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Using life history approach to  
explore the current Eritrean  
refugee crisis  
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Dissertação realizada no âmbito do Mestrado em Estudos Africanos  
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Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto

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# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Resumo</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Maps</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Tables</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>

## Chapter I

<b>Migration and Globalization in the twenty-first century</b> .....	<b>14</b>
1.1 Migration as a global trend: definitions and general information .....	14
1.2 Types and causes of migration .....	16
1.3 Historical background of migration flows.....	19
1.4 Migration and development .....	21
1.5 Theories of migration and its effects in the sending and hosting countries .....	23
1.6 Transnationalism and multiculturalism as parts of the migration process .....	27
1.7 International migration and refugee crisis in numbers and its effect in the world .....	30

## Chapter II

<b>The history of Eritrea as one of the push factors of the refugee crisis in Europe</b> .....	<b>36</b>
2.1 What Africa? – raptures and doubts .....	36
2.2 Contextualization: Eritrean population and environment.....	37
2.3 The social context: rural life and religion of Eritrea .....	42
2.4 Eritrea under Italian occupation .....	47
2.5 Eritrea and the African order under the British leadership.....	49
2.6 Federation of Eritrea: a prelude to annexation and Ethiopian occupation .....	51
2.7 The EPLF’s quest for legitimacy and building of the Eritrean polity .....	52
2.8 International repercussions of the establishment of the Eritrean state .....	55
2.9 The current situation of the Eritrean state and its international relations in the twenty-first century .....	59

## **Chapter III**

### **Eritrean refugee crisis presented in the life story interviews ..... 63**

3.1	Storytelling and its significance for the research on the current Eritrean refugee crisis .....	63
3.2	Planning the interview and its limitations .....	65
3.3	Life history interviews .....	67
3.3.1	Family and childhood.....	68
3.3.2	School and university time .....	70
3.3.3	Economic and political situation in Eritrea and Ethiopia .....	75
3.3.4	The Eritrean national military service .....	77
3.3.5	Human-rights violation in Eritrea and migration as the consequence.....	79
3.3.6	Refugee camps in Ethiopia.....	82
3.3.7	Hosting countries and assimilation process.....	84
3.3.8	Narrators' opinions about the refugee crisis and future of their countries .....	86
3.4	The analysis of the life story interviews.....	87

### **Conclusion..... 91**

### **Reference List..... 96**

### **Annexes ..... 104**

Annex 1		
Life history interview with the Interviewee I.....		104
Annex 2		
Life history interview with the Interviewee II.....		111
Annex 3		
Life history interview with the Interviewee III .....		115
Annex 4		
Life history interview with the Interviewee IV .....		121
Annex 5		
Life history interview with the Interviewee V .....		126

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## Resumo

Esta tese tem dois objetivos principais. Primeiro, dar a conhecer muito claramente a realidade na Eritreia. Segundo, tentar entender os motivos que levam os eritreus a fugir do seu país. Para tal, foram feitas e analisadas entrevistas de história de vida com eritreus e etíopes a viver na Polónia e em Portugal.

Desde que a Eritreia declarou oficialmente a sua independência, em 1993, que não se realizam eleições a qualquer nível da estrutura governativa, e o país é constantemente abandonado por milhares de pessoas. A Eritreia é um dos países mais restritivos do mundo, com vigilância em massa, tortura, escravatura e serviço militar obrigatório, cuja duração é para toda a vida. Logo após o fim da guerra entre a Eritreia e a Etiópia, que decorreu de 1998 a 2000, o presidente Isaias Afewerki introduziu censura nos meios de comunicação públicos e deu ordem de encerramento aos meios de comunicação privados. O país é controlado por um regime totalitário que se baseia no controlo total dos seus cidadãos pelas forças de segurança a todos os níveis da sociedade.

Devido aos motivos apresentados, milhares de eritreus fogem do país diariamente, com muitos deles a perder a vida na perigosa viagem para alcançar a Europa. Neste momento há mais de 200 mil eritreus a viver em campos de refugiados localizados no meio do deserto no Sudão e na Etiópia.

Este estudo pretende também apresentar a situação dos eritreus a viver nos campos de refugiados, assim como o processo de assimilação dos entrevistados das histórias de vida nos seus respetivos países de acolhimento.

**Palavras-chave:** Crise dos refugiados; Eritreia; Etiópia; Europa; Abordagem da entrevista de história de vida.

## **Abstract**

The main goal of this thesis is twofold. First, to provide a clear picture of the reality in Eritrea. Second, to try to understand the reasons why Eritreans flee from their country. In this research I try to achieve this goal by conducting and analysing life history interviews with Eritreans and Ethiopians living in Poland and Portugal.

Since Eritrea has officially introduced its independence in 1993, it has never held elections at any level of the government structure, and the country has been constantly abandoned by thousands of people. Eritrea is one of the most restrictive countries in the world, with mass surveillance, torture, slavery and mandatory military service, which lasts for the entire life. Right after the end of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which lasted from 1998 until 2000, the president Isaias Afewerki introduced a specific censorship in public mass-media and closed down the private sector media. The country is controlled by a totalitarian regime based on the total control of its citizens by the security apparatus at all levels of the Eritrean society.

Due to the given reasons, thousands of Eritreans flee the country, with many of them dying on perilous journeys to reach Europe. At the moment there are more than 200 000 Eritreans living in refugee camps located in the middle of the desert in Sudan and Ethiopia.

This research also seeks to present the situation of Eritreans living in the refugee camps, and the assimilation process of the life history interviewees in their respective hosting countries.

**Keywords:** Refugee crisis; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Europe; Life history interview approach.

## **Table of Maps**

Map no. 1. Map of the Horn of Africa – location of Eritrea. ....	38
Map no. 2. Eritrea’s ethnographic groups .....	40
Map no. 3. Physical map of Eritrea .....	41
Map no. 4. Selected routes which Beta Israel people chose to get to Israel. At that time Eritrea was still a part of Ethiopia.....	47
Map no. 5. Eritrea after gaining an independence in 1993.....	53

## **Table of Tables**

Table no. 1. International migrant stock at mid-year by major area in 1990-2015.....	31
Table no. 2. Interviewees' personal information.....	68

## **List of Abbreviations**

BCA – British Civil Administration

BMA – British Military Administration

Derg – The Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and the Territorial Army

ELF – Eritrean Liberation Front

EPF – Eritrean Police Force

EPLF – Eritrean People Liberation Front

EWN – Eritrean Weekly News

EWVA – Eritrean War Veterans Association

EU – European Union

HRW – Human Rights Watch

IAE – Intellectual Association of Eritreans

IB – Independence Bloc

IEP – Independent Eritrea Party

IOM – International Organization for Migration

ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

LPP – Liberal Progressive Party

ML – Moslem League

NEPIP - New Eritrea Pro-Italia Party

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NPM – National Moslem Party of Massawa

NUEW – National Union of Eritrean Women

OAU – Organization of African Unity

OPEC – Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

UN – United Nations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commission for Refugees

UNPD - United Nations Population Division

USSR – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WWII – Second World War



## Introduction

Few if any topics are more crucial to the world's news than the recent refugee crisis. The biggest refugee problem in last five years is that of the Syrians, who are fleeing their country because of the uprising against their President, Bashar al-Assad, which has easily turned into civil war and lasts until now. However, Syrians are not the only ones who are undertaking convoluted routes to flee the conflicts and dictatorship.

According to the 2015 Global Trends report on the forced displacement, 65.3 million people from all around the world were forcibly displaced, including Syrians, Afghans, Colombians, Congolese, Eritreans, Iraqis, Nigerians, Somalis, Sudanese, South Sudanese and Yemenis.<sup>1</sup> There have always been refugees in the world, but we are experiencing the crisis more serious than anything it has been seen in past decades. It has been said that it is a worldwide problem – one whose scale and asperity is incomparable since the World War II. That is why, it is crucial to develop the topic of the refugee crisis.

The main interest of this research is the current Eritrean refugee crisis in Europe. Around 40,000 Eritreans crossed the Mediterranean in 2015.<sup>2</sup> Most Eritreans must comply a form of forced labour, where they have no choice about where they live and work. Any objections are forbidden and the government's opponents are sent to prison without any judicial process. Rising food prices and the lack of basic services, like water or electricity, have made Eritreans hopeless. Moreover, Eritrea is notoriously breaking human rights. They are used tortures, imprisonment without a warrant or court order, people are often detained in an unknown location. All civil liberties are severely restricted, such as freedom of expression, association, assembly or freedom of religion.

Recent conflicts in the Middle East and Africa have made Europe the preferred destination. All the refugees found Europe's relative economic stability as the best option for refuge.

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<sup>1</sup> Information taken from the UN Refugee Agency's website (access online: 01.07.2016)  
Available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

<sup>2</sup> Information taken from the website Open Migration (access online: 03.09.2016)  
Available online: <http://openmigration.org/en/analyses/5-things-everyone-should-know-about-eritrean-refugees/> <http://openmigration.org/en/analyses/5-things-everyone-should-know-about-eritrean-refugees/>



In order to identify the research question it was first defined a research topic relevant to the programme of this master's, to my bachelor's background, and to my professional experience.

In October 2010 I have started a bachelor course in African Studies at the University of Warsaw in Poland. During those three years, I have been studying in detail the Horn of Africa, with the main focus on Ethiopia and Eritrea. Meanwhile, I have thoroughly studied Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia, and Arabic languages. After the first year of the bachelor, three students and I went to Ethiopia to do the research on Ethiopian education system during two months. That was the first time when I have worked as a researcher. After studying African Studies at University of Warsaw, I worked as a volunteer in Amman, Jordan in one of the Palestinian refugee camps. During that time I studied the topic of the refugee crisis in the Middle East. When I entered University of Porto, I wanted to continue studying the Horn of Africa and its social and economic situation. Since my aspiration is to work in the field of international help for refugees, the issue of Eritrean refugee crisis in Europe called my attention.

A body of research emerges from this study, which is able to help other researchers see the full picture of the Eritrean refugee crisis in Europe, and to expand academic knowledge. Because this thesis is integrated in the master course in African Studies, it enriches the discussion of these themes with intercultural concerns, and integrates a conceptual framework within a historical analysis, thus contributing to an enlarged understanding of what is and has been the refugee crisis in these particular settings.

The main goal of the research is to present the Eritrean reality and try to understand why Eritreans leave their country. It is essential to describe what they feel and what do they think about the crisis.

In this study I try to answer this, and to understand the consequences of the crisis in terms of Eritreans' future. In order to find answer for my research question I have done life history interviews with Eritreans and Ethiopians living outside of their countries.

Moreover, it is essential to present the social context of the interviewees, including childhood and school time. It is also important to introduce the political and economic framework of Eritrea and Ethiopia. Additionally, I focus on the situation of

the refugees living in the refugee camps, especially in Ethiopia. Finally, I try to understand the situation of the interviewees in the hosting countries.

Inclusion criteria are established to identify the literature that addresses the research question and the literature, which does not. The review will include primary and secondary published literature in the English, Portuguese, Polish and Amharic languages.

This research seeks to identify and address, as much as it is possible, eventual previous relevant publications related to this subject matter. Even though available information on refugee crisis is substantial, data on Eritrean case, on the contrary, is not.

As the topic of the dissertation has not been studied yet completely, it is essential to publicize this issue in the scientific field. The refugee crisis in the Horn of Africa, especially in Eritrea, seems not to stop in the upcoming years and the reality which Eritreans live in, are important topics for the research. The majority of the sources mentioned in this dissertation are obtained on the Internet and from the University of Warsaw Library, used to select resources due to the lack of research material on Portuguese libraries. Recognised professionals, experts and well-known journalists in the field, produced the documents, which have been retrieved from the Internet for this research. The majority of information and documents retrieved from the Internet were taken from the United Nations' database, from the scientific journals, including International Migration Review, Annual Review of Anthropology and others, and from the books written by professors associated with the departments of Anthropology, Development, Economics, Migration or African Studies. I have also consulted well-known newspapers, like The Independent, The Guardian or Aljazeera America, and blogs, including Understanding Slavery or The History Learning Site.

Moreover, and given that the focus of the investigation is placed on Eritreans, part of the information will be obtained from the institutions, such as the UN – United Nations, UNHCR – United Nations Refugee Agency, that collect, gather and analyse all possible sources from all around the world, including online publications and sites.

The empirical part of this study is based on the five life history interviews with Eritreans and Ethiopians currently living in Poland and in Portugal. The main goal of the life story interview is to synchronize the central parts, events and views in an individual's life, organize them, cohere them, learn from them, and finally present them. The transcriptions of the interviews are included in the annex of the dissertation.

The topic of the current refugee crisis is very complex. It turned to be quite difficult to convince people to give their testimonies for my empirical research. Neither the knowledge of the region and Amharic language, nor pure intentions did prompt eventual narrators to tell their life story. Some of the eventual storytellers did not want to agree to do a life history interview without a reward or recompense for help. Moreover, as it was difficult to find Eritreans, there are included two life history interviews with Ethiopians, who gave their opinion on the refugee crisis.

The final version of this study includes five life history interviews with Eritreans and Ethiopians.

The dissertation contains of introduction part, three chapters and conclusion. Main goal of the first chapter is to present theoretical background on migration and refugees, including main theories, definitions, terms associated with migration and refugees, and finally numbers related to the current refugee crisis.

Second chapter of the thesis aims to present a history of Eritrea for the readers. It also explains economic, political and religious situation in Eritrea in the twenty-first century and its international relations.

In the third chapter I explain the methodology chosen for empirical part of the dissertation, limitations of the research and results of the study: life history interviews and its analysis.

Finally, in the conclusion I try to answer for my research goals and give some recommendations for the future investigation on the topic.



# Chapter I

## Migration and Globalization in the twenty-first century

This chapter sets out the main theories and approaches that seek to characterize and explain migratory movements. The main aim of this chapter is to look beyond international migration and to try to understand the fleeing of the Eritrean society.

### 1.1 Migration as a global trend: definitions and general information

The migration is a social phenomenon which, in different forms, appears throughout the human history. Although migrants have common experiences, proper migration is a diverse and complex phenomenon. Migrants can be differentiated by gender, ethnicity, social class, age, by the reason of migration or by the way of migrating.

According to the information given in the *Exploring Contemporary Migration*, migration means: “crossing the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period” (Boyle et al., 1998: 35). Stephen Castles goes even further with the definition and explains that “migration means taking up residence for a certain minimum period-say 6 months or a year” (Castles, 2000: 270). The authors of the book *Exploring Contemporary Migration* distinguished two general types of migration: internal and international. *Internal migration* relates moving from one area (region, district or province) to another one within one country. *International migration* refers to crossing the borders which detach one state from another. As stated by Ronald Skeldon, internal and international migrations are components of the same process (Skeldon, 1997: 9-10).

Although many authors have contributed to develop ideas and methods, the concept of migration is associated to the work of sociologists. It is however, the result of an interdisciplinary collaboration of various sciences, including economics, sociology, anthropology, history, demography, among others, since the analysis of societies who emigrate have peculiarities, which sometimes only find explanation in interception of the various disciplines.

Like any other social phenomenon, migration is a complex thematic which cannot be explained by a single discipline. International migration involves many

aspects of society - economics, politics and social features. Therefore, the subject of study must integrate theoretical approaches of various disciplines. Each discipline places and considers issues, different assumptions and analysis or different perspectives. Anthropologists, sociologists and geographers develop the importance of transnationalism and social networks.

Anthropologists and sociologists approach the study of migration from a “variety of competing theoretical viewpoints fragmented across disciplines, regions, and ideologies.” (Massey et al., 1994: 700).

Castles defines that “sociological explanations of migration focus on the importance of cultural and social capital” (Castles, 2002: 1150).

Nowadays we are living in a world in motion. It is evident that there are more people on the move than at any earlier time in our history. After the Second World War (WWII), international migration surfaced as one of the leading aspects in social renewal and development in all parts of the world. The United States and Europe turned to be two major destinations for the migrants after 1945 (Castles, 1986: 770). Its importance looks likely to boost further in the current century, as population mobility increases in size and takes on new forms.

As a result of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century transportation infrastructure has made enormous progress in terms of speed, efficiency and convenience. Industrialization has been defined as “the process of converting to a socioeconomic order in which industry is dominant.”<sup>3</sup> There has been constructed the first railway network, which transported more passengers and goods with the increased speed and lower prices. In 1709 first balloon filled with the hot air has been invented, then supplanted by the airship, and finally replaced by the airplane in 1903. In 1817 the first Trans-Atlantic steamship transported people and goods.

Besides that, the communication system has developed with the unified system of postal service that allowed people to exchange their correspondence in a faster way. Finally, the invention of electric telegraph, telephone, radio and Internet enabled the rapid transmission of the information all around the world. With the increased mobility afforded by the development of transportation and new technologies of information and communication, international migrations are one of the main factors of transformation and development of the countries and / or regions. A wider knowledge of international

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<sup>3</sup> Definition taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica (access online: 12.05.2016). Available online: <http://www.britannica.com/topic/industrialization>

migratory flows, the level of the consequences and impact on sending and receiving countries, certainly will contribute to the understanding of the new order of the twenty-first century.

It is crucial to highlight that most of the border crossings do not indicate migration: most business visitors or travellers who are tourists do not intend to stay somewhere for a long time. The migratory movements are systematically described and explained through multiple demographic, social and economic analysis of the departure and destination regions. Thus, according to Jansen:

“migration is a demographic problem: it influences sizes of populations at origin and destination; it is an economic problem: a majority of shifts in population are due to economic imbalances between areas; it may be a political problem: this is particularly so in international migrations where restrictions and conditions apply to those wishing to cross a political boundary; it involves social psychology in so far as the migrant is involved in a process of decision-making before moving and that his personality may play an important role in the success with which he integrates into the host society; it is also a sociological problem since the social structure and cultural system both of places of origin and of destination are affected by migration and in turn affect the migrant.” (Jansen, 1969: 60).

## **1.2 Types and causes of migration**

More important than understanding the concept of migration is to understand its types and causes. The most evident cause of migration is “the disparity in levels of income, employment and social well-being between different areas.” (Castles, 2005: 272).

Nowadays, the migration’s topic tends to be considered as doubtful by societies, especially by the governments and its organizations who believe that it may cause erratic changes. States try to search for control enhancements in the division of international migrations into categories. According to Stephen Castles (2002: 270-271) there are eight types of migration: temporary labour migrants, highly skilled and business migrants, irregular migrants, family members, return migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and people, who are forced to move from their country of origin because of the development projects (usually large-scale infrastructure projects like dams, roads, airports or ports) and environmental catastrophes.

The temporary labour migrants group, also called as “overseas contract workers” or “guest workers”, includes people who leave their country for a defined period in order to find a job and send remittances back home.

The second type – highly skilled and business migrants - contains of individuals, who are highly qualified, like technicians, executives, managers and professionals. They change their location within the labour markets of international organizations or corporations, or search for employment through international labour markets. Irregular migrants, who are also termed as “illegal migrants” or “undocumented migrants”, enter the country without all the obligatory permits and documents.

Family members migrate to join the ones who are already in different countries and are the part of above categories. Some of the states help the legal migrants in their family reunions (including the United States and Canada). The fifth group contains of the return migrants who come back to their country of origin after a particular period of living and / or working in another country. Most of the governments look advantageously at the return migrants as they might bring experience, skills and capital, which are very useful for the economic development of the country.

The last three groups consist of refugees, asylum-seekers and forced migrants. I left those three types for the end, as they interest me the most and will be analysed in detail in this paper. They are exactly those groups where we can include Eritreans, who left their countries of origin.

