

[Economic Migration isn't Just an Eritrean Issue; It's a Global One](#)

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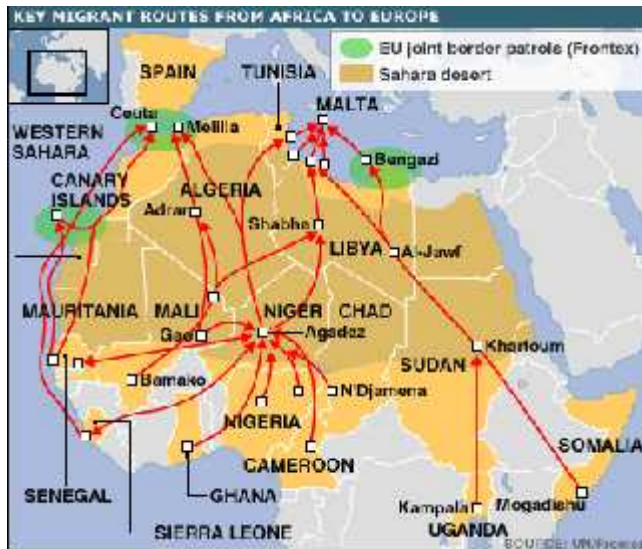
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Dozens of Tigrayan Refugees entering Eritrea

Human trafficking is a growing phenomenon affecting almost the entire world. It has become a lucrative industry that generates billions of dollars annually. No region of the world has been untouched by trafficking. While human smuggling is a global issue, this article will attempt to present a balanced report concerning migration of Eritreans. The main reasons for this article is to better combat human trafficking.

As the map below indicates, migrants from the East and West Africa have to use different routes to reach Europe.



Due to Spain's proximity to Africa, it has become one of the popular gateways into Europe for migrants. From there, migrants often make their way to other European countries. Similarly, migrants from the Horn of Africa move to Sudan through Libya and then to Italy. Once they arrive in Italy, they head for wealthy Northern European countries that provide generous welfare benefits such as Norway, Sweden, Holland, Denmark, UK, Switzerland and Germany. This act of leaving Italy for wealthier European countries clearly indicates they are economic migrants and not refugees.

Furthermore, according to Spanish border authorities in Tenerife (2006), around 6000 people died or ended up missing since 1988. This is largely due to the deplorable conditions of the transportations the migrants are forced to use. Traffickers use boats or makeshift rafts to cross oceans and seas without sufficient preparation. Most of those migrants who enter Spain are from western parts of Africa.

When it comes to illegal migration of people, politics seems to play a key role on what the media tends to focus on. Although Eritrea is often presented as having the worst migrant issues in Africa, the biggest producer of refugees in Africa is, in fact, Ethiopia. Both per capita and in sheer numbers, more people flee Ethiopia annually than any country in Africa. Yet, the focus seems to be mainly on Eritrea because of its political situation with the United States.

The followings are some factors that I believe are accelerating migration:

- Lack of Information:

Many Eritreans just don't have information about the realities of the West. They seem to have an exaggerated and often Disney-like perception of the West in their minds. They think it's all money and play, when in reality, because of their poor education, most of them will be struggling to make an honest living for the rest of their lives.

- Peer Pressure:

Most Eritrean youths fall victim of human trafficking because of peer pressure. They are often encouraged by friends and siblings to come along on a journey to the West. Since most of them are ignorant of the harsh realities that awaits them, they go along thinking it's an easy trip to make.

- The way forward:

Link up local law enforcement agencies with Interpol when dealing with human trafficking.

Involve NUEW (National Union of Eritrean Women), National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), and religious leaders in the fight against trafficking.

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