false nationality are unable to confirm the validity of the source. Although it is commendable that the ICG does attempt to use technologies like Skype to reach out to sources that are ostensibly

<sup>61</sup> "Video Assenna: Friend of Eritrea; Dan Connell Speaks at DC Conference." Youtube. Uploaded on May 27, 2013. Accessed: June 12, 2013: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyt2\\_-f7JiY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyt2_-f7JiY)

<sup>62</sup> "The Unusual Absence of Isaias Afwerki." Awate.com, April 24, 2012; "Eritrean Mining: China's Wanbao Withdraws." Awate.com, June 22, 2014.

<sup>63</sup> "Rape - silent war on SA women," Carolyn Dempster, British Broadcasting Channel, April 9, 2002. The story was later removed from Asmarino without acknowledgement but was archived on the Archive.com website. Accessed on August 14, 2014:

[http://web.archive.org/web/20070712112015/http://news.asmarino.com/Information/2002/05/SabaGiday\\_5\\_5.asp](http://web.archive.org/web/20070712112015/http://news.asmarino.com/Information/2002/05/SabaGiday_5_5.asp)

<sup>64</sup> "Eritrea: Situation on the Ground Report Part 1 - Missing President." Asmarino, November 18, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Humphries, Rachel. "Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Research Paper No. 247. November 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Meron Estefanos worked closely with Dan Connell in 2009 to organize non-violent activism against the Eritrean government through the European External Policy Advisors (EEPA). EEPA untitled webpage. Accessed: August 14, 2014. <http://www.eepa.be/wcm/component/content/category/139.html>; Grassroots International webpage entitled "Eritrea." Accessed: August 14, 2014. <http://www.grassrootsonline.org/where-we-work/eritrea>; Dan Connell is the founder and director of GI.

<sup>67</sup> "The Eritrean Coup That Never Was." Simon Tesfamariam. Eritrean Embassy, Tokyo, Japan. January 24, 2014. Accessed online on August 14, 2014: [http://www.eritreanembassy-japan.org/data/The\\_Eritrean\\_Coup\\_That\\_Never\\_Was\\_By\\_Simon\\_Tesfamariam.pdf](http://www.eritreanembassy-japan.org/data/The_Eritrean_Coup_That_Never_Was_By_Simon_Tesfamariam.pdf)

Eritreans, the ICG's references to these sources fall short of evidence-based analysis because:

- They are based on the claims of asylum-seekers who *likely have a vested interest in inflating their stories* in order to secure asylum and ensure third nation resettlement; and
- There is *no reference to the specific methodologies* used in sampling and selecting interviewees, blinding, or other basic standards of evidence-based research.

As a result of these underlying weaknesses, it is remarkably difficult to give credence to the ICG's claims, analyses, conclusions, predictions, and recommendations. This is not to say that the ICG does not make occasional true predictions or worthy recommendations but rather to simply say that these predictions and recommendations are not based on evidence.

### The ICG's Shortcomings

Past predictions by the ICG provide insight about the organizations effectiveness in accurately predicting future events in Eritrea. Since September 2010, nine months after Eritrea was sanctioned by the UN, the ICG has published three reports on Eritrea, with each concluding that the Eritrean government's policies have failed, painting a rather gloomy picture of the nation's future.<sup>68</sup>

The ICG states that the current "briefing should be read in conjunction with Crisis Group Africa Report N°200, Eritrea: Scenarios for Future Transition, 28 March 2013, which touched on the youth exodus but did not explore it in detail." Examining the very first report from 2010, N°163, reveals a number of predictions later shown to be inaccurate (see Table 3).