According to the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee “is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion”.<sup>4</sup> The status of a refugee allows someone to enter and grant him / her a residence status of the hosting country – either permanent or temporary. Generally, there are more and more organizations which help refugees all around the world, in order to make refugees’ life easier.

Asylum-seekers are defined as people who move across the borders in search of protection, but who do not fulfil the criteria given in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The seek for the refuge is provoked by

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<sup>4</sup> Definition taken from the official website of the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (access online: 12.05.2016). Available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>



the demolition of the social and economic base needed for living. It has been noticed that most of the asylum-seekers leave their countries because of continuous violence, whether caused by the governments or private institutions.

Finally, forced migrants group consists of people who were obligated to move because of the development projects (already mentioned airports, ports, roads or dams) or environmental catastrophes.

Many theoretical and empirical papers have been published on the causes of migration. As I will mention later, migration is an indispensable part of the globalisation process. The fundamental symbol of globalisation is the breakneck increase of the cross-border flows of all types: trade, ideas, finances, pollution, people and media products. Streams of capital and goods are worldwide accepted, but many times migration and coming within it differences are seen as the risk and threat to the national identity and safety. In reality, each country cannot bypass the flow of different cultures.

As a consequence of the variation in levels of income, employment and social well-being in different areas around the world, migration became a daily process. According to Oded Stark (1991: 56) “migration process cannot be explained just by the differences in the income, but also by determinants, like chances of secure employment or the need to manage risk over long periods”. Many decisions related to migration are made by whole families, not just individuals.

As Stephen Castles (2000: 272) underlines “migration is (...) a result and a cause of development”. It leads to migration, because new financial and educational opportunities give people better possibilities in another place.

Migration flows increase because of the historical connections between sending and hosting countries depended on trade, investment, cultural ties, political influence or colonization. For instance, Angolan migrants likely moved to the former colonial power Portugal.

It happens quite often that migratory processes start with the recruitment or military services. Some people also facilitate migration process. There is a large group of the recruitment organizations, agents or smugglers in the countries of origin. They can either help or misuse migrants.

### 1.3 Historical background of migration flows

People move around the world since the beginning of the spread of Homo sapiens<sup>5</sup> around East Africa about 200,000 years ago (Castles, 2000: 270). Wars, formation of new states, nations or empires forced people to migration.

According to Leslie Page Moch (1992: 44), since the fifteenth century, industrialization process, colonialism and new model of European nation-state formation, have influenced a brisk increase in migration. Starting with the colonialism<sup>6</sup>, it has involved overseas migration of Europeans as administrators, sailors, priests, soldiers, traders and farmers. Its labour determined forced migration of African slaves and later on, by the use of enslaved workers, who were transported to the colonial empires.<sup>7</sup> It is crucial to mention, that after the decolonization process in Africa, which has started in 1951 in Libya, lots of Africans started migrating to their former colonizers' countries. For instance, Nigerians moved to the United Kingdom, Senegalese moved to France and Cape Verdeans migrated to Portugal.

The Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century, which began in Great Britain, changed an agrarian economy into an industrial and machine manufacture. The industrialisation very rapidly spread around the Western Europe and North America. Besides technological changes, it brought some crucial social alterations related to mass migration to other continents. The United States' nation-building and economic growth banked on migration, with an approximated amount of 30 million people who entered the country from 1861 to 1920 (Zlotnik, 1999: 21-61).

After the Second World War (WWII), international migration has increased to the maximum. Lots of countries were affected by migration, while traditional immigration countries (like the United States or France) received thousands of people from different cultural, economic and social backgrounds. According to Stephen Castles (2000: 274), there are two phases of the migratory process after the WWII. The first one has covered a period between 1945 and 1973 with the migration flow to Western Europe, North America and Oceania from less-developed areas. It ended with the Oil

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<sup>5</sup> Homo sapiens is "the species to which all modern human beings belong."  
Definition taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica (access online: 21.06.2016)  
Available online: <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Homo-sapiens>

<sup>6</sup> This work includes more information about the colonialism in Africa in the upcoming chapter as it is significant for the presentation of the refugee crisis in Eritrea.

<sup>7</sup> As some of the internet sources say that there have been "between 12 - 15 million people from Africa to the Western Hemisphere from the middle of the 15th century to the end of the 19th century".  
Retrieved from the blog "Understanding Slavery" (access online: 12.05.2016).  
Available online: <https://goo.gl/miaHft>

Crisis in 1973.<sup>8</sup> The second phase, which started in the mid-1970s, transnational forms of production and distribution altered the world economy. Within this period new immigration countries emerged, including Southern Europe, the Gulf countries, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The collapse of multinational states (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia), civil wars and armed conflicts with the ethnic background caused the massive migration, which has occurred between 1980s and 1990s. People, who lived in many post-communist countries of the former multinational states left their countries because of human rights violations, lack of opportunities and enormous disasters of their homelands.

Since World War II (WWII), with the steady increase of migration, people have started to question the world's security and openness. Under the political point of view, entering the country has become more problematic than leaving and many countries started to seek for ways to stop, or at least slow down, the immigration flow. Since the 1970s, almost all the receiving states tried to reassert control of the migration movements. In the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century, studies on the policies of international migrations began to emerge with particular emphasis on the control and security issues.

According to the estimates of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 125 million people lived outside of their country of origin in the late twentieth century. Migration poses benefits for both the sending and receiving countries. It provides remittances to the society which is sending and brings a flow of human capital and entrepreneurial talent to the hosting society (Borjas, 1990).

While making an analysis in relation to the changes in policies of the international migration before and after the Cold War<sup>9</sup>, we find out that during this particular period

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<sup>8</sup>Oil crisis is described as a „sudden rise in the price of oil that is often accompanied by decreased supply”. In 1973 Arab member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) decided to increase the price of oil to almost \$12 a barrel. They exported oil to the United States, Japan and Western Europe. The crisis of 1973 forced those countries to slow down the process of economic restructuring, and what comes with that – financial and social changes, like migration process. Definition taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica (access online: 12.05.2016)

Available online: <http://www.britannica.com/topic/oil-crisis>

<sup>9</sup> The term Cold War created by Winston Churchill, former prime-minister of the United Kingdom „is used to describe the relationship between America and the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1980. Neither side ever fought the other – the consequences would be too appalling – but they did “fight” for their beliefs using client states who fought for their beliefs on their behalf e.g. South Vietnam was anti-communist and was supplied by America during the war while North Vietnam was pro-Communist and fought the south (and the Americans) using weapons from communist Russia or communist China. In Afghanistan, the

the states of the Eastern bloc were not interested in allowing the emigration of their populations and, as its testimony, the Berlin wall has been constructed. With the end of the Cold War a profound change showed up, by passing the Western countries to accept the immigration of the Eastern societies and questioning the migration in terms of security.

On the other hand, Freeman (1986) argues that the logic of the modern welfare state is a logic of occlusion, and the large-scale migration can ruin the public finances, lead social services to bankruptcy and undermine the legitimacy of the welfare state. Since the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 migration poses threat to all nations. When a series of suicide attacks and airline hijackings made by group of terrorists from al-Qaeda targeted on two towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, whole world stopped.

#### **1.4 Migration and development**

We live in a more fluid and much more movable world. National economies are increasingly dependent on the exchange of global networks. According to Petras (1981), one of the main features of the actual world-system – the modern capitalism – is in fact the creation of a global labour market. The globalization of economies and the increasing internationalization of the trade have led to a global system that has become increasingly complex. The establishment of new companies brakes political boundaries. The world without the borders, in the sense of the global movement of the capital and goods, is related to important workflows, which constitute international migrations.

Thus, Massey (1994) says that the world-systems theory is the clear consequence of the development process, resulting in the relocation and disintegration processes, and productive factors in the mobility of labour follow the opposite path to the capital movements. Migration provides information regarding the yield differentials between the countries on a worldwide level. However, the regulatory policies of the flows of capital and goods are very difficult to implement.

The increasing complexity of the global flows led to the formation of a multipolar world system consisting of cultural, economic and political realities, which

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Americans supplied the rebel Afghans after the Soviet Union invaded in 1979 while they never physically involved themselves thus avoiding a direct clash with the Soviet Union.”

Definition taken from The History Learning Site (access online: 07.05.2016).

Available online: <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/modern-world-history-1918-to-1980/the-cold-war/what-was-the-cold-war/>

are connected via multiple relations in a state of the permanent decomposition. The operational centres of each pole attract people to migrate: unskilled workers, who are often placed in the informal economy zones, and top professionals.

According to the globalization's thesis, states have been deterritorialized (Ruggie 1998). Companies, individuals and transnational communities have discovered several ways to elude the authority and the sovereignty of states. The nation-state is no longer the legitimate "player" in the international relations. On the contrary, it has been argued by the theorists of globalization theory (with a strong emphasis on transnationalism), that the state is unable to control neither of the migrants circulating in search for the employment opportunities or international corporations, especially banks, that move vast sums of capital all around the world. The major criticism which is given for the globalization theory includes the weakness and, in some cases, the absence of political explanation of migration, with the transmission of power and change in society and economy.

On the other hand, the globalization's theory highlights positive effects of migration as well. It makes enormous changes in the demography of the hosting country and in the labour market. Obviously, migration creates the development opportunities in the countries of origin through the circulation of human capital acquired in the hosting country. If there were sustainable conditions for growth created in the countries of origin, the differences in income would be reduced, and consequently, it would reduce the flows of migration and increase the return of emigrants.

Globalization allows more opportunities for an exchange of highly skilled people and the rapid spread of consumer products to other countries.<sup>10</sup>

Since the World War II (WWII) international migrations, while being a historical process, became one of the predominant factors of interaction between societies with different levels of the development. International inequalities and migratory networks seem to continue to influence the amount and the path of migrations. According to Sassen (1996), the migratory processes are still powered by the existence of material and ideological links with colonization, of continuous processes of expanding markets and other factors, such as common language, commerce relations and intense communications between different countries.

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<sup>10</sup> Globalization enabled for non-English speaking migrants to learn speaking English. More and more nongovernmental organizations provide classes of languages and give support to the migrants.

The theoretical approach interrelates migration to the process of the economic development. The research on the link between migratory movements and the development puts under review the question of the very concept of development and the economic growth. The development concept is relative in time, space and context in which countries fall. In fact, the development does not exist without the economic growth, although the opposite is very common.

According to Stephen Castles (2000), from one side the development process of each country generates migrations, since the improvement of the economic and educational conditions gives desire to the individuals to seek better opportunities in other countries. On the other hand, migrations generate the development process as well. Regarding the link between migration and development, Fisher (1997) concludes that the impact of international migration in the development of most countries tends to be positive, but mostly in the short term.

## **1.5 Theories of migration and its effects in the sending and hosting countries**

Most research on migration focuses on selected sections of reality, so that it is easier to generalize and identify regularities that rule the migration system. The classification of the theories of migration can be build based on a different criteria. The most frequent division relates to the international and internal migration (which has been already mentioned in the subsection 1.2. Types and causes for migration), as quite commonly assumed that the crossing of the border is associated with a distinct change in the characteristics of the same migration motives displacement and intensity of the flow.

The basis of the second division of the theories of migration is to treat it as a result of the changes that occur in the environment or as a cause of these changes. Therefore, migration can be considered as a consequence or as a cause in the chain of interconnections between itself and the environment. In the first approach migration is the dependent variable. Therefore, it seeks to answer questions on the set of characteristics that determine its occurrence, including the migrant's personal characteristics, the form of the migration process, as well as the temporal and spatial variation of the intensity of flows. In the other approach, migration is the independent

variable, resulting that theories of this group focus on the natural, economic, social and political consequences of migration (Woods, 1982). Personally, I believe that this division may be useful in analysing the current refugee crisis, as it focuses on individuals' life, and on the other hand, it analyses a particular group of people (in that case one nationality or religious group) and their reasons of leaving the country. However, it focuses more on forced migrants rather than refugees or asylum-seekers.

The other classification divides theories of migration into classical, conflict and system theories. All of them are called theories of equilibrium (Pryor, 1985). Classical theory assumes that migration is the process of compensating the differences occurring in the economic or social nature, and the transfer of the population is beneficial for both – the population and for the regions, which send and receive migrants. The theory of conflict, more or less refers directly to the Marxist rhetoric, sets up that the condition for the development of highly developed countries is the use of the underdeveloped countries, and migration, in particular the international one, is a mechanism to deepen the differences between countries, for example, by brain-drain<sup>11</sup> (Arango, 2000). Finally, system theory assumes, that there are many factors which have an impact on migration, and it is impossible to explain the variability of migration by using just one factor which boils down spatial differences to one dimension of the world.

Migrations can be also studied by analysing the behaviour of the individuals and based on this analysis, conclusions can be drawn about the general population (Woods, 1982). This division stems from the adoption of different scales examining the migration phenomenon. Such an approach, which is operating a micro scale in the research, is called behaviourist or behavioural. Behavioural theory is based on psychological theories of motivation and focuses on the relation between the occurrence of the phenomenon of migration and personal characteristics of the entity, and the way in which it assesses its own place of residence on the background of potential migration purposes (Woods, 1982). Since anyone can react in a different way on the same set of the information and circumstances, hence the feedback related to the total population is based on some probability. It is therefore assumed, that migrants respond to the social

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<sup>11</sup> According to Góis and Marques (2007: 34) the term “brain drain” meant apprehension with the flow of highly skilled people between developed countries, principally from Europe to the United States of America. Nowadays, the “brain drain” also includes “the migration of individuals from less developed to developed countries” (Góis and Marques, 2007: 34). According to Cambridge Dictionaries Online, term *brain drain* means “the situation in which large numbers of educated and very skilled people leave their own country to live and work in another one where pay and conditions are better”. (Access online: 09.05.2016).

Available online: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/brain-drain>

and economic differences in space. I am of the opinion, that this particular division can be useful in analysing Eritrean refugee crisis as it focuses on individuals' life. That accuracy is very useful in analysing a variety of reasons, which lead Eritrean to the refuge.

The main focus of the neoclassical theory are the economic aspects, and they do not take into account the security and life conditions topic, which is so essential in studying the refugee crisis. The neoclassical theory of migrations' analysis includes a structure of costs and benefits accounted under the individual's point of view in the countries of origin and destiny (Woods, 1982). Under the influence of classical economic theory, the models of "push-pull" related to the market theories of work, are based on these balance perspectives. According to the neoclassical, one of the main determinants of economic migrations have root characterized by "economic and social development" (Castles, 2000: 269). According to Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield a significant part of the work on migration "was influenced by this theory (modernization theory) and a bipolar framework for analysis that separated and opposed sending and receiving areas, and the push factors of out-migration from the pull factors of in-migration." (Brettell, Hollifield, 2000: 102). But it is essential to emphasize that, the neoclassical theory surpasses that bipolar framework while analysing the migration flows, no matter what is the type of migration.

The neoclassical theory values the existence of historical character, mainly the colonial period, of migratory networks and others to explain the existence of migratory flows between countries. The migratory flow, by its perception, contributes to the economic development of both countries - the sending and receiving. The modernization theory involves a development balance model, resulting in a more equitable balance between resources and population pressure in both societies.

Although the push-pull elements also serve to answer the question why people migrate, the historical-structural approach diverts the attention of the motivations and adaptations of individual migrants to the macro process levels that shape and keeps the movements of the population.

Unlike the microeconomic model, the macro historical-structural approach makes its systematization complex, given the diversity of the incorporating migratory models. The historical-structural approach puts migration in "the context of a global economy, core-periphery relations, and the development of underdevelopment." (Brettell, Hollifield, 2000: 103). The researchers of this approach focus on the global



market instead of the individuals, and analyse the impact of the national and international economic and political policies on the migration movements. From this perspective, concepts such as the international division of labour and the internationalization of the proletariat have emerged to define the gap between the export of labour in low-wage countries and import of the same in countries with high wages (Piore, 1979).

Personally speaking, I believe that neoclassical theory of migration is the most suitable for understanding economic migration, but not for the refugee crisis. It focuses on costs and benefits of each individual, who decides about moving into a particular destination. Most of the economic migrants make a research on the hosting country, before leaving their country of origin.

By comparing given approaches, it seems to me, that none of them is perfectly applicable for explaining and understanding Eritrean refugee crisis. However, it seems to me, that assumptions of two theories can be useful while studying current refugee crisis.

I reckon that the system theories may help in understanding the refugee crisis. They focus on many factors which push people to migrate or refuge. Eritreans leave their country because of few different reasons, including human rights violation, eternal national military service, political and religious repression, imprisonment and tortures by the regime.

I am also convinced that the historical-structural approach might be useful in understanding why Eritreans flee their country. It focuses on motivations of people leaving their country, with the emphasis on the history and living conditions of the country of origin.

No matter which theory the researchers would choose for analysis, the reality shows that more and more countries will be affected by migration with the diversification of the sending countries. The diversity of migrants' origins are numerous on economic, social and cultural levels. Only with the development of the southern countries, based on an economic growth that absorbs all the people to work, international migrations may be reduced.

Each theory presented above takes into consideration that migration movement affects sending and hosting countries. There are numerous negative effects of migration in the migrants' country of origin. In these countries, "migration may hinder development by siphoning of qualified personnel (the "brain drain"), removing dynamic

young workers and reducing pressures for social change” (Castles, 2000: 275). In situations of unemployment and underemployment existing in countries of the origin, internal migrations reduce the supply of manual labour, which may reduce the incidence of these phenomena and simultaneously contribute to the increase of wages. On the other hand, Kearney (1986: 331-404) argues that the loss of population through the migratory flows weakens the sending country’s economy.

One of the most visible positive impacts of migration in the country of origin comes from the remittances sent by emigrants. Going deeper into that impact it is quite easy to define other influences: the economic and political change, the stability of interest rates or the currency of the country of origin (Puri and Ritzema, 1999).

The development of migrants’ associations helps to maintain the relation with the origin community. These ties of connection generally assume the role of local development motors, becoming the migrants’ transmitters of knowledge, of savings and technology, of researchers and guarantors of well-being. Unfortunately, it runs a risk of creating up an emigration culture, according to which it becomes a rhythm of passage mostly for young people.

In short term, the practical evidence indicates that migration has several impacts on the countries of emigration and immigration. The economic-social impacts caused by migration in the hosting country, include mainly the population structure, the tax impacts, the job offer sharing, the new cultural experiences, the social services costs for the language formation, and the lower national salaries. However, the influence of long-term migration is difficult to be account for because of the complexity of the real situations.

## **1.6 Transnationalism and multiculturalism as parts of the migration process**

Due to the varied causes and consequences, it is difficult to assess the migration as desirable or undesirable social phenomenon. Generally speaking, mass migration entails positive and negative effects on demography, economy and culture of sending and hosting countries. The postmodern utopia of a mobile world without borders has not been accomplished yet. Migration is primarily a controlled and limited by the state process, based on inequality and discrimination. Almost everywhere qualified

immigrants are seen way better than low-skilled migrants or even refugees – hence the hostile attitude towards the poor migrants from the South.

Nowadays, with the increasing refugee crisis in Europe many nationalist groups appear. They believe that migration is noxious and dysfunctional and it must be stopped. The mass media often maintain a discourse, which is influenced by colonial roots – poverty threatens the prosperity and public order.

The discussions between the researchers of the historical-structural approach have resulted in an emergence of the new approach about the connection between sending and hosting countries, speculating that is entrenched in the concept of transnationalism. In the contemporary migration processes, migrants sometimes maintain multiple relationships in both the receiving society and the sending country, pointing these relations to the transnational context of population mobility. Portes (1999) argues that transnational activities may be, in long term, empowering the low status migrants and help them to ensure better levels of life and education for their children.

