

A young boy with a joyful expression is looking through a circular window. He is wearing a blue sweater with a colorful geometric pattern. His hands are resting on the wooden frame of the window. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

ERITREA REFUGEE

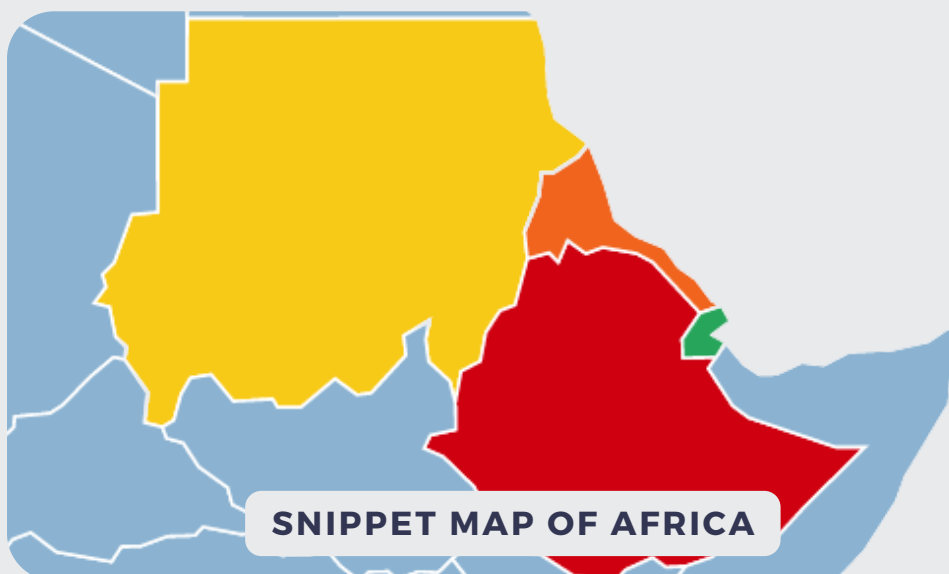
BVOR BACKGROUNDERS



B V O R B A C K G R O U N D E R S

RECENT HISTORY AND REASONS FOR DISPLACEMENT

After gaining independence from Ethiopia in the 1990s, Eritrea set up a presidential republic government. However, national legislative or presidential elections have never been held. Isaias Afwerki has served as president since 1993, instituting mandatory and indefinite military service for all adults over 18 years old. The Eritrean government uses the high school system to forcibly channel thousands of young people into national service. They must spend their final year of school at a military camp. Conscripts have also been subjected to inhuman and degrading punishment, including torture, without recourse. The government of Eritrea recognizes only four religions: Sunni Islam, Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals (Lutherans). Authorities routinely raid meetings of unrecognized religions groups. Detained adherents are forced to denounce their religion. The government bans private media. In 2001, 10 journalists were arrested and detained indefinitely without trial. Due to government secrecy and the absence of independent monitoring, it is impossible to determine how many political prisoners are currently detained.



ERITREA IS LOCATED IN NORTHEASTERN AFRICA, ON THE RED SEA COAST.
BORDERED WITH **ETHIOPIA**, **SUDAN**, AND **DJIBOUTI**





B V O R B A C K G R O U N D E R S

WHERE DO PEOPLE GO?

Most refugees from the Eritrea flee to Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda.

WHY CAN'T THEY STAY THERE?

Sudan

- Refugees must register at the nearest office of the Sudan Commissioner for Refugees or another authority. They must stay in camps designated by the government. Living conditions are poor, but refugees living outside the camps have a higher risk of abuse, extortion and forcible return. Sudan's limited resources and poor economic conditions make it difficult for refugees to find employment.
- Due to a lack of health care resources in their home country, there are more than 4,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan with disabilities and/or serious medical conditions. Sudan also has limited healthcare resources. Refugees with medical conditions have difficulty earning a livelihood and may require full-time support from family members. This makes it difficult for other family members to earn a living, exposing them to exploitation and abuse.
- Eritrean women and girls are particularly vulnerable in East Sudan, where discriminatory and culturally harmful practices such as child marriage and polygamy are common. Over 3,000 Eritrean women and girls are identified as being extremely vulnerable. They include those whose husbands have gone missing in their country of origin or in smuggling or trafficking incidents in Sudan. Women often must raise small children alone, without support. Many women and girls are also survivors of violence, including sexual assault, and face isolation as a result.
- The continuous political and social unrests in Sudan greatly affect the livelihood of the refugees and majority of them leave in constant fear and insecurity as a result.





B V O R B A C K G R O U N D E R S

Ethiopia

- The freedom of movement of refugees within Ethiopia is restricted, as most must stay in camps. Passes are required for movement outside the camps. Since 2010, the Ethiopian Government has implemented an Out-of-Camp Policy, restricted to Eritrean refugees, to allow them to sustain themselves outside the camps. Restrictions on employment and movement seriously limit their self-sufficiency. Refugees do not have the legal right to establish businesses or work in the formal economy, so there are few livelihood opportunities for them.
- Women and girls are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Refugees are often forced to find ways to support themselves and their families, which may require them to leave the camps. Doing so makes them vulnerable to smugglers and traffickers. Access to security and the justice system varies, increasing refugees' vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Health facilities and services for survivors of trauma and those with disabilities are limited.
- War broke out in the northern Tigray region of Ethiopia on November 03, 2020, displacing the Tigray people along with thousands of Eritrean refugees who were in the Tigray region. Refugees are left without shelter, food and basic needs. Many refugees have been injured or killed in the violence.





B V O R B A C K G R O U N D E R S

Uganda

- The Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process in Uganda can take some time due to processing delays, leaving Eritrean refugees in precarious situations without the protection of refugee status. Without status, they are vulnerable to detention, or expulsion and cannot work or integrate into the country.
- Starting in 2013, Israel started deporting Eritrean refugees to Uganda and Rwanda. The Ugandan government does not grant refugee status to these refugees, leaving them in a precarious situation as they are considered to be trespassers and vulnerable to detention or deportation.





B V O R B A C K G R O U N D E R S

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The Blended Visa-Office Referred (BVOR) program helps to resettle refugees to Canada identified by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as those who are the most vulnerable and most in need of resettlement.

The BVOR program is a partnership program between sponsor groups in Canada, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and the newcomers. IRCC provides up to six months of income support to the newcomers, while the private sponsors provide the start-up costs, remaining six months financial support, along with social and emotional support for the newcomers' first year in Canada.

For more information about the BVOR program, and to view profiles of refugees that urgently need to be matched with a sponsoring group, please visit our website or contact us via email.

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program

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 RSTP.CA

 **CCS**
Catholic Crosscultural Services

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