**Table 3. ICG N°163 2010 Predictions Versus Actual Outcomes**

2010 Prediction	Actual Outcome
<u>Prediction 1:</u> "The transfer of youthful labour from rural areas to the army has crippled agricultural production...Eritrea is now in increasingly desperate need of assistance."	In 2011, one year after ICG prediction, a drought in the Horn of Africa sparked the worst famine in the last 60 years. However, Eritrea was the only unaffected country in the region. <sup>69</sup> Despite the fact that Eritrea is the only African nation without the presence of USAID and WFP, it avoided famine and even managed to send food aid to Somalia. <sup>70</sup>
<u>Prediction 2:</u> "[Eritrea's] economy is in freefall."	Only three months after the ICG report's prediction, the Economic Intelligence Unit of The Economist magazine stated that it "predicts Eritrea...will overtake Qatar as the world's fastest-growing economy" with a growth rate of 17%. <sup>71</sup> Since then Eritrea has maintained one of the fastest growing economies in the world, predicted to be 8th fastest growing economy in 2014 with a growth rate of 8%. <sup>72</sup>
<u>Prediction 3:</u> "The authoritarian political system is haemorrhaging its legitimacy in the eyes of millions....It is a question of when, not if change comes."	Although ICG endorsed political "haemorrhaging" and predicted change, there has yet to be one report of protest from a legitimate, independent news source. Even ICG itself acknowledged that "although there is no open protest, the government cannot take this for granted over the longterm."
<u>Prediction 4:</u> "President Isaias shows no willingness to modify his authoritarian stance, and there is little prospect of internal reform. If anything, the regime can be expected to intensify repression in the face of growing disengagement by the population and greater opposition outside the country."	In 2013, President Isaias called for the reform of the government and ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), contradicting ICG's prediction that there is little prospect for internal reform. <sup>73</sup> Additionally, he revealed in May 2014 that "a constitution drafting process will be launched in order to chart out the political road map for the future governmental structure." <sup>74</sup>
<u>Prediction 5:</u> "Increased international isolation, and in particular difficulties with immediate neighbours, will, if the past is a good basis for judging, be used to justify continued military mobilisation."	See the review of claim 4 in Table 1

The tabulated results are concerning in that ICG claimed to draw upon "more than ten years of work on and field research in the country."<sup>75</sup> If 10 years of research was not sufficient to make accurate predictions about Eritrea in its first report, it seems much less likely that ICG—using the same undisclosed research methodologies—will make more accurate predictions with only one year to prepare since the last

report. The 2013 N°200 report, *Eritrea: Scenarios for Future Transition*, is also similarly devoid of the basic tenets of evidence-based research.<sup>76</sup>

In spite of the ICG's checkered history of predictions about Eritrea, there seems to be no noticeable changes in the former's reporting of the latter. Given ICG's reporting on Eritrea, including the current report in

<sup>68</sup> "Eritrea: Siege State," International Crisis Group, Africa Report N°163, September 21, 2010; "Eritrea: Scenarios of Future Transition," International Crisis Group, Africa Report N°200, March 28, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> "Eritrea Denies Food Shortages," Peter Clotey, Voice of America News, June 14, 2012.; "Eritrean Minister Says No Food Shortage in His Country," Voice of America News, July 29, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> "Eritrea Cabinet Approves Aid to Somalia," Voice of America News, Peter Clotey, October 12, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> "Insider selling in the U.S., Eritrea's growth, and the year in commodities," David Milstead, The Globe and Mail, Dec. 27, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> "These 10 countries are set to be the fastest-growing economies in 2014." Max Fisher, Washington Post, World Views. January 9, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> "The Administrative Restructuring Process Will Be Accomplished In the First Half Of 2014,' President Isaias," Shabait, March 14, 2014.

<sup>74</sup> "President Isaias Afewerki's speech on the occasion of the 23rd Independence day celebrations," Eritrean Ministry of Information, May 25, 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, pg. 1.

<sup>76</sup> "ICG's Conjectures on Eritrea: Realistic and Probable or Wishful and Imaginary?" Eritrean Center for Strategic Studies, April 26, 2014. Accessed online: [www.tesfanews.net/wp-content/uploads/ICGs-conjectures-on-eritrea.pdf](http://www.tesfanews.net/wp-content/uploads/ICGs-conjectures-on-eritrea.pdf)

question, the organization appears to take on the following 3-step pattern of reporting:

1. Stating the existence of problems that emanate almost exclusively from the Eritrean government by deferring *exclusively* to the opinions—as opposed to the evidence—of experts or by referencing sources that are: (a) unverifiable, (b) questionable, or (c) politically-motivated;
2. Acknowledging contradictions in ICG’s claims about problems in Eritrea (e.g. total absence of protest) yet largely ignoring these contradictions in the final analysis; and
3. Making predictions and recommendations that do not stem from evidence-based analysis.

Furthermore, it is important to note that ICG has no presence in Eritrea and did not acquire its data from analysts actually in Eritrea. A footnote, explains that “permission to do research in Eritrea was not granted, but interviews were conducted in person or via email/phone primarily with over 200 Eritreans” but “due to security concerns, Crisis Group has withheld most of their identities and locations.” ICG does not make it clear as to what these “security concerns” actually are such that independent analysts can assess their validity. Readers also do not know the extent of the efforts and the specific correspondences by ICG to acquire permission to conduct research in Eritrea or even the stated reasons for which permission was not granted.

It should be noted that a comparable organization like the Royal Institute of International Affairs, was able to send analyst Jason Mosley to Asmara in April 2014 with the assistance of the Eritrean Diplomatic Mission in London.<sup>77</sup> Was the Mission contacted? ICG does not make this clear.