Transnationalism is defined as a social process in which migrants operate in social areas that cross geographic, political and cultural boundaries (Schiller, Bash and Szanton, 1992: 8). The roots of transnationalism in anthropology can be found in the investigation on the return migration, which emphasises the connection with the homeland. However transnationalism, as its proper concept explicit, also implies that the migrant's return is not a definitive return. Migrants come to be nicknamed when transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations with the two countries (social, economic, political, organizational and religious) that expand the boundaries putting in inter-relation, the local and the global (Schiller, Bash and Szanton, 1992: 10).

The transnationalism emerged from the fact that migrants remain binding ties to their homelands and hosting countries. The transnational perspective questions and / or criticizes the traditionalist theory that considers migrants as assimilated into the host societies. Migration contributes to the increase of human capital and for the well-being of the receiving society. The researchers of transnationalism, consider that migrants within one or two generations, will integrate in the host society by assimilation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Academic papers related to transnationalism: Gordon M., (1964). *Assimilation in American Life*, New York, Oxford University Press; Fuchs L.H., (1990). *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity and the Civic Culture*, Hanover, N.H., Wesleyan University, New England and University Press of New England.

Migrants maintain multiple relations, not in contradiction, but in combination with the hosting society and the society of origin. They often stay in touch with family in their place of origin and many of them do not apply for the permanent residency in the destination country, mostly return to their homelands (Jones, 1992).

The expansion of the European systems, through the colonization and just right after the decolonization, spread to the world the ideals of nationality, sovereignty and citizenship (Said, 1993). Thus, the changes occurred in the last half of the twentieth century, and the consequent mobility world of the twenty-first century, with strong capital flows, goods, people and cultural products make sustainable the ideal model of transnationalism, surpassing even the theory that the assimilation is inevitable and necessary in the adaptation process (Gordon, 1964). According to the definition given on Encyclopaedia Britannica, the term assimilation has been defined in anthropology and sociology as “the process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society.”<sup>13</sup> A lot of research has been done on the cultural assimilation process in particular communities around the world. Cultural assimilation is associated with the migrants, who are forced to adapt themselves to rules, traditions, language etc. of the hosting country. The process of assimilation usually takes place in unforced way. Most of the hosting countries focus providing migrants a sense of security.

The connection between the society and the culture of a community, with local (micro) and global dimensions (macro), helps to explain how the migrants cross the borders, and they are shaped by the context (political, cultural, economic and social) within which they operate, both in the country of origin and in receiving country.

As an antithesis of assimilation, the multiculturalism has emerged. Nowadays, multiculturalism is the term used in two different senses. It is usually defined as a description of the cultural diversity of each society. It might be also associated to ideology, doctrine or movement towards emancipation of various minority communities in the social, political and cultural life. The main characteristic of multiculturalism is an integration of cultures of the all possible types. Currently there is an increasing number of multi-ethnic migrant countries, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and European countries.

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<sup>13</sup> Definition taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica (access online: 06.05.2016). Available on: <http://www.britannica.com/topic/assimilation-society>

Integration is a process, which depends not only on the culture, but also on the economy. The bottom of the professional hierarchy and unemployed people integrate the slowest. The revitalization of native culture and ethnic identity can be provoked by a failure on the economic ground. In the end, effective socio-cultural integration is a very complex process: it depends both on the goodwill of the migrant community and of the hosting country. Let us note, that the European Union promotes migration within the community (free movement of people and capital). On the other hand, the EU comes with the increasing reserve to immigrants from non-European cultural circles. This happens because none of the known models of integration policy does not guarantee success. Multiculturalism entangled in numerous paradoxes and produces a new type of prejudices. Weak, overt and hidden prejudices are characterized by strong, political and legal citizens of the old Europe dissatisfied with their new neighbourhood. Thus, multiculturalism in Europe is an imperfect model of integration, the challenge for the old and new generations of Europeans, and consequently an important research topic.

## **1.7 International migration and refugee crisis in numbers and its effect in the world**

According to the information given on the United Nations (UN) website, the current migration is concentrated in specified regions and countries. In a paper written by Stephen Castles (2000), he presents that “90% of the world’s migrants were living in just 55 countries”.

In the third period of the biggest flow of migration – from the 1980s until 1990s, – streams from less-developed to developed countries have grown very fast. Additionally, there have been broad flows of migration from the least developed countries of the South to the developing countries, especially in the East Asia.

Particular regions and areas are affected by the migration process within both sending and hosting countries more than others. A specified amount of young women and men leave their area of origin. It usually leads to local labour shortages as well as changes in social life. In immigration countries, migrants become a part of industrial areas and urban centres, where they find a job. Almost all the European countries consist of cities where it is easy to find big concentrations of migrants. Commonly,

some of the neighbourhoods became centres of migrant settlement. Such areas are an important basis for ethnic communities and cultural connections.

Migration and refugee crisis cannot be explained in a better way than numbers and stories of life, where migrants and refugees explain their choice and long journey for a better life.

According to the United Nations Population Division (UNPD), the number of people resident in a place outside their country of origin grew from 153 million in 1990 to 244 million in 2015. It is an absolute increase of 91 million people from 2000. International migration started growing rapidly in 2010 with the number of 222 million people outside their country of origin.

Sort order	Major area	International migrant stock at mid-year					
		1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
1	WORLD	152 563 212	160 801 752	172 703 309	191 269 100	221 714 243	243 700 236 (59,74% more than in 1990)
2	Developed regions	82 378 628	92 306 854	103 375 363	117 181 109	132 560 325	140 481 955 (70,53% more than in 1990)
3	Developing regions	70 184 584	68 494 898	69 327 946	74 087 991	89 153 918	103 218 281 (47,1% more than in 1990)
4	Least developed countries	11 075 966	11 711 703	10 077 824	9 809 634	10 018 128	11 951 316 (7,9% more than in 1990)
5	Less developed regions excluding least developed regions	59 105 261	56 778 501	59 244 124	64 272 611	79 130 668	91 262 036 (54,41% more than in 1990)

Table no. 1. International migrant stock at mid-year by major area in 1990-2015.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The content taken from: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015). (Access online: 16.05.2015). Available online: <https://goo.gl/hfvk8C>

Each consecutive year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) publishes a Global Trends report on forced displacement. The most recent Global Trends report has been published on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 and it shows frightening numbers and realities from all around the world. The detailed research is based on data from the UNHCR's reporting, governments and partner agencies.

According to the report there were 65.3 million people displaced from their homelands by conflict or persecution in 2015. It is 5.8 million more than in 2014 (59.5 million people). As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi highlights "It is the first time in the organization's history that the threshold of 60 million has been crossed".<sup>15</sup> As stated in the report migration and forced displacement have increased over the past five years.

Researchers of the report focus on three reasons of forces migration, which I explain below. The conflicts and civil wars in Afghanistan and Somalia last for three and four decades. There are more tragic conflicts and insecurities around the world, including Syrian civil war (which already lasts five years), conflicts in Central African Republic, Burundi, South Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen, Ukraine and in countries of Central America. The UN Refugee Agency emphasizes, that governments do not come with fitting solutions for solving forced migration and helping refugees in the hosting countries.

Presently, there are three countries, which generate 50% of the world's refugees: Syria (4.9 million people), Afghanistan (2.7 million people) and Somalia (1.1 million people).

In consonance with the 2015 Global Trends report, I studied particular numbers related to Eritrea and Ethiopia. According to the database of the United Nations, about 8.68% of all citizens of Eritrea (496,598 Eritreans) lived outside their country of origin in 2015. Respectively, Eritrea has been classified as the ninth-biggest country of origin in 2015, with an estimated number of 411,300 refugees originating from the country at the end of 2015 (compared to 363,200 at the end of 2014).

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2015 Eritreans represent around 4% of all arrivals through the Mediterranean Sea. Thought, Eritrean society arriving by the Mediterranean

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<sup>15</sup> Information taken from the UN Refugee Agency's website (access online: 01.07.2016)  
Available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

Sea to Italy presents a significant number (19%), there were only 700 individuals, who submitted a claim for asylum in 2015.

The most frequent route, which refugees chose to reach Europe, was the Mediterranean route. There were around 1 million people, who decided to take a risk and escape to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

Though, most of the refugees try to reach European countries, Europe is not a top destination for them. Globally, Turkey is the biggest hosting country, with around 2.5 million refugees.

What petrifies the most is the enormous number of children, who had to leave their homelands. There were around 51% of forcibly displaced children in 2015, and many of them were travelling alone or were separated from their parents.

The phenomenon of refugee crisis needs to be questioned in this global world, challenging the disciplines such as economic geography, sociology and social anthropology. The fieldwork in various regions is required in order to better understand in the social changes caused by migrations.

The migratory policies, especially the ones related to refugees and asylum-seekers, are now more restrictive. Thus, those policies are leading not only to a diminution of less developed workers but can also cause, already mentioned, “brain drain”, which is aggravating the unevenness in terms of development between sending and receiving countries. It is expected to build the harmonized migration policy that takes into account the interests and maximize the benefits of the European Union (EU), of the countries of origin of migrants with the main assumption of the increasing development of ties on the political, economic, cultural and social level between migrants and their country of origin.

Hosting countries should be encouraged to implement policies that provide the socioeconomic integration of all the types of migrants, through the access to the labour market, health public services, housing, education, as well as, the implementation of anti-racism policies, xenophobia and any other type of intolerance, which are part of a migration policy.

The country of origin should encourage the best application of remittances in productive activities and investment at local level. Accordingly, it must reduce transfer costs, facilitate sending remittances, foster the local entrepreneurial spirit and ensure the access to banking services by enhancing and / or formulating the tax incentive system in



the countries of origin. In this sense, the local public government has necessarily a big role to play.

The search for solutions to problems such as the regional inequalities and the domain of the developed countries on the refugee economic flows, will surely be a part of all the political debates in the upcoming years.



## **Chapter II**

### **The history of Eritrea as one of the push factors of the refugee crisis in Europe**

#### **2.1 What Africa? – raptures and doubts**

Speaking of Africa we often think of it as a country. Whereas, Africa is the second biggest continent in the world in terms of the size (30.3 million km<sup>2</sup>). It consists of 53 independent states, where one of them, Egypt, is partially located within Asia on the map of the world.

Africa is very diverse in terms of ethnicity. The continent's inhabitants speak over 2000 different languages and dialects. Just in the South Africa there are eleven official languages including English, Afrikaans and others. Most of the Africans are fluent in at least two languages.

African continent is also diverse in terms of religion. The inhabitants of the south part of Africa consider themselves as Christians (around 40% of the whole population), while Islam is a religion professed in the north and in the east of Africa (around 45% of its inhabitants). Besides those two religions Africans still believe in some traditional African faiths.

African continent is considered as the cradle of mankind. It is proved by the research and archaeological excavations carried out in the south of Africa (the current area of South Africa). There has been discovered the remains of a prehistoric man, whose age is estimated at 4 million years.

The first civilization in Africa appeared more than 5000 years ago with creation of the ancient Egypt. Around 2500 years ago more lands have been discovered by the sub-Saharan societies. Sahara was a natural barrier separating the southern part of Africa from the rest of the world, until the arrival of Arab traders in the eighth century.

The arrival of Europeans in Africa in the fifteenth century, slave trade and European imperialism, had an enormous impact on the whole continent.

It is crucial to mention the colonial period in Africa as it affected, and still affects, the whole continent. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century Europeans started colonizing Africa by establishing the new economic order which was beneficial for the colonizers. In this period slavery reached its apogee as the slave labour became

“trendy”. The shameful slave trade scattered on around 20 million Africans in Europe and America, which significantly weakened the African culture and its influence on its history until the modern times. Africans have been used to work in the agricultural sector and in the metals and minerals mines. Profits from their work driven the economic growth in Europe and America.

In 1884 European leaders (Belgian, British, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish colonizers) decided that their countries could accept occupied African territories as European colonies. However, Liberia and Ethiopia were the only countries which remained independent.

Africans fiercely fought against the colonialism. Zimbabwe and Sudan aroused the uprising against the British government in 1896 and 1920; in 1902 Angolan tribes tried to overthrow the Portuguese government; Namibia and Tanzania lost thousands of their people in the uprisings against Germany in 1904-1908; and finally Nigerian local tribes sparked an uprising against the British government in 1920. Nevertheless, the colonial powers were combating these revolts.

During the next decades of the twentieth century, all the African countries gained their independence and started rebuilding their identity and nation.

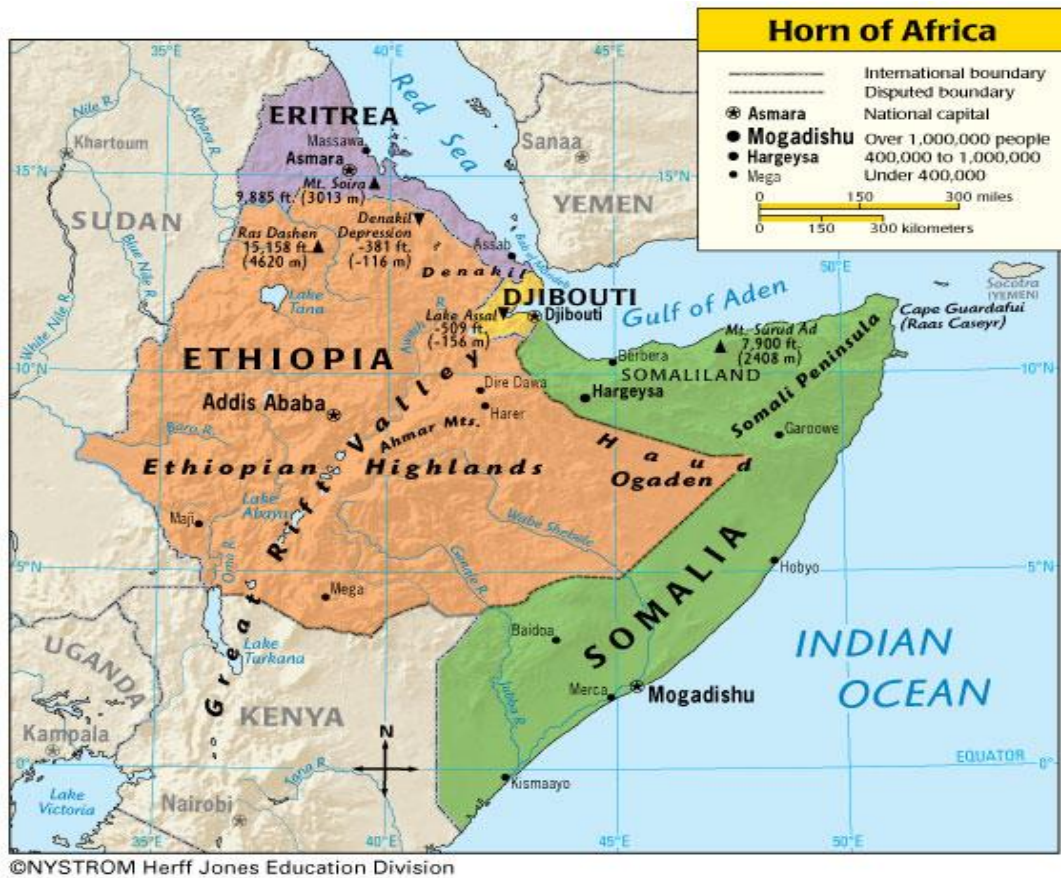
The contemporary Africa is struggling with the effect of the colonial period and with the current internal and external conflicts. Colonizers used the conquered countries as a source of the cheap raw materials for European industries. Instead of creating an internal market, which could help African countries, colonizers transformed the whole continent into a raw goods territory. As it turned out, all the independent countries of Africa were too weak to develop their economies in a short time. The economic crisis brought Africa into a period of wars with their neighbours and allies.

The reality shows that with the beginning of the colonial period, Africa became a permanent machine of migration, mainly forced. Africans are constantly leaving their lands because of developed unemployment, lack of opportunities, constant conflicts and religion and ethnical persecutions.

## **2.2 Contextualization: Eritrean population and environment**

Strategically located at what is known as the Horn of Africa, Eritrea is one of the poorest countries in the world with “a Human Development Index ranking of 155 out of

175 countries”.<sup>16</sup> Over 117,600 km<sup>2</sup> in size and with a population of around six million people, it is one of the smallest countries in Africa (Iyob, 1995: 51).



Map no. 1. Map of the Horn of Africa – location of Eritrea.<sup>17</sup>

Both physically and demographically, Eritrea is Africa in microcosm. It is a land of great diversity and unlimited contrasts. It is obvious that the ethnic heterogeneity is the outcome of migration and conquest, and the great variation in the allocation of population is the result of terrain, climate, and country’s history. The contrasting physical environment, thoroughly affected the transformation of Eritrean society and its culture, certainly influencing the patterns of settlement, modes of life and production, social interaction and popular apprehension.

It is quite easy to notice that the ethnographic picture reveals the existence of many linguistic groups, but only a few are numerically significant. The Eritrean population is composed of Semites, Cushites and Nilotes. The Semitic-speaking

<sup>16</sup> Information taken from the Rural Poverty Portal (access online: 02.06.2016).

Available online: <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/eritrea>

<sup>17</sup> Map taken from <http://maps-africa.blogspot.pt/2012/05/horn-of-africa-map-pictures.html>

majority is mainly composed of the Tigrinya and the Tigre people. Out of these, the Tigrinya is the largest group, accounting for as many as 55 percent of the total population. It is a dominant element, culturally and politically, since the foundation of Axum.<sup>18</sup> The Tigrinya group is predominantly Christian with significant Muslim minorities (Levine, 2000: 34). The Tigre people constitute around 30 percent of inhabitants. Just like Tigrinya people, the Tigre group consider themselves to be the descendants of the ancient inhabitants of the State of Axum. The Tigre people are divided into many groups, including: Bet Asgede, Ad Tsaura, Ad Muallim, Bet Mala, Maria, Mensa, and others. In the northern part of Eritrea, close to the border with Sudan, lives a small amount of Beja people. The Beja people in Eritrea belong to the Beni-Amer group and their official language is Tigre. Just like in Sudan, their traditional occupation is shepherding (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 72).

In addition, there is a number of Nilo-Saharan-speaking Nilotic ethnic minorities like Kunama and Nara people. According to their own oral tradition, they may come from the Fur people.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, in few cities of Eritrea there are small groups of Arabs involved in the trade, and at the border with Sudan shepherds from Rashaida ethnic group.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the African languages, and this also applies to the Horn of Africa, do not have their own graphic notation. Few civilizations of this area created their own alphabets, and the oldest arising from the North Africa is the Meroitic script. Ethiopia has created its own alphabet in the fourth century, which has been easily adapted in Abyssinia and in Eritrea. Ge'ez language and alphabet has arisen with the creation of the former Axum Empire and came out of the use in the tenth century. Though Ethiopians and Eritreans do not speak Ge'ez anymore, it is still a liturgical language in both countries. Currently, in the area of the Horn of Africa four different alphabets function:

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<sup>18</sup> The ancient kingdom of Axum has been found in the fourth century. For a very long time Axum was a religious capital for Christian Orthodox in Ethiopia. At this moment, the town turned to be a touristic area.