## Conclusion

The ICG Report on Eritrean emigration is critically flawed and does not meet the basic standards of evidence-based research. Although it is encouraging that ICG recommends international actors to help resolve the ongoing conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia in order to curb migration, it falls short of acknowledging this conflict as an illegal Ethiopian occupation of Eritrean territories in violation of international law. It also avoids acknowledging the centrality of this issue to migration and the seriousness of the threat posed to Eritrea. Without resolution of this conflict, hopes of desired change within Eritrea are highly limited.

## Recommendations

In light of the above, the Red Sea Institute makes the following recommendations for the European Union and EU President Italy:

- Work with state and non-state actors to provide sufficient and unconditional protection of Eritrean migrants;
- Work with state and non-state actors to augment security along paths of Eritrean migration;
- Avoid working with non-state actors that seek to change Eritrea’s domestic politics by steering human trafficking policy and legislation;
- Scale up the ongoing efforts to address human trafficking and migration by working collaboratively with all affected nations and concerned third parties;
- Avoid enacting policies based on the recommendations of state and non-state actors that may be questionable, biased, and/or invested Eritrean domestic politics questionable or of ill-repute;
- Base policy decisions on the highest standards of evidence that are verifiable under scrutiny and collected by sound methodologies characteristic of quality research;

- Recognize the central role of the EPRDF’s unfettered violations of international law—like the ongoing illegal occupation of and unprovoked hostilities against Eritrea—in driving Eritrean migration, with the end-goal of initiating genuine efforts by an Italian-led EU to conclusively end the violations;
- Guarantee the terms of December 2000 Algiers Agreement in line with the EU’s responsibility as a guarantor of the agreement;
- Initiate an UN-sponsored international investigation of Eritrean migration and human trafficking and prosecute criminals; and
- Recognize the complex multifactorial nature of human trafficking, which includes both push and pull factors that require equal emphasis.

The Red Sea Institute makes the following recommendations for the Eritrean government:

- Continue working with international partners to stem migration and human trafficking of Eritreans;
- Continue efforts to investigate and prosecute suspected criminals involved in driving migration and human trafficking;
- Scale up the ongoing efforts to address human trafficking and migration by working collaboratively with all affected nations and concerned third parties;
- Continue and augment current efforts to improve governmental efficacy in order to decrease poverty and raise the quality of life of Eritreans that would otherwise emigrate; and
- Study the push factors that contribute to Eritrean migration and enact mitigating policies to curb migration.

RSI makes the following recommendation to International Crisis Group concerning future reporting on Eritrea:

- Provide much greater emphasis on the causes of emigration such as the ongoing Ethiopian military occupation of Eritrea—explicitly identifying it as an illegal “occupation”—not only to allay the Eritrean Government’s understandable concerns of international pro-Ethiopia bias but to also remove the Government’s primary stated reason for the large scale mobilization that ICG believes is hurting the economy;
- Recognize *with equal emphasis* the role of both push and pull factors in driving migration;
- Recognize with greater emphasis and solve the critical role of organized transnational crimes perpetrated against the Eritrean migrants by calling for an open UN-sponsored international investigation of Eritrean human trafficking;
- Reference a diverse set of independent sources while avoiding references to sources that may be politically-motivated, questionable, disreputable and/or unverifiable by international partners;
- Divorce political opinions and bias from Eritrea reporting;
- Open up the investigative reporting process and include, above all, the opinions of the Eritrean people, especially those inside Eritrea;
- Avoid deferring to only expert opinions and refer also to actual evidence used by those experts such that international partners can come to their own conclusions based on evidence rather than based on only opinion;

<sup>77</sup> *Eritrea and Ethiopia - Beyond the Impasse*. Jason Mosley, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, April 2014.

- Avoid the use of hyperbolic or rhetorical language when reporting on Eritrea while focusing on more moderate approaches;
- Make evidence-based predictions;
- Separate reporting on Eritrea from Ethiopia by providing a dedicated Eritrea website section; and
- Hold Ethiopia to the same standards and scrutiny as Eritrea such that justifiable claims of a “double standard” cannot be made.

### **Acknowledgements**

The preparers of this report by Red Sea Report would like to thank African Strategies for their assistance and collaboration. We would also like to thank UNHCR officials as well as the diplomats and officials in the AU, EU, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.

© Red Sea Institute, 2014

This material is offered free of charge for personal and non-commercial use, provided the source is acknowledged. For commercial or any other use, prior written permission must be obtained from the Red Sea Institute. In no case may this material be altered, rented or sold.

Please direct all correspondence to the Red Sea Institute at [redseainstitute@gmail.com](mailto:redseainstitute@gmail.com)