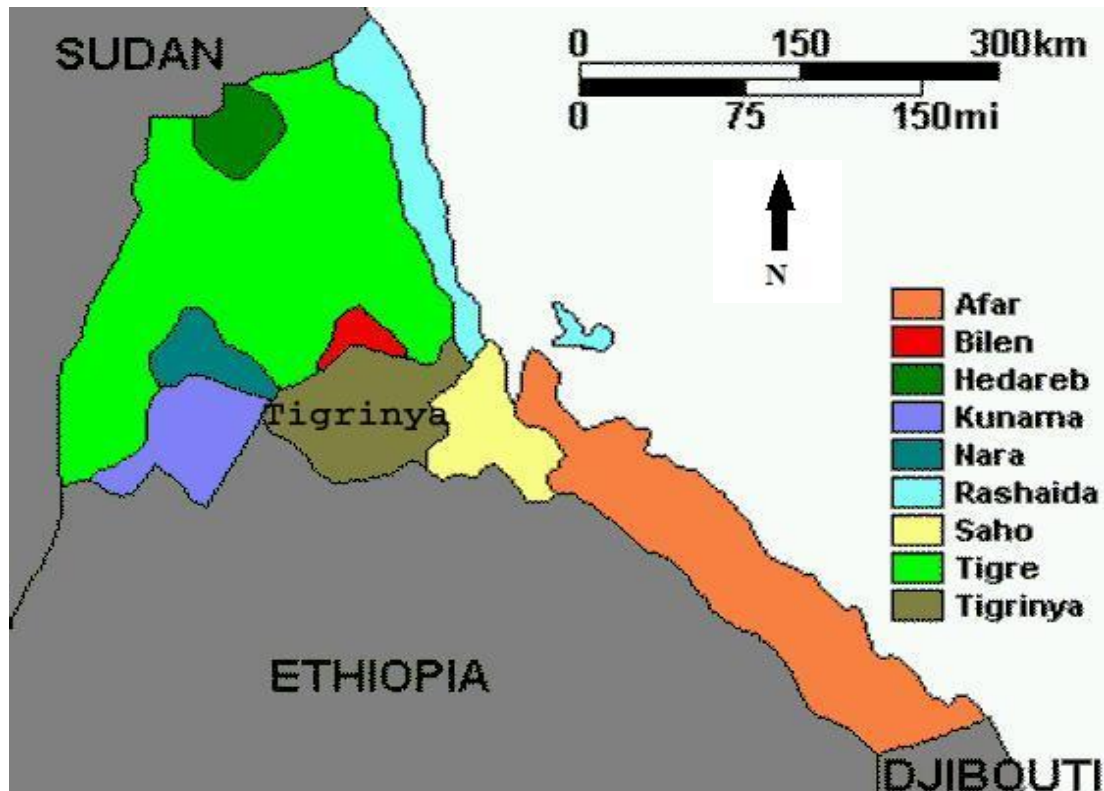
<sup>19</sup> Fur people - The Fur are an ethnic group from western Sudan, principally inhabiting the region of Darfur where they are the largest tribe. They speak Fur language and are Muslims. Their presence on the Eritrean territory has not been studied yet.

J. Gentleman, "Chaos in Darfur on rise as Arabs fight with Arabs", news article, The New York Times, September 3, 2007: 1. (Access online: 27.03.2016)

Available online: [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/03/world/africa/03darfur.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/03/world/africa/03darfur.html?_r=0)

<sup>20</sup> The Rashaida people are a tribe populating Eritrea and northeast Sudan. They practice Sunni Islam and sometimes found in the Arabic Peninsula. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report from March 2013 the Rashaida people have been heavily involved in trafficking Eritreans to Israel. They started to cooperate with some Bedouin people in 2012 on the Sinai Peninsula in order to send Eritreans to the Israeli state.

Latin, Arabic, Ge'ez and Somali (Diringer, 1953: 148-149). In Ethiopia, the official language is Amharic using the specific letters, also used in Eritrea. It is a syllabic script created for writing the Ge'ez language, now only the liturgical language of the Ethiopian church. Islam has left the Arabic language with its alphabet. As a result of the European influence, the Latin alphabet has been widely spread. The main local vehicular languages of Eritrea are Tigrinya, Tigre, Dahlik, Beja, Saho, Afar, Blin, Arabic and Amharic.



Map no. 2. Eritrea's ethnographic groups.<sup>21</sup>

The rest of the population derives from the Cushitic-speaking minority including groups such as, e.g. Saho, Hedareb, Afar and Bilen. Among the Cushites population, the largest group in the Eritrean territory (about three percent of the total population in 2010<sup>22</sup>) represents the Afar people.<sup>23</sup> They live in the dry lowlands area of the south-eastern Eritrea, as well as, in Djibouti and Ethiopia. Closely related to the Afar people is also an ethnic group Saho, inhabiting a narrow strip between the Abyssinian Upland and the Danakil Lowland in the south-eastern part of Eritrea. Some researchers use the term

<sup>21</sup> Map taken from <http://www.eritrea.be/old/eritrea-people.htm> (access online: 27.03.2016).

<sup>22</sup> Information taken from the website [https://en.wiki2.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Eritrea](https://en.wiki2.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Eritrea) (access online: 27.03.2016).

<sup>23</sup> Other names of Afar group – Danakil or Teltal people.

Saho-Afar to determine both groups. Most of them are nomads cultivating camels and cattle.

The historical relationship between these ethnic groups, has oscillated between harmony and conflict. The Eritreans have fought bloody and destructive civil wars at times, but Christians and Muslims have lived there in a state of mutual tolerance. Geography and history have both promoted and thwarted opportunities for intercommunication and solidarity.

Physically, Eritrea contains of a wide range of geographical features and nature wonders corresponding with the climatic conditions. The country's varied climate, which naturally affects the vegetation and the incidence of diseases, heavily influenced human relations. Eritrea is divided into three different geographical spheres.



Map no. 3. Physical map of Eritrea.<sup>24</sup>

The Eastern part consists of deserts and semi-deserts, where the climate is hot and dry (except for the coast), and the inhabitants deal with fishing and shepherding.

<sup>24</sup> Map taken from <http://www.mapsofworld.com/physical-map/eritrea.html>



Danakil region, which belongs to this zone is one of the hottest places on Earth, partially located in the low. Central part consists of the fertile highlands, where the farming branch has been developed the most with an average annual temperature of 18°C, and rainy seasons which last from June until September.

The Western part includes dry and hot lowlands. The lowland peoples organized themselves into small clans or tribes, kept differences of language and ethnicity, and tended to follow Islam. Without any doubt, the ecological separation also formed a cultural outer limit (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 65).

The Eritrean coastline has around 1000 kilometres in length. Eritrea has approximately 350 islands on the Red Sea including Dahlak Archipelago. The biggest cities of Eritrea are Asmara, Keren, Agordat, Nakfa, and two seaports – Massawa and Assab (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 276).

### **2.3 The social context: rural life and religion of Eritrea**

Eritrea is mainly an agricultural country. The percentage of the rural population is estimated at about 87 percent, while the urban population is only 13 percent. The basis of the Eritrean economy focuses on agriculture and farming (mostly nomadic). Eritreans cultivate sorghum, wheat, barley, legumes and oilseeds; in the irrigated area Eritreans also cultivate cotton. For many years the cultivation of grain crops did not cover national demand for food. This is compounded by the after war destruction with Ethiopia and by the severe drought, which plagued the people of these areas. Authorities have focused on both the reconstruction of old villages and construction of new ones, which provide about 50 percent of the food to the cities. Thus, the amount is still insufficient. In 1993 there have been planted millions of trees which were supposed to support the agricultural system in Eritrea within the next few years. Unfortunately, it did not bring any success, as most of the trees did not survive in dry weather. Local population is cultivating the cattle, goats, sheep and camels. The animal breeding<sup>25</sup> is treated as a form of an investment and capital. This leads to the increase of the inventory around the country.

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<sup>25</sup> According to the information given on the website of Encyclopaedia Britannica the term “animal breeding” means a “controlled propagation of domestic animals in order to improve desirable qualities”. Until now it is the main branch of the Eritrean economy. (Access online: 02.06.2016)  
Available online: <http://www.britannica.com/science/animal-breeding>

Social interaction within the three ecological zones is also limited through traditional and dynamic historical factors. As pastoralists and farmers competed for primary resources, mainly water and pastures, group clash, undaunted by linguistic and religious commonality, became quite native in the lowlands. Such conflicts appeared between as well within the clans or tribes. Attacking for cattle is another source of struggle (Gemechu, 2004: 57).

In the highlands, the broken and craggy terrain restricted social contact. Mountains were invincible and rivers, most of which are not navigable for most of their course, were closed for much of the rainy season, which lasted for a respective time.

Certainly, it is not entirely accurate to say that geographical factors were responsible for the development of the political culture in Eritrea. It was also the effect of the definite relationship of the classes or portions of them – for example activities of hierarchical polities continually competing for productive resources.

The disintegration of popular consciousness certainly came out of the territorial fragmentation and the existence of various sources of power. It produced two contradictory tendencies: regionalism and nationalism.<sup>26</sup>

In the hierarchical and patriarchal farming in the Eritrean society, cultural division of labour based on gender began at an early age, male and female contributing equally to the household income. Thus, it is the male homestead heads who mobilized and controlled family labour. Fathers and sons are responsible for cleaning the land, plowing the fields, sowing seeds, harvesting cereals, constructing houses, and making most of the simple agricultural tools and domestic appliances. Mothers and daughters on the other hand, are participating precisely in some of the agricultural activities, such as weeding and winnowing. Busy at work from the early morning to late in the evening, the peasant woman is treated like a jument. Her work, though exceeding that of men, is never fully appreciated, let alone proportionally compensated (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 67).

What purposefully depreciates women's work and injures their dignity is the cultural reality constructed by men, who exercised supreme authority both within the

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<sup>26</sup> Nationalism is the devotion to the law of putting the person's country first, above all the other countries or nations. Its goal is to draw out the best in a country and corresponding position among the family of nations.

Regionalism is quite similar in its aims, methods and objectives as nationalism. The only difference between these two tendencies applies to particular part of geography. Regionalism focuses on a smaller part of the particular country, while nationalism concentrates on the whole country.

All the information is taken from: Bartnicki, Mantel- Niećko, 1987: 344.

home area and in the larger society. As they enjoy the exclusive control on all familiar resources, men dominate the house area, demanding submissiveness and complete loyalty on pain of punishment. Although all traditional societies worship masculinity while degrading femininity, the conditions of the Eritrean peasant woman and her experiences of oppression varied. For example in the pastoral societies, where social distinction is negligible, the conditions of women are much better, however, they are not totally free from the stereotypical treatment or even beliefs.

The principal activity of the peasant family is cultivation, mainly for home or local consumption, but most of the villages entered into market relations. This act gave the Eritrean society a life-time opportunity to solve the food problems in the rural areas. As the country is ethnically diverse, local markets bring favourable circumstances in exchange for their goods. The other side of the market is its social function. All around the world the marketplace has been a site of social interaction. It is a perfect place to gossip, to exchange news, to participate in gatherings or to talk about groups' issues. Along with the place of worship, the market is the most integrating local institution in rural Eritrea (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 69).

Religion was, and still seems to be, the other integrative force. Eritrea is certainly a home to several religions that either are indigenous or were introduced into the country at different times and under different circumstances. There have been published some statistical papers on the religion in Eritrea but none of them includes all the religious groups in the country. Eritrea is a homeland for four main religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other traditional religions. According to the information given by the United States Department of State, in Eritrea there are around 50 percent of Christians (including Copts, Catholics and Protestants), around 48 percent of Muslim people and a small percentage of traditional ethnic religions' believers and Jews.<sup>27</sup> Christians and Muslims are in the majority of the four religious groups that form the rural society. Traditional faiths have fewer believers and are fast disappearing, while Judaism does not have more than a thousand followers.

The half of Eritreans consider themselves as Orthodox Christians. Eritrea and Ethiopia have the 'big tradition' of the Orthodox Church. Christianity entered the territory of today's Horn of Africa very early, since the evangelization of Axum (the

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<sup>27</sup> Information taken from the report made by the United States Department of State. *2010 Human Rights Report: Eritrea*, 2010. (access online: 27.03.2016). Available online: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154345.htm>

country from which emerged Ethiopia and Eritrea) was made in the fourth century. Shortly after, along with the migration of the Arabs and the spread of Islam, the role of the Orthodox Church in this part of the world has been totally limited. Only at the Ethiopian Highlands, partly in isolation, has the Orthodox Church developed.

The Ethiopian church along with the Coptic one and with the churches from the territory of today's Sudan, were considered as miaphysite.<sup>28</sup> Until the end of the nineteenth century, the Ethiopian church was divided and its believers fought among themselves (Bartnicki and Mantel-Niećko, 1987: 55). Finally, the Emperor Menelik II has united Ethiopia, which lead to the unification of the Orthodox Church. In 1878 was held the cathedral council in Boru-Meta, where it has been officially announced one confession of faith for whole country in combination of the human and divine natures, called tewahedo.<sup>29</sup>

The church had, and definitely has, a major impact on social, political and cultural life in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Years in the Orthodox Church count from the Christ's incarnation, that is from the eighth year A.D. This particular period is called the "Incarnation era". Ethiopian calendar (it involves also Eritrean Christians) comprises twelve months of 30 days each and one month of 5 or 6 days. The liturgical calendar is very complicated and contains of many holy days of Jesus Christ, Maria and memoirs (especially saints) (Mantel-Niećko and Ząbek, 1999: 85).

Islam is the youngest and the most expansive religion in the Horn of Africa. Spread by the Muslim missionaries, merchants and shepherds, it has expanded to the entire northern Sudan, Red Sea area (current Eritrea) and the Horn of Africa. Smaller groups of Muslims are also located in areas dominated by the followers of Christianity or traditional religions. Islam has only slightly changed the traditional and family life of the local population, who actually often remained like before. Generally, it did not require an immediate rejection of the local practices or customs. In every ethnic group

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<sup>28</sup> Miaphysitism signifies that "in the one person of Jesus Christ, Divinity and Humanity are united in one (μία, mia - "one" or "single") nature ("physis"), the two being united without separation, without confusion, and without alteration". "(...) The Coptic, Ethiopian and Eritrean churches believe that two natures – human and divine – were present through the mystery of the Incarnation within a single nature." (Access online: 27.03.2016)

Definitions taken from: Parry K., *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010: 88; and from the Britannica online dictionary.

Available online: <http://www.britannica.com/topic/monophysite>

<sup>29</sup> Tewahedo - (Ge'ez - tawāhidō) is a Ge'ez word meaning "being made one". Information taken from the Britannica online dictionary <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Ethiopian-Orthodox-Tewahedo-Church>

of the Horn of Africa coexisted two belief systems, with the continuous attenuation of the previous ‘sacred’ authorities until the total rejection of their former faith.

The majority of Eritrean Muslims practice Sunni Islam.<sup>30</sup> According to the information written in *History of Ethiopia* (Bartnicki and Mantel-Niećko, 1987: 59), Islam in Eritrea has been accepted after Mecca’s immigrants settled in Negash, which is currently located in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia.<sup>31</sup> However, they were only accepted under the condition of living in peace with the Christians in the area. A proper Eritrean territory began converting to Islam under the ruling of the Ottoman Empire in the Horn of Africa in 1538-1589.<sup>32</sup> Unluckily, at the end of the nineteenth century Eritrean Muslims were effectively removed from their homes by the Emperor Yohannes IV, and found a refuge in the northern areas in what is now Eritrea.

Both Muslims and Christians still recognize the powers of a wide group of spirits to whom they pray or make sacrificial gifts for conciliation or admit their mediation in a cosmic order seen as mysterious and precarious.

In the rural area, both Christians and Muslims were stuck to their professed faith, observing its calendar, scriptures and rituals. Religious practices and festivals established an essential rhythm of rural life.

Apart from Christianity, Islam and traditional religions, it has been discovered that Judaism is thought to have existed in Ethiopia and Eritrea before the other religions spread around. Those who refused accepting the new religion (especially Christianity), were expelled from the area and forced to find an asylum in the mountains of southern Ethiopia. The concentration of Ethiopian and Eritrean Jews is also known as Beta Israel<sup>33</sup> or Falasha, who are currently concentrated in the northern part of Ethiopia and in the southern part of Eritrea. Most of the Beta Israel people moved to Israel in the late

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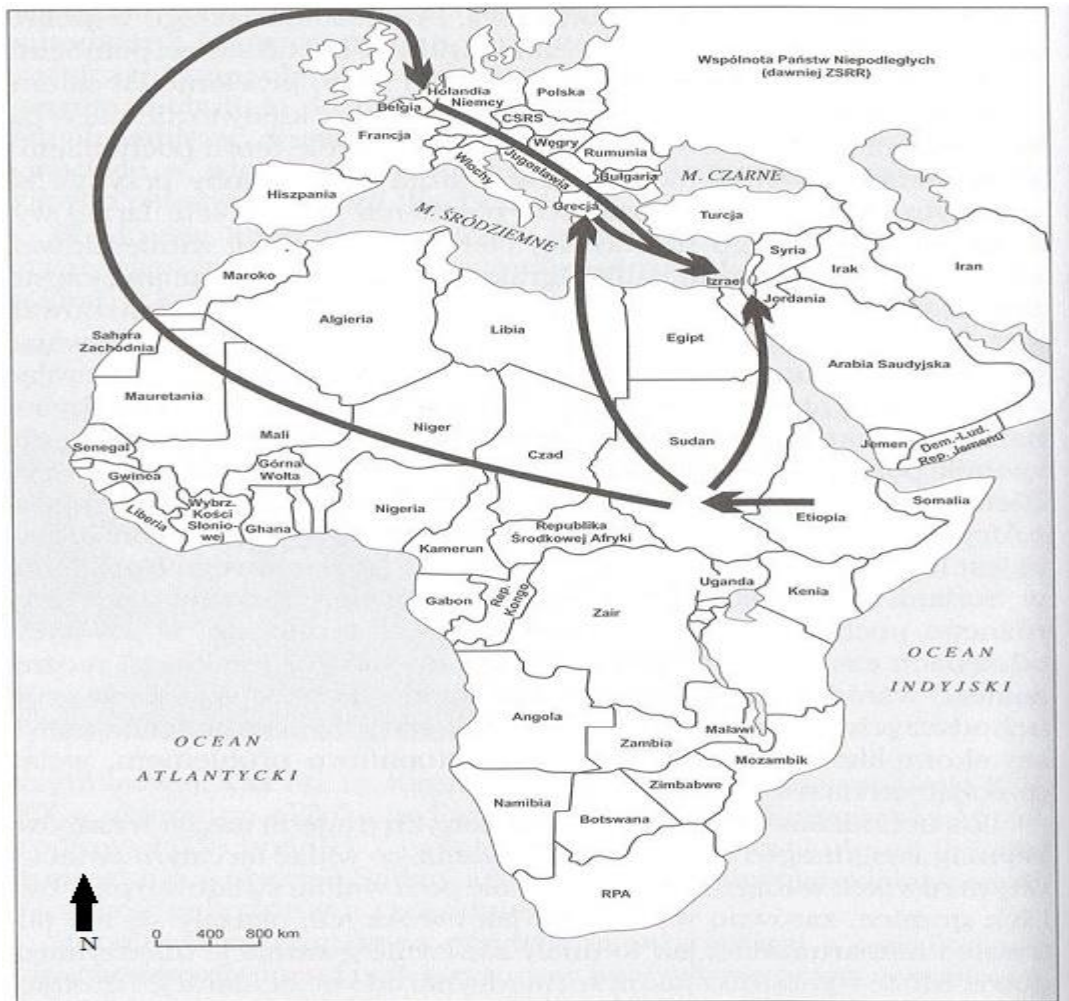
<sup>30</sup> Sunni Islam – is one of the branches of Islam. It has been estimated that 90 percent of the total Muslim community are Sunni. “Sunni Islam is the heir to the early central Islamic state, in its acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the order of succession of the first four caliphs”. (Access online: 28.03.2016). Information was taken from the website Encyclopedia.com <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Sunni.aspx#3>

<sup>31</sup> Tigray region is one of the nine regions of Ethiopia. According to the federal constitution of Ethiopia it is also known as “Region 1”. Its capital is Mekelle and the area is inhabited by the Tigray, Irob and Kunama people. (Access online: 02.06.2016) Information taken from the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia. Available online: <http://www.csa.gov.et/index.php>

<sup>32</sup> The Ottoman Empire was present in the Horn of Africa in 1538-1589. The spread of Islam started within the Tigre people.

<sup>33</sup> Beta Israel or Falasha – a small community of Jews living currently in Ethiopia and Eritrea. It has been said that they are the descendants of Menelik I who migrated to Ethiopia from Jerusalem. Beta Israel practice Judaism based on the Jewish Scriptures and various apocryphal books. (Access online: 27.03.2016). Information taken from Encyclopedia.com <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Falashas.aspx>

1980s and in 1990s. Unfortunately, Eritrean and Ethiopian Jews were always considered by Israeli Jews as animals. At the end, their hope for a better life has been completely dispelled. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, they were supposed to be the Beta Israel immigrants from Israel, and curiously in Israel they became the immigrants from Africa (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 93). The map given below shows the selected roads which the Beta Israel people chose to get to Israel.



Map no. 4. Selected routes which Beta Israel people chose to get to Israel. At that time Eritrea was still a part of Ethiopia.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.4 Eritrea under Italian occupation

Eritrea gained its independence as a result of the thirty-year war against Ethiopia (01 September 1961 – 29 May 1991) for national freedom. The Eritrean state had been

<sup>34</sup> Mantel-Niećko, J. & Ząbek, M., 1999: 370.

predated by the formation of a new national identity and exceptional traditions and culture. Despite the fact that Italy colonized Eritrea in 1869 - 1941, it is exactly the Italian nation which had created the industrial sector where Eritrea's population had been hired. Italians had placed new educational system and health care services, and what is more, enabled social advancement of its inhabitants.

Within the changes in the period of the Second World War (WWII), the British government, which took the territory of Eritrea, brought in a democratic system that allowed creation of political parties and rise of the independent movement.

In 1952 the Empire of Ethiopia subordinated Eritrea, and in a very short time Eritrea was transformed into Ethiopia's province. In spite of the occupation of Eritrean territory, Eritreans formatted guerrilla movements that liberated its population from the Ethiopian regime. This has led to the creation of new national identity and desired liberty.

All these elements are an important component of perception of contemporary Eritrea, and they definitely influence the acknowledgement and understanding of the current situation. Therefore, I consider the presentation of the brief history of Eritrea as an important part of this thesis in order to be able to focus on the refugee crisis in Europe.

Eritrea is one of the youngest countries in the world. The country which is religiously, ethnically and linguistically differentiated, has been officially proclaimed as an independent state in 1993 after more than three decades of armed struggle for the right to self-determination. The history of Eritrea is an interesting example of the European and African colonialism which resulted in creation of a new national identity.

Despite many historical themes, the future of Eritrea did not stem from the events of the distant past but from the socio-economic, political and military activities carried out during the last century. The mythology which appears with the slogan of "Eritrean identity" and freedom of Eritrea authenticates the process of creating a separate nation by spreading it in a long period of time.

The Italian expansion in the region of the Red Sea began in the late 60s of the nineteenth century. The beginning of the expansion was with the conquest of the small part of the territory of the port of Assab in 1869. After the conquest of Assab, the Italians intended to initiate further penetration along the coast towards Massawa, and from there inland (Bartnicki, Mantel-Niećko, 1987: 281). The formal manifestation of the Italian colonial policy in Africa was the official proclamation of the new colony on

the Red Sea coast on 1 January 1890. Italians named it “Eritrea” and over time it became an administrative and geographical unit (Bartnicki, Mantel-Niećko, 1987: 299). Willingly or not, part of the Tigrinya community seemed to have Europeanised itself. The change was so powerful that the expanded areas became a border between two worlds. Local elites were embedded between the threat from the colonists and the dangers from the Empire of Ethiopia.

Within the Italian colonization, the Italians introduced the capitalist system, created numerous colonial armies consisting of local soldiers. During this period, the Italians had an intensive process of industrialization and infrastructure development of the colony. Factory workers were getting rich very quickly since they started accepting the Italian domination and culture.

Despite the dominance of the Italians, the urban population considered these changes as positive. The sense of ethnic superiority over Ethiopians became the hallmark of Eritrea’s population and also spread to the neighbouring province of Tigray in Ethiopia (Tekeste, 1997: 16-18).

## **2.5 Eritrea and the African order under the British leadership**

As a result of the defeat of the Italian army in Africa in 1941, the territory of the Red Sea coast was passed under the rule of the British administration. The period of the British control under Eritrea consists of two sub-periods: the British Military Administration (BMA) operating in 1941-1949, and the British Civil Administration (BCA) in 1949-1952.

The British Military Administration has declared Eritrea as the “Occupied Enemy Territory”, with the Italian government as the enemy. The BMA took over the power in the country to take advantage of the colony’s human and material resources to the war effort. Due to the closure of the Suez Canal, Eritrea has become a centre of the light industry in the region. The BMA undertook the action in order to increase the self-sufficiency and industrial development of Eritrea. However, the civil liberties were far more significant to the social changes for the British government. For the first time Eritrea’s residents had an opportunity to experience the European-type democracy and take an active part in its creation and functioning. The formation of the political parties, the independent judiciary and the media played a tremendous role in the development of



Eritrea's national identity. British authorities started promoting the idea of democracy according to the same patterns which included people belonging to the whole of the British Empire. The aim of this administrative action was to convince Eritreans to their country's political development (Haggai, 1983: 4).

The enormous importance was to have its own security forces – the local police. The Eritrean Police Force (EPF) has been formed consisting of 3000 Eritreans and initially led by 97 British officers. From January 1943, the primary schools started functioning and the teachers' professional level has been raised. Before the war, there were 24 educational institutions, and during the BMA and BCA administration there were created 100 elementary schools, 14 secondary schools with 1200 students and 2 high schools with 167 students, and what is more, for the first time girls could attend school (Trevaskis, 1960: 129).

At the beginning of 1942, the weekly magazine in Tigrinya called Eritrean Weekly News (EWN) came out. The first newspaper in Tigrinya started with a circulation of 5000 copies per day (Bartnicki, Mantel-Niećko, 1987: 346). The health care also played a significant role in building a new identity, thanks to the concern for the health of all citizens of Eritrea. The BCA has formed the Medical Department that taught the inhabitants how to prevent themselves against numerous diseases.

In 1948, the alliance of the independent parties has established the "Selfi Natznet" Independence Bloc (IB). It consisted of three political parties: "Rabita el-Islamiya" - Moslem League (ML), "Mahber Hadas Ertra" - New Eritrea Pro-Italia Party (NEPIP) and "Mahber Natznet'n Limaat'n Ertra" - Liberal Progressive Party (LPP) (Habte Selassie, 2003: 72-73).<sup>35</sup> The Independence Bloc has set to itself some clearly defined goals: "1) *Immediate independence of Eritrea*, 2) *Establishment of a democratic government*, 3) *Maintenance of Eritrea's territorial integrity and* 4) *Prevention of partition outlined by the Bevin-Sforza plan*<sup>36</sup> *intended to incorporate Eritrea with either Ethiopia, the Sudan, or any other country.*" (Iyob 1995: 76). The response of Ethiopia's Empire to the growing independence movement was the creation

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<sup>35</sup> In the upcoming years there were more political parties which decided to join the Independence Bloc i.e.: National Moslem Party of Massawa (NPM), Eritrean War Veterans Association (EWVA), Intellectual Association of Eritreans (IAE) and Independent Eritrea Party (IEP).

<sup>36</sup> „The British foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, and the Italian foreign minister, Count Carlo Sforza, promulgated a joint plan on 10 May 1949, for the United Nations to grant trusteeships to Britain in Cyrenaica; Italy in Tripolitania; and France in the Fezzan, for a ten-year period, after which Libya would become independent. The plan, which met massive hostility in Libya itself, was rejected by the United Nations General Assembly eight days later.” (Access online: 02.06.2016)  
Available online: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3424600541.html>

of the militia called *shiftas* which regularly terrorized Eritrean's society. The Orthodox Church took the side of Ethiopia threatening with excommunication to all the faithful who support IB (Connell, 1997: 55).

## **2.6 Federation of Eritrea: a prelude to annexation and Ethiopian occupation**

Consequently, in 1948 the Four-Power Authorities<sup>37</sup> and The United Nations General Assembly (UN) started looking for the best solution in the region. Finally, in 1950 the UN General Assembly released the Resolution 390 A(V) which approved to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia as “*an autonomous unit... under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.*”<sup>38</sup> The parliamentary elections which were held in Eritrea during this period have been forged. The fictional federation and subsequent incorporation by Ethiopia led to the subordination of the Eritrean society, its industry, agriculture and the natural resources to the neighbouring stronger state.

The supremacy of the Amhara group from Ethiopia over Tigrinya and other ethnic groups from Eritrea was a discrimination and an attempt of denationalisation of the Eritreans. The Ethiopian dominance over Eritrea in 1952-1993 has been described as the colonization. Many Eritreans blamed Addis Ababa for the reduction of Eritrean's autonomy, especially for the pursued predatory economic policies, which in turn resulted in degradation of the Eritrean economy. In 1962, Eritrea has been annexed to Ethiopia as the fourteenth province. On hearing the news of the adopted law, Eritrean separatists formed the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in Cairo under the leadership of Adam Idris – a former chairman of the Eritrean Parliament. In 1963, separatists asked for support from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but the attempts to obtain the support of the OAU were shattered because the organization had been avoiding any separatist movements and Ethiopia had a high position in the OAU. Until 1974, despite some setbacks, the Ethiopian Army kept control over most of the territory of Eritrea. In

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<sup>37</sup> The Four-Power Authorities: the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union and France.

<sup>38</sup> For details see United Nations, „Text of Resolution 390 A(V) adopted on 2 December 1950 by the General Assembly of the United Nations,” *The Final Report of the United Nations Commission in Eritrea*, General Assembly, Official Records: Seventh Session, Supplement no. 15 (A/2188), New York, 1952: 74-75. (Access online: 02.06.2016)

Available online: <https://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/6974121.92821503.html>

1970, Isaias Afewerki – an engineering student, along with his followers created the Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF) (Haggai, 1983: 39).

The revolution of February 1974 in Ethiopia, which has arisen from the Marxist movement, brought about significant change in Ethiopia and in Eritrea. The Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and the Territorial Army (Derg) fought with the Emperor Haile Sellasie II for the better life of all the citizens of Ethiopia. From 2 July 1974, the Derg showed greater interest in cleansing the army, rather than fighting with EPLF. The seizure of power by the Marxist party in 1974 put an end to the ideological conflict, but the ethnic conflict remained. Two guerrilla movements – the ELF and the dominant EPLF fought the invader, as well as, each other for influence in the society.

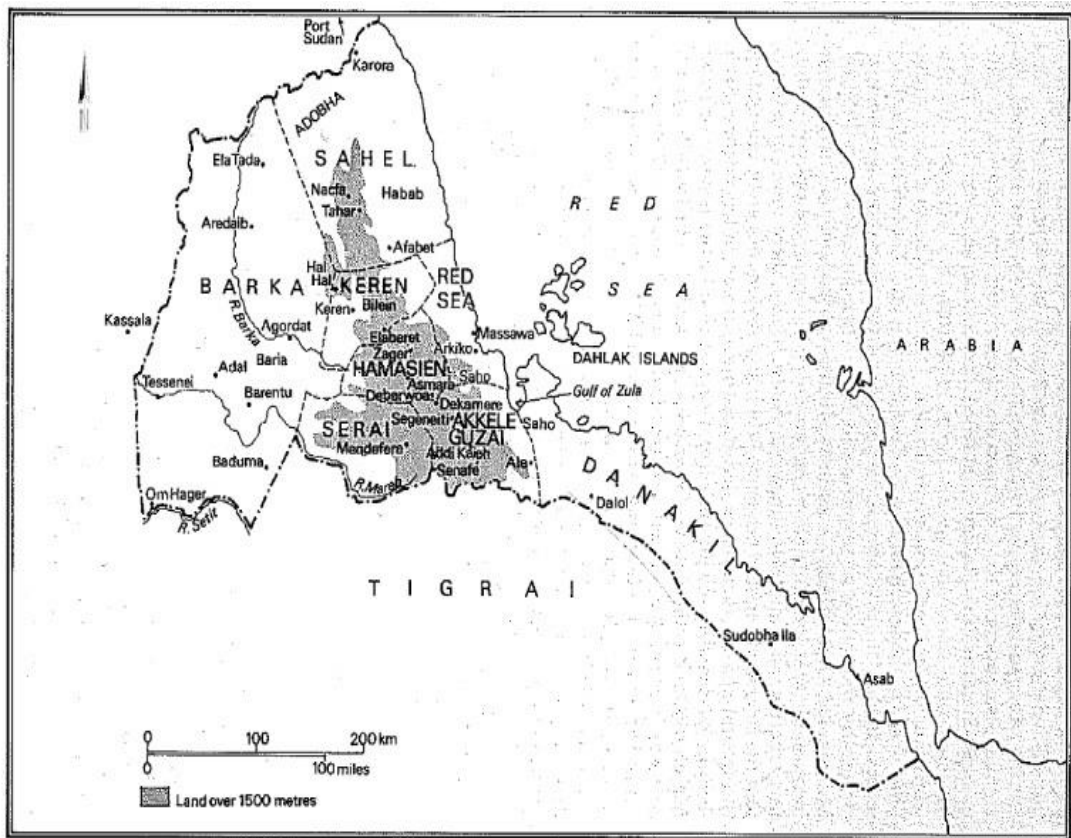
## **2.7 The EPLF's quest for legitimacy and building of the Eritrean polity**

The increase of the attacks and protests for Eritrean independence weakened the Ethiopian army and led to the final discussions between the Ethiopian government and EPLF party on Eritrea's freedom. From the 1<sup>st</sup> until the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1991, Ethiopian authorities held talks on the Granting of Independence to Eritrea. Finally in January 1992, an agreement was reached in which the interim government in Addis Ababa agreed to recognize the independence of Eritrea only if such is the will of the Eritrean province expressed in the referendum. At the same time Ethiopia guaranteed Eritrea a free access to the port in Assab. Even before the referendum, Eritrea established diplomatic relations with Djibouti, Egypt and Sudan which had already recognized Eritrea's independence (Bartnicki, Mantel-Niećko, 1987: 511).

In April 1993, in Eritrea there was held a national referendum under the supervision of the UN, in which the people of Eritrea opted for independence (Bartnicki, Mantel-Niećko, 1987: 512). "Do you approve Eritrea to become an independent sovereign state?" - That was the question on which the Eritrean people could answer with "yes" or "no." Due to the fact that the vast majority of the population of Eritrea could not read or write at the time of the referendum, coloured cards had been thrown to the ballot boxes. Throwing the blue card – which is one of the flag colours of the independent Eritrea – meant to opt for the independence, and throwing the red card

– meant staying under the Ethiopian occupation. The referendum brought together more than a million people, and 98.8% voted for immediate independence of Eritrea.

On 24 May 1993, the creation of the Republic of Eritrea had been officially announced by the new President of Eritrea – Isaias Afewerki. The armed Forces Coordinating Committee (known as the Derg) based on the comprehensive support of the socialist countries lost, and on the political scene in Eritrea remained ELPF (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 279).



Map no. 5. Eritrea after gaining an independence in 1993.<sup>39</sup>

In the inaugural speech, Afewerki – the new president - said that his main goal is to prevent clan, religious and tribal divisions, which could lead to further conflicts. He emphasized that Eritreans have been given a proof of rare prudence by abstaining with the formal declaration of independence for two years (Gemechu, 2004: 58).

In the newly established state, a four-year transition period has been set up, which had formed the basis of a pluralistic political system and a Constitutional law.

<sup>39</sup> Map taken from Mantel-Niećko, J. & Ząbek, M. (1999). *Róg Afryki – historia i współczesność*, Trio publishing house, Warsaw: Trio, p. 269.

Until the development of the new Constitution, Isaias Afewerki was supposed to be the head of state and government. The president is also the commander-in-chief of the Eritrean army. He also nominates officials to posts in various government departments. In administrative terms, Eritrea has been divided into ten provinces. Each province was governed by a governor, who was a part of the government.

According to the Legislative Decree No 37, which has been released in May 1993, Eritrea was supposed to be a country abiding the principles of law and independence (Gemechu, 2004: 59). As it has been stated by the President Afewerki, Eritrea was supposed to be a democratic and multiparty country with a free market economy. By 1995, in Eritrea operated 18 political parties and one labour union. The government allowed issuing of two newspapers, two journals and one weekly magazine. In the newly established state, a system of social security and health was expected to be created. The president guaranteed a 48-hour working week. The minimum wage was supposed to be above a dollar a day. And finally, new Eritrean authorities have decided to put special emphasis on education (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 269).

With the independence of Eritrea, serious economic, political and social problems appeared. The newly formed state needed huge sums to rebuild the country. Almost all the Eritrean cities were completely destroyed. Massawa, as one of the important ports, was a particular object of Ethiopian artillery fire and bombings. Eritreans have tried, and are still trying, to renovate the dilapidated buildings. However, the enormous destruction and the continuing lack of financial resources limit their ability to act. In 1993, Isaias Afewerki asked the international community to support the Eritreans in the rebuilding of the ruined country (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 269). In mid-May 1993, the international community decided to start with the recovery plan for Eritrea. There has been signed a credit agreement for a total sum of \$106 million. The reconstruction project included restoration of basic infrastructure, as well as, financial reinforcement. From that moment, Eritrea has signed new projects with the European Union (EU) in 1994 and in 1995, which were consequently worth \$39 million and \$4.1 million. The Eritrean government repays the loans until now (Iyob, 1995: 143).

However, the Eritrean government had to deal with more than just the reconstruction of their country. It is essential to mention female guerrillas who fought for the Eritrean independence. The progression of Eritrea highlights emerging gender relations. The rebellion, as it has been mentioned before, was led by the EPLF, which completely integrated women at all levels of the guerrilla struggle. It has been estimated

that around 35 percent of the all guerrilla fighters were women at the time of 1993. The EPLF actively promoted gender equality during the civil war. Few years after the victory of 1991 the EPLF sponsored the creation of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), an Eritrean organization focused on promoting women's rights, and which in the upcoming years passed few laws related to the gender issue. With the end of the guerrilla struggle, the government has decided to forbid Eritrean women fighting in the guerrilla groups or in the army. Eritrean women found themselves returning to the patriarchal world with traditional and stereotypical images of women as the worse human being and person responsible for home and family. Unfortunately, until now there are no changes.

Other problems include the return of refugees, famine and the reintegration of combatants. The Ethiopian-Eritrean War (1961-1991), droughts and famine caused one of the biggest emigrations from Africa to countries such as The United States of America or Canada.

## **2.8 International repercussions of the establishment of the Eritrean state**

The result of the national referendum taken in Eritrea, which was held in April 1993, quickly gained international approval. Eritrea has been recognized as a state by the following countries: Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti, Yemen, Israel, Italy and the United Nations.

In May 1993, Eritrea officially applied for an admission as a UN member state. The letter from the Eritrean authorities with a request for the accession to the UN has been submitted for the consideration to the Security Council, which in accordance with the provisions had to recommend a proposal to the General Assembly of the UN. On 23 May 1993, Eritrea was accepted into the UN group as a 182<sup>nd</sup> member of the organization (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 279).

The newly formed state tried to set up or maintain with their neighbours "relations of cooperation and brotherhood" (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 279). In the inaugural speech, Isaias Afewerki opted for a peaceful cooperation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The president of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, has ensured the international governments that Addis Ababa has accepted the Eritrea's sovereignty and "wants

together with its formal colony (Eritrea) fight for the African unity” (Markakis, 1987: 138). Both leaders appeared together at the ceremony associated with the celebration of Eritrea’s independence. That act was supposed to symbolize a new level of relations between the previously fighting neighbours.

Shortly after regaining the independence, EPLF party rejected partisan period’s ideology and adopted the centre-nationalist program (O’Kane, Hepner, 2011: 56). In June 1993 Isaias Afewerki won the presidential elections, and on 23 May 1997 he adopted a new constitution. Eritrea’s independence has brought some serious political problems for Ethiopia. Oromo, Afar and Somali people who are living in Ethiopia put forward their aspirations to the ethnical independence. Some inhabitants of central Ethiopia, especially the Amhara people, hardly accept the current political hegemony in their country which is identified with the Tigray and the Eritrean people. The Amhara people consider themselves as dominated by the northern part of Ethiopia, which in their opinion cares only about their own interest. This dissatisfaction can be found in various Ethiopian publications issued outside of Ethiopia, as well as, on the Internet. That is the topic covered by one of the newspapers called “*Assefa Negash*”<sup>40</sup> (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 274).

In 1998, as a result of disputes over the demarcation of the border between the two countries, broke down the Eritrean-Ethiopian War. The war ended up with an agreement signed in Algiers on 12 December 2000. Since that time the frontier zone is patrolled by UN peacekeepers. In the late 2005, the Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki has forced the UN to evacuate the military troops from its territory (O’Kane, Hepner, 2011: 62).

Some of the Ethiopians continue to oppose Eritrea’s independence, as the newly established state deprived Ethiopia an access to the sea. However, Eritrea promised Ethiopia the right to use two ports on the Red Sea coast – in Massawa, and in Assab. Unfortunately, with the beginning of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War in 1998, Eritrea forbid access to both of the ports until now. Isaias Afewerki believed that an independent Eritrea should have a harmonious and close relation with Ethiopia (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 272). The creation of an independent Eritrean state has weakened Ethiopia which in 1990s was the strongest country in the region. Isaias Afewerki accused the National Islamic Front of disregard for the international law and dangerous attempts of

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<sup>40</sup>Taken from Assefa Negash, *The pillage of Ethiopia by Eritreans and their Tigrean surrogates*, Los Angeles: 1996.

*jihad*<sup>41</sup> against the infidels living in Eritrea. Given the fact that the major part of the Eritrean population is Muslim, finding new supporters for jihad in the new state was not a difficult task (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 277).

Eritrea always tried to maintain good relations with its neighbours and allies. Relations between Tel-Aviv and Asmara were politically “correct”. The hatred for the past among Eritreans will take some years; however, the representatives of the governments cannot be guided by emotions. In 1994, the Eritrean government and the Israeli officials signed an agreement on medical assistance for the Eritreans wounded during the war (Nakash, Langer, Nagar, Shoham, Lurie, Davidovitch, 2015: 1285).

At the same time, the relations between the Arab countries and Eritrea cooled down. The relations have been affected by the introduction of the English language instead of Arabic at school and refusal of entrance of Eritrea in the League of Arab States.

The relations with Sudan have also deteriorated. The Eritrean government has repeatedly accused Sudan for the subversive activities. In July 1993, the Sudanese government closed all the offices of the EPLF party located in Sudan. On 6 December 1994, Eritrea broke off its diplomatic relations with Sudan, accusing the neighbouring country of stopping the peace, security and stability process with Eritrea. At that time, Sudan has been accused of training terrorists by the Eritrean authorities, who were intended to lead diversion in Eritrea. According to the authorities in Asmara, the Sudanese fundamentalists aimed to gain dominance in the Horn of Africa.

A serious problem appeared in the relations between the Eritrean state and Yemen. Each country wanted to be one and only state who had access to the three islands on the Red Sea. These islands do not have a particular “nationality” and there is no international convention which specifies their law. In 1982, the Yemeni authorities announced their sovereignty over the archipelago, declaring that the islands are subjected to Yemen. Considering the fact, that back then the archipelago was a part of Ethiopian territory, the Ethiopian authorities definitely rejected the declaration of Yemen. In December 1995, the situation between Eritrea and Yemen has tightened up.

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<sup>41</sup> According the Oxford Dictionaries *'jihad'* is “(Among Muslims) a war or struggle against unbelievers”. The basic meaning is "to exert oneself" or "to fight". As some of the Muslims believe it was Allah and his envoy Mohammed who urged all the Muslim community to start *'jihad'*. Nowadays the given word is used in every day's life as the world struggles with lots of terrorist organization which rely on the mission of *'jihad'*.

Short explanation of the word *'jihad'* taken from the Oxford Dictionaries, access online: 02.03.2016, Available online: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/jihad>



The case had become a subject of an international arbitration. There were, however, significant problems of a technical nature, as both sides of the conflicts constantly claimed new demands on the conditions for negotiations. Even nowadays Eritrea and Yemen are not capable to agree on to whom those three islands on the Red Sea belong to (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 278).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, Eritrea was on its best way to become the next country with “the future”, counted among few African countries which could not get out of the vicious circle of poverty. In November 1997, the Eritrean government issued a national coin in circulation called Nakfa. Until that time, the Eritrean currency was Ethiopian Birr. According to the authorities in Asmara, issuing new national coin was one of the most important changes that have occurred in the country.

Another important element related to the development of the country and its continued existence would be the Constitution. Finally, on 23 May 1997, the Eritrean government with Isaias Afewerki have ratified new constitution. However, the implementation of the most important legislative act in the state has been postponed by several months. The reason given by the government was the problem within the political structures in the country.

The problems in front of which Asmara’s authorities stood by were related to the territorial conflicts. The boundaries of the state from the time of decolonization are the cornerstone of the African continent.

On the map of the world and of the African continent a new state appeared. The case of Eritrea is another proof of identity’s construction and development of a culture in Africa where the impact of the white colonial states was the time of constructiveness. Everything seemed to be like a good beginning of the new country and its new society. Eritrean people fought for their freedom, built their country from scratch and finally developed their own unique culture. But that brings us to one peculiar question: what in this case led, and still leads, Eritrean people to leave their independent country? What went wrong after hundred years of fighting for the free and democratic country? The answer for these questions might be hidden in the modern history of Eritrea which started with the victory of Isaias Afewerki in the presidential elections of June 1993.

## 2.9 The current situation of the Eritrean state and its international relations in the twenty-first century

From the moment of regaining independence in 1993, Eritrea has never held elections at any level of the government, which is a unique case in the world (Mantel-Niećko, Ząbek, 1999: 89). Just after the end of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998-2000, Isaias Afewerki introduced a specific censorship and closed down all private media. The Internet is under a complete control of the authorities – just 200 000 Eritrean inhabitants have the access to the Internet (from 6 million of the total population of Eritrea).<sup>42</sup>

Human rights in Eritrea are, as shown by the organization Human Rights Watch, commonly broken. Since the creation of the Eritrean state, its government rests in hands of the EPLF and public media is under total control. On 27 June 2014, the United Nations Human Rights Council announced the creation of a special commission in order to investigate human rights violations in Eritrea. The investigation proved that *“systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed in Eritrea under the authority of the Government”*.<sup>43</sup> The people who are imprisoned without any law proceedings – including women with young children – are placed in tin containers or sunk into the ground buildings, where they find difficult conditions and extreme temperatures. All the military force takes on the children. Eritreans under the age of 50 are forced to work in the army or government institutions. Political assassinations are committed by the police officers and soldiers, very often on their own.

Residents of Eritrea cannot flee their country. The military army has the right to shoot the fugitive if they are caught on the border (Drabik, 2010: 5). Those who managed to escape are recognized by the Eritrean authorities as traitors and must pay 2% of their income earned abroad to the Eritrean government. If the emigrants do not pay this taxation, their families are persecuted. According to The Guardian, most people who drowned in the sea after 1993 came exactly from Eritrea.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For details see the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea, taken from [ohchr.org](http://ohchr.org), New York: 06.2015. Access online: 01.03.2016.  
Available online: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Tran, M. (2015). What you need to know about Eritrea – the Guardian briefing. In *the Guardian*, August 17, London.

Every day, thousands of Eritreans flee their country; many of them die on perilous journeys to Europe. In the report published by the United Nations Human Rights Council dealing with the human rights in Eritrea, it has been shown that the country is a totalitarian state based on total control of the citizens by the security apparatus at all levels of the Eritrean society.<sup>45</sup> In a country with a population of six million people, there are more than 300 overcrowded prisons. People usually go to prison without a court case or judge ruling. They are forbidden to contact their families or lawyers. The tortures in the prisons are on a daily basis, such as beatings or electrical shock hazard.<sup>46</sup>

Eritreans are afraid of eavesdropping or denunciations. All men and unmarried women are forced to attend the national military service. In 1995, the president of Eritrea and the National Service Proclamation introduced the “compulsory duty to perform active national service” for all citizens between 18 and 40 years of age, in order to “preserve the culture of heroism shown by the people during the armed struggle [and] create hard working generations to participate in the reconstruction of the nation.”<sup>47</sup> In theory it lasts for 18 months, but after the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998-2000, Isaias Afewerki has prolonged the obligatory national military service for an indefinite period. The reality shows that most of the people spend their whole lifetime there. For the families of deserters the penalty is applied for more than \$3000 or prison. The government also often refuses to issue a passport. In most cases, illegal escape across the border to Sudan or to Ethiopia is the only way left for the Eritreans. On the borders, guards shoot towards the fugitives without any warning.<sup>48</sup>

Tortures, kidnapping, human trafficking, executions are only some of the problems people face there. Illegal escape across the border is only the beginning of a dangerous trip. There are more than 200 000 people living in the refugee camps in Sudan and Ethiopia in the middle of the desert. In Sudan, refugees are often the victims

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<sup>45</sup>For details see the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea, taken from [ohchr.org](http://ohchr.org), New York: 06.2015. Access online: 01.03.2016.

Available online: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx>

<sup>46</sup> For details see more at [hereandnow.wbur.org](http://hereandnow.wbur.org), *Why so many Eritreans are fleeing to Europe*, Boston: 09.2015. Access online: 29.02.2016.

Available online: <http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2015/09/17/eritreans-migrants-europe>

<sup>47</sup> Information taken from the blog “War is Boring” (access online: 15.06.2016)

Available online: <https://warisboring.com/in-eritrea-military-service-is-slavery-ea86459c8af4#.xsam4brn>

<sup>48</sup> Taken from [america.aljazeera.com](http://america.aljazeera.com), Mclaughlin, *Exodus from Eritrea after independence dream became a nightmare*, The United States of America: November 2015. Access online: 29.02.2016.

Available online: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/11/6/exodus-from-eritrea-as-independence-dream-becomes-a-nightmare.html>

of kidnappings for ransom or human trafficking. If the relatives cannot afford to pay for the ransom, the abductees are either sold or murdered. This is dealt within the organized gangs. From the reports published by the human rights organizations, it is clearly explained that the refugees in the refugee camps in Sudan and Ethiopia are tortured. Those who have the funds to continue their journey are consequently trying to get to Europe through Egypt or Libya. In Libya though, the major threat is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which in April 2015 shot dozens of refugees from Eritrea and Ethiopia.<sup>49</sup>

Out of all the Africans who go on a journey by sea to Europe, the majority are the Eritreans. Around 37 000 Eritrean citizens submitted their asylum applications in 2014. The number of those who did not make to Europe is unknown. In the past ten years, more than 5% of the Eritrean population has fled the country.

According to the recently published report by the UNHCR, there are 65.3 million people who were displaced at the end of 2015.<sup>50</sup> As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi highlighted that “At sea, a frightening number of refugees and migrants are dying each year. On land, people fleeing war are finding their way blocked by closed borders.”<sup>51</sup> At the moment, more and more European countries decide to establish new restrictions and laws due to the refugee crisis.

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<sup>49</sup> Taken from independent.co.uk, Birrell, *Eritrea is Africa's North Korea - but UK bureaucrats won't accept its citizens are refugees*, London: August 2015. Access online: 29.02.2016. Available online: <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/eritrea-is-africas-north-korea-but-uk-bureaucrats-wont-accept-its-citizens-are-refugees-10478885.html>

<sup>50</sup> Information taken from the official website of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (access online: 20.06.2016) Available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



## **Chapter III**

### **Eritrean refugee crisis presented in the life story interviews**

This chapter sets out an empirical research based on the life history interviews. In the first part there will be given theoretical framework of the methodology, with a brief explanation of the choice and its accuracy with the dissertation's topic. There will be also given a short clarification on limitations of the methodology, which appeared during the study.

Second part will be based on the life story interviews done with migrants and refugees from Eritrea and Ethiopia, currently living in Portugal and in Poland. All the interviews are anonymous and have been authorized by the interviewees.

#### **3.1 Storytelling and its significance for the research on the current Eritrean refugee crisis**

Storytelling is a fundamental part of humans' life. Generally, even without recognizing it, people think and speak in a story form. In everyday life, stories are a narrative description of a situation, an experience or any other action, which happened in the past. The knowledge of the past permits us to tell about it.

In the oral tradition societies, storytelling was a symbolic part of the people's life. Traditional African ethnic groups believed that stories passed from generation to generation transmit an allegorical key for living a life in a valued way. Majority of these stories followed very universal model. This model had many variants, and usually was represented by the rituals associated with the humans' life (including birth, initiation, marriage or death), which were based on the stories carried for centuries.

People's lives consist of a list of events that are taken out from experiences familiar to all people. By telling a story, people share an experience. There are few definitions of the life story created by some researchers. According to Robert Atkinson:

“A life story is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and

what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another.” (Atkinson, 1998: 8)

Charlotte Linde goes deeper and argues that life story must include two criteria:

“(…) 1. The stories and associated discourse units contained in the life story have as their primary evaluation a point about the speaker, not a general point about the way the world is; 2. The stories and associated discourse units have extended reportability; that is, they are tellable and are told and retold over the course of a long period of time.” (Linde, 1993: 21).

The life story usually focuses on the time from birth to the present. Though it can be easily used in analysing a particular moment of life. The life story interview follows three-step process, which includes recording, transcription and written narration. The interview contains of two participants or more. The interviewer is a mentor, and the interviewee is a reencounter of the story.

There are at least three key-words that need to be considered while preparing a life story interview. These are ethics, voice and complexity.

Even though, the life story interview should be prepared in detail by the researcher, it can get out of control as narrator may be quick and unemotional in telling the story of his / her life.

The first use of life story methodology for academic purpose has been started by Sigmund Freud in psychology, with his famous psychoanalysis, a method of the talking cure for mental illness. His methodology was based on the open talks with the patients in order to find a solution for each individual’s case.<sup>52</sup> However, his research was based on the secondary documents.

This qualitative research method is used by the researchers from different disciplines and areas such as sociology, history or linguistics. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental approach used by anthropologists. It is believed that this method helps in understanding how each individual cooperates with other human beings. According to Clifford Geertz, anthropologists use life stories to get in to the dynamics of cultural change, the individual’s view of a community and common cultural aims (Geertz, 1973: 18-20).

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<sup>52</sup> Information taken from Simply Psychology website (access online: 04.07.2016)  
Available online: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/Sigmund-Freud.html>

The main goal of the life story interview is to synchronize the central parts, events and views in an individual's life, organize them, cohere them, learn from them, and finally present them. The crucial point while approaching life story interviews is to achieve a full recognition of human life, particularly the individual life in relation to other people, and in realizing how each group is connected to others.

During the storytelling process there is needed an observation on all the events that the narrator thought about. While doing a life story interview researchers realize, that each thought, each word and each sentence told by the interviewee is significant, valid and worthwhile.

### **3.2 Planning the interview and its limitations**

All the people have a story, or lots of stories, to tell about their life. All the situations which happen to people can only be shared with others through story, and this is what gives them their meaning. The interviewers and stories' listeners are usually surprised by how the story hits them; by the way it moves them and by how it connects with something that people are familiar with.

Interviewing someone else for his / her life story is a memorable experience. Assisting someone else in the adventure of telling his / her story is one of the most touchable and worthwhile interpersonal experiences possible to participate in, and a way of entrusting others by guiding them to a deeper understanding of their own lives.

I have used the life history approach long time ago. The first time it happened during the group research on the education system and students' experience in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in Autumn 2011. After doing the questionnaire with Ethiopian students, five of them agreed on telling their stories. Though, it was not well planned, it was definitely a new and interesting experience.

While volunteering in NGO in Amman, Jordan, my main task was to prepare activities for the children and women in one of the Palestinian refugee camps. In the first month of my work, I decided to do some research with the women on my own. The best method for my study was the life history approach. Everything what I have heard in the fitness centre I put in my small diary. It was a crucial part of my life. Additionally, I do believe that it was a new experience for the women as well. The routine of doing exercises and sharing experiences became an exciting part of their existence.



When I came back from Jordan, I have realized that I would like to use life stories in my next dissertation. Moreover, my academic background in African Studies in Warsaw, Poland and in Porto, Portugal and particular interest in the Horn of Africa, made me realize how essential is to talk about the current refugee crisis in Eritrea and in Ethiopia.

As collecting all the data for the empirical part of the dissertation takes some time, I have decided to start with my research as early as it is possible. Right after choosing the topic of the thesis in October 2015, I scheduled few interviews in Poland and in Portugal.

I have been preparing for the interview for a very long time, including thoughts, questions, materials (recorder, mass storage) and eventual situations, which may occur during the interview. Eritrean refugee crisis is a very delicate and complicated topic, which brings a range of emotions, starting with anger, confusion, disappointment, irritation, fear and sadness. However, one thing was not expected while choosing a methodology for this dissertation – difficulty in convincing people to tell their life story.

As it has been already written above (in the sub-chapter 3.1.), it is a narrator who needs to want to tell a story. He / she must be aware of the clear aim of the research. As the goal was to interview Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers in Poland and Portugal, I was looking for them through non-governmental organizations (NGO's), official migration centres in main cities of Portugal and Poland, and through all the possible contacts, which have been built during a university time in Warsaw and in Porto.

The beginning seemed to be easy and fruitful. The motivation for writing e-mails, making phone calls and appointments with people who could help, did not have any limit. I was fully convinced that my knowledge of Amharic – official language of Ethiopia, will assure the potential storytellers about my intentions. Unlikely, most of them did not respond for my next e-mails or quickly changed their minds, and decided not to tell their stories. Almost all the answers for the e-mails, conversations and meetings turned to be very disappointing. Official organizations cannot share their contacts, non-governmental organizations are willing to help but do not find life story interviews as a proper methodology for sharing a horrifying experience of refugees. And finally people, who may know individual refugees or migrants never helped.

Explaining the purpose of the life story interview was the most difficult. Being clear about whether the interview is just for own research use, or for possible

publications, is crucial. Sadly, some of the storytellers do not always believe in the researcher's goal and prefer not to agree on doing an interview. Moreover, a number of the eventual storytellers did not agree on the interview, as they did not want to recall their struggle associated with the refuge and their life in the country of origin. Additionally, some of the eventual interviewees expected a reward or recompense for the help. Unfortunately, for some of them, setting the rule of unpaid interview was not acceptable.

Few weeks after my arrival to Porto, I have decided to enlarge my group of the tellers and include also migrants. It made my research a bit easier, and I could have started with doing the interviews. In February 2016 I have scheduled the first life story interview for the next month. Finally, the first life story interview for this dissertation has been done four months ago (March 2016).

The main rule of the life history interviews is to keep the interviewees' names anonymous. All the interviewed people are aware of the final version of this study and they approved written transcriptions of their life stories. The interviews have been done via Skype and in one of the interviewee's house. The approximate time of each life history interview is two hours.

It is impossible to predict the life story interview course. It might be very short or very long – a schedule or exact time of the interview does not exist. From time to time, there are definitive circumstances that may limit an interview and make it not enough valuable. Calling up different memories brings a variety of feelings and emotions. While interviewing, the majority of storytellers come to a difficult place to recall. It is important to make a pause and give a needed time for the narrator to go back to telling their story. What needs to be remembered is that the interview must be very well prepared, every interviewer needs to let the life story flow.

### **3.3 Life history interviews**

This subchapter presents a chronological account of storytellers' life based on the interviews. These stories offer honest insights about interviewees' past help illustrate their life by providing intense memories. While reading these stories, I advise the reader to picture the plots and imagine himself / herself as the narrators.

As it has been already mentioned before, it was impossible to find Eritrean refugees for my research. That is why, I have also done the interviews with the

migrants, who know the current situation in Eritrea and talk about the refugees, who escaped from Eritrea.

This part will be divided into analytical categories of the storytellers' life. This subchapter is divided by the following categories: family and childhood, school and university time, economic and political situation in Eritrea and Ethiopia, the Eritrean national military service, human-rights violations and migration as its consequence, refugee camps in Ethiopia, and finally, narrators' opinions about the refugee crisis and future of their countries.

This subchapter is written in a diary form. The table presented below includes basic information about the interviewees.

Sort order	Category	Interviewees				
		Interviewee I	Interviewee II	Interviewee III	Interviewee IV	Interviewee V
1	Age	30	32	29	34	36
2	Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
3	Nationality	Eritrean	Ethiopian	Eritrean	Eritrean	Ethiopian
4	Religion	Muslim	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian
5	Profession	Student	Journalist	Student	English Teacher	Student
6	Country of origin	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Ethiopia
7	Hosting country	Portugal	Poland	Poland	Poland	Poland
8	Situation of migration	Economic migrant	Economic migrant	Economic migrant	Eritrean refugee to whom Polish citizenship was granted	Economic migrant

Table no. 2. Interviewees' personal information.

### 3.3.1 Family and childhood

The interviewees come from Eritrea and Ethiopia. Five of them come from the big middle-class families, which are still (partly) living in their countries of origin. Usually, the children remember childhood as careless, joyful and the best time of their lives. Majority of my interviewees have good memories related to their countries from

the time of their childhood. They do not have any particular thoughts associated with that period, but it reminds them of their friends, neighbours and relatives.

Three interviewees (out of five) were raised in the villages and small towns. They spent most of their time with their friends playing football, swimming in the nearby lakes and streams, or hunting the birds in the neighbouring forests. The Interviewee I remembers his childhood as following:

“My childhood was very funny. (...) I spent it with my neighbouring friends from the village. We have some small streams around, where I used to swim a lot. Besides that, we loved to hunt the birds. It is good that I grew up in a small community, which made me focus on the beauty of small things. I loved that time!” (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

Most of the kids from the villages had to help their families at home and in the field. They did not have much time for playing with the other children, as they were taking care of their younger siblings when their parents were working in the field. The oldest ones in the family used to take care of the cattle and helped in the seasonal works in the farmlands. When they finished their daily work in the field, they did not have strength or time for doing their homework or studying for the next classes. Moreover, the access to the electricity in the villages and small towns is still very limited, and most of the habitations use candles and gas light for cooking and studying. The Interviewee III remember that period as very memorable:

“I was doing everything what the rural family had to do. I was helping my family with the house and with the farm, including field work and the cattle. (...) In the evenings we did not have electricity, so I could not study. But from time to time I could use the gas light for reading and doing my homework.” (Interviewee III, 29 years old)

No matter where my interviewees were born and raised, they affiliate their childhood with the celebration of national and religious events in Eritrea and Ethiopia. It is a memorable time for all Eritreans and Ethiopians, regardless their faith. As it has been already written in the Chapter 2, Christians and Muslims in Eritrea and Ethiopia live peacefully and they treat each other in a kind-hearted way. Additionally, they celebrate all the religious events together. Both nations emphasize, that strong

connection between Muslims and Christians is essential for a harmonious life. The Interviewee II highlights the importance of that connection:

“I was born during the Ethiopian Orthodox Christmas<sup>53</sup> (Ganna in Amharic). We celebrate Christmas separately, sometime after the Catholic Christmas. We used to invite all our neighbours to come to our place, no matter what was their religion. Even though, my family is Christian, we used to celebrate Muslim holidays as well. We are all even, we do not put people in different boxes. ” (Interviewee II, 32 years old)

The Interviewee IV did not have a carefree childhood. She remembers that time as a difficult one for her family and Eritreans. She was born in 1980s, when Eritrea fought for the independence. Ethiopians were deciding about the future of Eritreans and their daily life. It was not a good time for none of the Eritreans, including kids. Spending time outside or going out in the evening was dangerous. Ethiopian army introduced a curfew starting at eight o'clock in the evening. All the children, especially in the big cities, could not play around with other kids:

“I did not have good time with my friends like in other countries. My mother did not want me to play outside of the house, because she was scared that something might happen. Everyone was scared of going out, houses had to be closed. I and my sister used to believe, that one day it is going to an end, and eventually Eritrea will become a free country.” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

### **3.3.2 School and university time**

No matter how bad or good was the political situation of the country, all the narrators went to school. According to the interviewees II, III and V, Ethiopians had no problems with the access to the education. Neither the difference between the city and the village, nor the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998-2000, stopped the children of studying and going to school. As my narrators say, Ethiopia and Eritrea have a similar five-stage education system. It starts with the kindergarten or primary school of two cycles from grade 1 to 4 and from grade 5 to 8. After the regional exams taken at the end of grade 8, students go to the secondary school of two cycles from grade 9 to 10 and from grade 11 to 12. Afterwards, all the students have to take the national exams,

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<sup>53</sup> Ethiopian Orthodox Christmas – Ethiopians use the old Julian calendar. The Christmas Day is celebrated on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, two weeks after Catholic Christmas.

which lead them to universities. The time, which the Interviewee III spent at school was memorable:

“I do remember especially the first half of the elementary school, it was in the rural area of Mekelle. We (students) had exactly the same cultural background and traditions. I felt great at school. We have learned lots of things, including maths, languages, arts or biology.” (Interviewee III, 29 years old)

All the interviewees highlight the importance of studying languages at school. Depending on the region, Ethiopian primary schools teach all the disciplines in Amharic and in the language of the region, for instance Tigrinya in the Tigray Region, Harari in the Harari Region, or Somali in the Somali Region. The Interviewee III comes from the northern part of Ethiopia, where most of the classes were taught in Tigrinya, official language of Eritrea. They emphasize the difficulty of having most of the disciplines in Amharic. At home and in their free time they speak Tigrinya, which is the language of their region:

“(…) I have been attending most of the classes in Tigrinya, the local language of my region in the north of Ethiopia, until the end of primary school. Unfortunately some of them were given in Amharic, which I had to learn very fast. All the children struggled to learn it, especially that most of our relatives do not speak Amharic.” (Interviewee III, 29 years old)

On the contrary, Eritreans do not consider their education system as good as Ethiopians. It is also five-stage and there are no fees, but the number of schools and the variety of disciplines is restricted. Moreover, the access to schools was limited. Some of the schools, especially in the villages and in small towns, were destroyed, and roads were closed. When the interviewees I and IV were attending primary school in the 1980s, the official language of all the disciplines was Amharic. The Tigrinya language, official language of Eritrea, has been forbidden at schools and universities during Ethiopian occupation. Just in the private schools, pupils could study in their mother tongue:

“At that time – in 1980s, teaching in Tigrinya was strictly forbidden. All the disciplines have been taught in Amharic. That was an enormous problem for all the children. I did not know the language, because no one taught me that before.

But we (the children) had to manage somehow, even though it was very difficult and challenging.” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

Furthermore, Eritreans preferred to attend the school when their country was under Ethiopian control, than to stay at home. The Interviewee I says, that even if they did not understand the political situation, they could easily notice the nervous atmosphere at home and around it. Families were struggling to survive each day. They did not have money, country was destroyed, and access to water and food was limited. That is why all the children rather preferred focusing on their school duties and activities, than looking at their relatives, who are scared about their future:

“I remember when Eritrea was under control of Ethiopia. It was difficult for people around the country. I did not understand what was going on, I have noticed that my family is quite nervous, especially when they were watching TV. There was no money; people were fighting for food and water. It was one of the worst times ever. (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

As I have already described in the chapter 2 how similar is the culture of Eritrea and Ethiopia, there is still a need to explain how their history is taught at school. According to the Interviewee IV, all the pupils have not been taught the truth about the history of Eritrea. During the Ethiopian occupation, Eritreans have been told that no matter what is going to happen, Eritrea always will be a part of Ethiopia. Most of the teachers at Eritrean schools were from Ethiopia. They used, to say that Eritreans depend on Ethiopian country and its nation. They repeatedly continued saying, that Eritrea is just one of the Eritrean regions. Teachers have got an order from the Ethiopian government to tell the official version of the history, which was approved by the government. But Eritreans knew the truth and tried to pass the real Eritrean history from one generation to another:

“After classes, when we came back home, my parents used to tell some stories about our country and its struggle for the independence. There was no freedom of speech that is why teachers could not say the truth. Otherwise, they would be taken into a prison.” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

The narrators somehow remember their friends from the school time, but most of them do not keep in touch with them. Just recently, thanks to the social media like Facebook or Twitter, they managed to find some of their friends from that time, and had

a small talk about their memories. However, most of the friendships have been made during the university time. Though, most of them regret not having an opportunity of keeping their friends closer, as most of them did not graduate, migrated, or escaped the country.

According to the Interviewee I, there are seven colleges in Eritrea. Until 2002 there was one university in the country – University of Asmara. Unfortunately, with the new administration in the ministry of education, the university has been closed, and new students had to choose one of the seven colleges spread around the country. The variety of courses is very restrained and most of the students apply for the Institute of Technology or College of Health Science in Asmara.

As it has been stated by the Ethiopian interviewees, there are around 30 public universities in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, there are not many Ethiopians who get accepted. The Interviewee II describes the process of getting to a university, as quite difficult. After the national exams taken at the end of the secondary school, all the students are supposed to choose three universities in the country, which they find interesting. Later on, city halls publish lists with the students' names and assigned to them universities. There are usually three or four possible rounds, when Ethiopian can apply.

However, not all the Eritreans and Ethiopians have an opportunity of graduating, finding a job or travelling:

“Most of my friends did not finish their school. But I feel bad about that. I am just a simple man, who got a marvellous opportunity to graduate and study abroad. My mother told me about our neighbours from my age, who have no future, or who took a risk and left to Libya. Unfortunately, their families did not hear any information from them until now.” (Interviewee III, 29 years old)

Nevertheless, those, who managed to graduate from university, find that period as a challenging. Three interviewees out of five have been raised in the small towns and villages. I asked them about the differences which they have noticed when they moved to the cities. The beginning was difficult for all of them. New people, traditions, mixture of different languages and ethnic groups. After sometime they got used to the new reality, even though they did not understand some of the rules, which they have observed back then. The interviewees III and V mention, that for some of the students getting used to new rules was impossible and they did not manage to graduate:



“When I went to the city, things have changed completely. I had to interact with the city boys and with a different culture and traditions. It was not easy, though. I understood that there are lots of differences between the city and the village.” (Interviewee III, 29 years old)

“(…) I studied Arts with a specialization in painting and African Studies at the University of Addis Ababa. It was not easy. (…) I remember the first day in the dormitory place. A friend of mine asked me who I am, what is my religion, from which ethnic group I come from, and whom do I support politically. I have never had such an experience before. It was very strange to hear such a question. It was a shock for me. But from that day those questions continue.” (Interviewee V, 36 years old)

When the narrators went to universities, they joined few discussion clubs. Each university contains of at least few of them. It was a new experience, mostly enjoyable. Generally speaking, it opened some doors in their future careers. According to the Interviewee V, the majority of students chose music or reading club. They did not want to get involved in any club related to politics, journalism or critical thinking. Just when he started the university, he decided to join one political movement. The conditions of university and dormitories were unacceptable and students wanted some changes from the administration. Meanwhile, the goals of that club have changed, and the movement became sort of a political party. Not everyone was interesting in being a part of it anymore, including my narrator. Also, it caused some problems related to the politics and religion:

“I wanted to be helpful and feel like I am doing something important. (…) One day, the police came and arrested few of us, including me. I spent there 2 horrible weeks, without water or food in the worst conditions ever. It turned out that the government did not like our movement at the university. I had no idea that it would turn to be a problem for Ethiopian government. But our authorities did not treat the people as the human beings. Something had to be done.” (Interviewee V, 36 years old)

“(…) Political and religious discussion clubs are not allowed in Ethiopia. But there were lots of students who participated in debates, music and arts clubs or in the writing club. I was not very active in such activities.” (Interviewee II, 32 years old)

All the storytellers admit, that university opened some new doors of opportunities for them. Especially, that they managed to study abroad, travel around and

attend international conferences. Without proper education and help of their families and friends, they would never apply for university or graduate. My interviewees, especially Eritreans, consider themselves as lucky for having so many possibilities. They explain, that their parents and grandparents lived under Italian, British and Ethiopian occupation, and their only dream was to become an independent country. However, it seems that these free countries did not manage to stabilize their economic and political situation. The economic and political situation in both countries, especially in Eritrea, does not allow the people to earn enough money to survive each month.

### **3.3.3 Economic and political situation in Eritrea and Ethiopia**

All the interviewees agree that something has to be changed in Eritrea and Ethiopia. People are afraid about their, and next generations' future. In the Ethiopian case, the problem is related to the overpriced fees in the education system, unpredictable prices in the markets, lack of opportunities and poor health system. The Interviewee II explains that the majority of Ethiopian youth cannot afford the university, neither public nor private, as the fees are really high. Just the best students can get a scholarship from the Ethiopian government, which can help some of the young people. Unfortunately, not everyone is lucky, even though, they study hard. The Interviewee II admits that there is no middle-class in Addis Ababa, people are either rich or poor:

“The youth do not enter the university, because their parents cannot afford it. Lots of my friends stayed at home helping their families, or they decided to migrate. (...) While walking on the street of Addis, you can mostly find poor people, or the rich ones. That is why we are in crisis.” (Interviewee II, 32 years old)

Additionally, the prices of food, drinks and basic services, raise every single day. It is difficult to survive for Ethiopians.

On the contrary, Eritreans suffers from the obligatory national military service, which does not end; from the religion oppressions and dictatorship introduced by the president Isaias Afewerki, and others. According to the Interviewee I, it is impossible to survive a month for Eritreans. If the citizen has its own business, everything is easier. But most of Eritreans work for the government, there is no opportunity to save money. The economic crisis makes people leave the country or escape from the horrible reality:

“It is very difficult to cope with the economy and its crisis in the country. (...) Starting with the 30-years-war against Ethiopia, people have decided to seek for better opportunities in Europe and in the United States. Additionally, lots of Eritreans left to Angola or Sudan.” (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

Both nations blame their governments for the crisis. Though, the reality is different in Eritrea and Ethiopia, their citizens decide to migrate. I have noticed that my storytellers accuse the countries’ authorities for being responsible for the economic situation, lack of opportunities, and final migration of their inhabitants.

Nowadays, Eritreans and Ethiopians consider themselves as enemies, and they try to treat each other in a friendly way. They do not understand why the governments do not care about the people. It seems to me that the hatred, the will of being in power, money and possibility of ruling the country, brought Eritrean to such a crisis. There are lots of full shops, but people do not have enough money to buy things. The president Afewerki “closed” the country for all the investments. It affected whole country, especially the construction branch. The majority of Eritreans lost their jobs, as all the constructions were stopped by the government. Moreover, fruit sellers stopped selling their products on the streets of big cities, as they have pass through lots of controls:

“There are a lot of controls checking on the salesmen and their products. That is why the sellers decide not to sell anything, and they struggle to survive.” (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

Apparently, the problem lies in the lack of knowledge around Eritreans about the government and its policies, because they do not have an access to the international mass-media. The local radio and television are censored, and the access to the social media, like Facebook or Twitter, is limited. According to the narrators I, III and IV, the president Isaias Afewerki and the government treat their nation like “animals”. Each citizen must have basic rights. As I could notice during the interviews, human rights in Eritrea do not exist, there has been no elections since Eritrea has been officially recognised as an independent state in 1993. The freedom of speech does not exist, and those who want to say something against the government loud, are immediately taken into prison. Very often the prisoners never got out:

“Inside the prison, they (prisoners) do not get any food or water. Very often the prisoners never come back home. Few weeks or months after, their bodies are

found on the streets of Eritrea. (...) The politicians cannot treat people, who fought for the independence in such a way. It is very painful...” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

I have noticed that my Ethiopian interviewees do not really care about the political situation in Eritrea. The exception is the Interviewee III, whose mother comes from Eritrea. He emphasizes, that he will always feel more Eritrean than Ethiopian. He grew up in Mekelle, a small town in the northern part of Ethiopia. The majority of its inhabitants is either Eritrean or at least half Eritrean. My storyteller explains how difficult it is to talk about the Eritrean refugee crisis in his family:

“We do not understand how it is possible, that the government is destroying the country and its nation. Then, the authorities are surprised with the high level of people who escape the country. (...) It is unbelievable what politics and the will of possessing the country can do with the humans’ feelings...” (Interviewee III, 29 years old)

As we can verify in the following testimonies, the current political situation in Eritrea is one of the biggest problems for the nation. However, the worst part of living in there, is the mandatory national military service, which after the war with Ethiopia in 1998-2000 turned to be eternal for almost all the citizens.

### **3.3.4 The Eritrean national military service**

According to one of the interviewees, the national military service has been brought in right after Eritrea officially introduced its independence in 1993. At the beginning it was mandatory for both genders during 18 months. The newly elected president of Eritrea, Isaias Afewerki, made acquainted the service for the safety reasons, as he was aware of the upcoming war with Ethiopia. The country was not stable, and its authorities could not allow their enemies to destroy, what has been rebuild.

Unfortunately, after the war with Ethiopia in 1998-2000, Isaias Afewerki has officially announced the need for extension of the obligatory military service. According to the narrators I and IV, all the Eritreans who turn 18-year-old are obliged to enter national military service. Within 18 months the officer responsible for the training decide, whether the trainee stays for an active service, or if he / she can continue the education at university.

The interviewees continue explaining that the government tries to convince people about bad relations with the neighbouring countries. Every day in the local radio and TV there is an announcement about eventual attack by Ethiopia, Sudan or Yemen. As it has been verified during the interviews, the reality looks different. There is no threat from none of the countries and the military service continues to keep all Eritreans under control. The ones who are taken for the active military service stay in the army for years. The 18 months service has been changed for the indefinite. During the military service all the trainees get an accommodation and food in exchange for the service. From time to time, they are allowed to have one or two days off. But if they do not come back to the military unit on time, they are punished or taken to the prison.

That is why most of the Eritreans try to find a way to escape from the service, whether it is training or an active service. Those, who manage to escape, go abroad to seek for new opportunities and study. Until now, nothing has changed in the terms of the national military service:

“There is no life inside the army, just a monotonic routine of fulfilling the orders. But I was lucky. I wanted to study and have a proper future. My father knew someone in the government, who had decided about my exit. My family had to pay a lot of money to the officer. It was not legal, but I had no choice. (...) Most of my friends did not have the chance to leave the army. They are still there.” (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

“I remember the day when I received a letter from the army. Two weeks after I was supposed to show up to start my military service. I did not want to do that. (...) When they ask for one day off, the officers’ chairman asks about the places which they tend to visit. He always gives the exact amount of money which is “needed” for the day, so that they will not spend much. It is usually 2-3 dollars.” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

The Interviewee IV escaped from the army. First, she had moved to another city with a help of her family and friends. Her parents knew a doctor, who could state her disability of entering the national service. Disabled and ill people are not “useful” for the service. However, it just postponed the scheduled date of entering the army. She fled the country in the 2000s, just after the war with Ethiopia ended. By the next year, she managed to escape from Eritrea and started moved to Paris, France. She has got a status of an asylum-seeker in there, and thanks to some non-governmental organizations she

managed to finish university in France, where she met her future husband. In 2005 she moved with her husband to Warsaw, Poland, where she started her new life:

“I will be eternally grateful for all the people who helped me back then. It was very difficult to escape from the country. (...) I did not want to live like my parents or friends. In Europe people do not hear about our reality. And even if they do, they do not really care about that. (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

As she adds, at the beginning of the twenty-first century it was much easier to escape the country. There were more friendly people, who could help without paying them money. The transportation was more expensive, but the access was easier. Nowadays, Eritreans leaving the country, whether it is for pleasure or business, must present their ticket back to Eritrea or submit all the documents explaining the reasons for migrating. Otherwise, they will be allowed to departure.

The Interviewee I continues, that with the beginning of the refugee crisis Eritreans became capable of giving everything what they have, just to escape from the country. The smugglers, whom they meet at the beginning of their journey, take everything from scared and tired of dictatorship people.

### **3.3.5 Human-rights violation in Eritrea and migration as the consequence**

Eritrea is one of the world’s fastest-emptying countries. The country is ruled by a dictator, who do not respect human rights. The attention of the world’s mass-media focuses on the Syrians and Iraqis, but migration from the Horn of Africa, especially from Eritrea, is more radical. According to the 2015 Global Trends report on forced displacement Eritrea has been classified as the ninth-biggest country of origin, with an estimated number of 411,300 refugees originating from the country at the end of 2015.<sup>54</sup> The study does not count those who died or were abandoned on their way. Around 45,000 migrants arriving in Italy and Greece in 2015 were Eritreans.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Information taken from the UN Refugee Agency’s website (access online: 01.07.2016)  
Available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Two of the storytellers give their personal testimonies on the human-rights violation in Eritrea. The Interviewee I describes one of the factors, which makes Eritreans leave their country – lack of freedom of speech. Everything is censored, starting with the articles and finishing with daily news in TV. Journalists working in the national mass-media receive prepared by the government programme for each day. According to my storyteller, Isaias Afewerki uses radio and television for showing the stable situation in the country to the Eritreans. Those journalists who do not fulfil the orders are threatened by the government or taken to the prison. There is no access to the international mass-media. Additionally, the Internet access is limited and most of the social media websites are blocked. The Interviewee I highlights that Facebook or Twitter are the only options for Eritreans to check on news from the world.

The Interviewee IV tells a story of her sister, who graduated in Journalism and Communication at the University of Asmara. Her biggest dream was to change the world, or at least the reality in Eritrea. Right after graduation she started working as an assistant in the national newspaper. The editor in chief presented her responsibilities and rights. After preparing the texts for the newspaper she was supposed to send it to the organization checking on the content. She was tired of lying to society and she published two texts without sending them to the censoring organization:

“The same day she was arrested. After two weeks she has been released – beaten and emaciated. The same day she fled the country. She could not work in the newspaper anymore. She thought that, she might find an asylum in the neighbouring Ethiopia. But it turned out, that the reality in there is not better.”  
(Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

Moreover, people cannot say anything against the government or the president. There are lots of spies around Eritrea seeking for the conspirators. Eritreans are scared of talking no matter what is the place. They do not trust their friends or families, because everybody can be a spy. The Interviewee I was taken into a prison for talking about the government during a dinner with friends in the restaurant:

“(…) We started discussing politics and our disappointment on lack of the access to the international mass-media. Five minutes after, two of the customers sitting nearby arrested all of us. I stayed there for a week. It is impossible to survive prison's conditions. Family visits are strictly prohibited. People are

tortured there during months or years. Eventually they all die.” (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

As a result of the human-rights violations, Eritreans leave their country hoping to find an asylum in the neighbouring countries and in Europe. They prepare themselves for the risky journey for a long time. At this moment, the majority of Eritreans leaves to Libya through, where they pay to the smugglers more than \$2000 per person, and they go on a boat through the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. But some of the dealers take the money and never come back.

“Generally speaking, I do understand why people leave the country. (...) One of my friends left at night and called his family 3 weeks after, when he arrived to Libya. Right now he lives happily in Italy. When I talked to him few weeks ago, he said, that he wants to forget this journey. He saw people dying during the trip. There was not enough water for everybody. But then, he admits, that if he had to repeat the trip, he would have done that again, because he cannot live in Eritrea.” (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

He also continues saying, that there are lots of migrants, who just followed the others and left Eritrea, hoping to find a job somewhere else. Most of them are unaccompanied children, who are not affected by the reality and they do not know what is going on in Eritrea. Nevertheless the smugglers encourage them to take a risk and go on a boat to Europe with people, who really cannot live in Eritrea anymore. The problem shows up when the traffickers ask for the money and the children have nothing besides a sweater. They usually do not reach their destination, because the smugglers torture and physically abuse them.

Lots of Eritreans have friends and relatives in Ethiopia, and the opposite. However, Ethiopians are not completely aware of the current refugee crisis in Eritrea. The Interviewee III says that in the Ethiopian TV or newspapers there is not much information about Eritrea and its crisis. One of his cousins fled Eritrea in 2015 as he could not stand the military service anymore. He escaped to Libya, where the majority of African and Syrian refugees gather to go on a boat to reach European coast. In Libya all the smugglers have prisons where they put Africans, especially the ones from the Horn of Africa. Meanwhile they choose the ones who can immediately go on a trip. Sadly, young women and unaccompanied children are used and raped, and just after that they are allowed to get in to the boat:



“They have no other choice; otherwise they will be killed... My brother told me, that they journey through the Mediterranean Sea was not that bad as what he saw in Libya. It was even worse than in Eritrea.” (Interviewee III, 29 years old)

### **3.3.6 Refugee camps in Ethiopia**

Eritreans flee to Ethiopia in the first place. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency there are more than 100,000 Eritreans trying to live in eighteen Ethiopian refugee camps.<sup>56</sup> A sister of the Interviewee IV until now lives in one of the refugee camps in Ethiopia. When she lost her job in a national newspaper, she escaped to Ethiopia and asked for an asylum. However, Eritreans are not treated well by Ethiopians. Very often they are abused by the authorities of the camps. There is a lack of water, food and medicines. Refugees cannot leave the camp. All the identity documents which the refugees have are taken by the administration during the registration in the camp. It complicates the contact with the refugees' families:

“Some time ago, I have sent money to my sister, who lives in the refugee camp close to Addis Ababa. I found out, that she could not receive the money, as she has no documents. Thanks to my friends in Poland and in Ethiopia, she has received the money in other way.” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

According to her sister, all the refugees have problems with their health. They get sick very easy. The most common diseases in Ethiopia are malaria and yellow fever. None of such diseases exist in Eritrea as the country's landscape is more plant than in Ethiopia. Moreover, Eritreans have no access to the Ethiopian health system and medicines. With the lack of the proper medicines and doctors, refugees have no chance for survive.

As it has been already mentioned in the category related to the human-rights violations, there are more and more children who leave Eritrea on their own. When they reach refugee camps either in Ethiopia, Sudan or Djibouti, the reality looks exactly the same. Without doubts they are safer outside of Eritrea, but without a proper education they cannot make progress. The United Nations' Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) working in each hosting country provide an access to primary school, and depending on the camp to the secondary school as well.

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<sup>56</sup> Information taken from the UN Refugee Agency's website (access online: 01.07.2016)  
Available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/statisticalyearbook/2014-annex-tables.zip>

However, the disciplines given there are limited and contain of very basic information. The Interviewee IV retells a story of her sister living in one of the refugee camps in Ethiopia about the health system and education:

“Once, my cousin got malaria in the camp. The medicines were given too late and he passed away. (...) Kids get basic education in the camps, which usually finishes with the primary school. Learning how to write and read takes much more time than in the public schools in any other country. It slows down their growth.” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

The Interviewee III remembers his Eritrean students from the Mekelle University, who were refugees in one of the camps in Ethiopia. He explains that they the majority of them escaped from the country as they could not stand the military service. The mother of one of them has been kidnapped by the security service and never came back home. People disappear in there without any reasons.

The storyteller used to live close to the border with Eritrea, in the Tigray region, where three major refugee camps are settled. As it highlights one of the biggest ones is located in the Afar region, where most of the refugees come from Eritrea. Nevertheless, the conditions in the refugee camps in Ethiopia are not acceptable, as most of the refugees are squashed in tents with the restricted access to food and water. The narrator continues:

“I also know one journalist, who works in one of the Eritrean opposition radio stations. He is trying to find a way to leave the country. I know that it is not easy for him... (...) I am not surprised that they do not want to live in the camps. They left their countries, because they were looking for normal conditions. And at the end, they get the same thing.” (Interviewee III, 29 year old)

He also remembers his friends from the University, who recently fled Ethiopia to seek for new opportunities and safe place. He remembers a friend called Mickel, who was his roommate in a dormitory in Mekelle. He wanted to reach Italy, where his cousins settled. They were sending remittances to their family in Ethiopia. He though, that he should change his life as well. He died on his way to Libya on the desert. The Interviewee III has been told that there was not enough water for the escapers:

“It was terrible news for me. I did not expect him to go. But people leave. Nowadays, it is a part of the daily news in every country around the world. It is

definitely the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War. And if nothing will be changed, it might be a disaster for the world.” (Interviewee III, 29 years old)

Demonstration of the data given by the interviewees brings me to some comments. Eritreans leave their country to escape from the never ending military service, the dictatorship, and the political system where people are kidnapped, tortured, taken into a prison and eventually killed. However, when they finally manage to escape the reality, they find each other in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries, where basic needs cannot be accomplished and their future is associated with the camp. That pushes refugees to seek for a better life in Europe. They get encouraged by the smugglers, who promise an easy trip to the Libyan coast and facilitate a passage through the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. If the escapers manage to survive the trip they are rescued by the special forces in the European seashore. Nowadays the future for all of them ends up in the newly establishing refugee camps in Greece and Italy. Although, the refugees who come to Europe have to struggle with a new culture, traditions and privileges. That is a difficult process which is described by my interviewees in the next category.

### **3.3.7 Hosting countries and assimilation process**

As it has been described above, Eritreans, and even Ethiopians, have lots of reasons for leaving their countries. It is not going to stop until the governments will change their policies. More and more Eritreans flee to Europe. But the adaption process in the destination country is not easier than migration.

The Interviewee IV, who managed to escape to France explains that the beginning in Europe was not easy. She has got an asylum and met friendly people, but she struggled to learn new language and get used to the new reality. Though living in France was easier, because it is a multicultural country, but moving to Poland turned to be complicated. Thanks to her future husband and his family, she managed to adapt quite fast and to survive a long process of her legal stay in Poland. After few months she has received an official decision with the approval for staying in Poland and very recently she has got a Polish citizenship:

“I am very happy that I am in Poland right now. (...) Thankfully, the decision for my staying in Poland was positive. I think that I have a lot of luck in my life. Not everyone has it. Nowadays it is very difficult to be allowed to stay in Poland.” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

The rest of the narrators does not plan to stay in Europe for a long time. Their dream is to find a perfect job in the United States or in the developing countries of Asia. The beginning in Portugal and in Poland was not easy for any of them. Even though they were aware of a different climate and long winters in Poland, they were still surprised by the cold weather. Moreover, they knew about cultural differences, which they may find.

The Interviewee I experienced the culture shock when he arrived to Portugal. He was surprised by the way of living, spending their free time or making their own budget for the month. He cannot understand how Portuguese people can go out that often when the unemployment is that high. He mentions that in Eritrea people try to save every cent, no matter how much money they receive:

“From time to time we do not have electricity, so we cannot cook even at home. Additionally, there is lack of water in my country. Here people do not really care about the basic things. They can live properly.” (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

The worst part of moving to Poland for the interviewees II, III, IV and V was the racism. They did not really expect so much hatred and severity. At some point, it seemed that the racism in Poland stopped, but with the new wave of the refugee crisis, everything started from the beginning.

The Interviewee IV remembers that she was scared of going out in Warsaw, especially that random people were asking her what she is doing in Poland and why she did not stay in her country of origin. She could not stand nicknames and slanders. However, she knew kept being strong and she tried to avoid such people. When she gave birth to two girls, her worries and doubts came back. The children in the kindergarten were touching her kids, as they were surprised by their colour of skin. They were acting strange around the girls and never allowed them to play together. When my storyteller found out about that, she took her kids to the private multicultural kindergarten.

“People make questions, and they will never stop. The only solution for that is the conversation. As long as they do not know the answers, they will be suspicious and distanced. But when I try to talk to them and tell my story, everything changes. They become open and trustworthy.” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

At the end, all of them were happy for knowing new culture, traditions and people. It is a memorable experience for them. They are grateful for the staying in Europe and all the opportunities, which they have got.

All the storytellers agree for being lucky to be in Europe. They are aware, that most of the Eritreans and Ethiopians will never get the same opportunity as they have got. That is what makes them worried about the people and their countries. Though, they still hope that one day everything will change, and their families and friends will not have to leave their homes.

### **3.3.8 Narrators’ opinions about the refugee crisis and future of their countries**

It is very difficult to describe in a written form how my storytellers reacted, when I asked them, what is their opinion about the refugee crisis and how do they see Eritrea and Ethiopia in the next few years. Some of them started to cry, the others could not express themselves, but there was one thing, which I have seen in all the eyes – a spark of hope.

Eritreans accuse their president Isaias Afewerki for destroying the country, its economy and development. Moreover, they do not understand why Eritreans have to spend their whole life in the military service, which takes over their dreams about the future education and progress.

I asked my Ethiopian narrators about their opinion on solution for the Eritrean refugee crisis. The Interviewee II emphasizes that refugees are not willing to live abroad, unless they have to seek for an asylum somewhere else. He thinks that politicians are supposed to start changing their policies, taking care of the human rights and facilitate basic needs of the citizens. He also shares his idea on how to help the refugees and asylum-seekers:

“In a short term, asylum is always good. But temporary solutions do not solve problems of the crisis. I am not interested to live outside of country for a long time. I prefer to stay there, no matter what. I guess that I am not the only one, who has the same opinion.” (Interviewee II, 32 years old)

One day, some of them would like to come back to their countries of origin. But the current situation does not allow it. The escapers are aware that if they will come back to Eritrea, they will be killed right after they cross the border. They know that it is too dangerous to go back right now, but they hope to visit their homelands with families. However, they have no doubts that nothing is going to change in Eritrea in the upcoming years.

“If I had a chance, I would go to Eritrea even for one day. I cry from time to time. It hurts a lot to see how Eritrea is destroyed, step by step. (...) I would love to see my whole family having a dinner in Asmara. Maybe one day, in few years...” (Interviewee IV, 34 years old)

“I would love to go back to Eritrea, but for now I will stay in Europe. I honestly do not know what will happen right after I arrive in Asmara. Maybe they would take me to the prison. (...) I know that I will swim again in the lake close to my hometown. I do not know when, but it is going to happen. One day...” (Interviewee I, 30 years old)

### **3.4 The analysis of the life story interviews**

Doing the life history interviews with Eritrean and Ethiopian migrants and refugees was a remarkable experience. I was prepared for the unexpected brakes during the interviews, but when it actually happened, it was still surprising. It was a memorable event for both sides. At the end, the interviewees were glad for telling their stories. It made them realize how important is to talk with people and share their experiences. Moreover, it released their hidden and contradictory emotions, including sadness, laugh, tears, anger, happiness, love or hatred. They have never had such an opportunity before, to talk about their countries and related with them feelings. They all agree, that people must talk about the refugee crisis, otherwise they will never reach an understanding of refugees' suffer.

Even though, I had knowledge about the current refugee crisis in Eritrea from the Internet, TV and newspapers, it was an outrageous reality to listen to the narrators'

testimonies. During almost all the interviews, there was a need for at least one break, as the memories of the family and friends got back with a dual power.

The life story interviews brought me to a point of some observation and criticism. The reality described in the chapter 2, has been confirmed by the storytellers.

Thankfully, the narrators have good memories associated with their family, friends and childhood time. The school time was challenging, but they have good memories related with that period. They lost contacts with their friends, whom they have met at school. The most significant time is corresponded with the university time. That is where they made new friendships, discovered new places, and have been taught disciplines, they always wanted to discover. But as the interviewees I, II, III and V explain it was also a time of finding out about the cultural, religious and political differences.

They have been asked lots of questions related to their political preferences. It was a time of putting people in different boxes. The interviewees II and IV say that Africans like to divide themselves in those boxes. The division is not made by the countries or districts, on the contrary – it is associated with the ethnic groups and its languages. As it has been verified and described in the category related to the assimilation process, most of the interviewees had problems with acclimating. If they did not fit in one group, they had to find another place. I think, that this grouping would not be accepted in the Western countries. European countries are used to the division by countries for decades. The appurtenance to the countries is really strong.

As my narrators explained, they opened their eyes on the complex situation of their countries of origin. They started to discuss, make comments on politics and economic situation of the countries, eventually they have got involved in discussion clubs and groups at university. The interviewees I and V were taken to the prison, because of their ideas and thoughts. They also admit that it showed them hypocritical democracy of their countries. All the decisions taken by the president Isaias Afewerki, brought them to one conclusion: Eritrea is ruled by a dictator.

During my analysis of the interviews I have noticed that there are two main push factors of the refugee crisis in Eritrea – the obligatory military service and lack of freedom of speech, which bring Eritreans to prison, tortures and death.

The Interviewee IV strongly affirms, that Eritrea is governed by one man, who puts Eritrean citizens in the eternal military service, without opportunities for future. Their testimonies associated with the problem of the military service, lack of freedom of

speech, tortures, kidnapping and murders were officially checked and condemned by the United Nations and the Human Rights Watch (HRW) in their 2016 report.<sup>57</sup> The military service, due to all the restrictions and obligations it poses to Eritreans (with their lives limited to the Eritrean territory, and the obligation to devote their future to the regular military service, which leads us to one person – the president Isaias Afewerki), could easily be associated with the restrictions of a "ghetto".<sup>58</sup>

The interviewees agree that, the citizens are separated from the world's reality – there is no freedom of speech. Every word can be used against themselves. The international mass-media and journalists have been already forgotten in Eritrea, just like in case of sister of the Interviewee IV, who lives in a refugee camp in Ethiopia. None of the European or American companies want to invest in Eritrea. All the reasons given above lead to the exodus.

According to the Global Trends 2015 report Ethiopia is the fifth major refugee-hosting country and the first choice for the Eritreans (UNHCR, 2016: 15). But according to my storytellers, life in the refugee camps in Ethiopia is terrible. Refugees die because of malaria and yellow fever, there is a lack of water and food. In the past three years, Eritreans take a risk and go on dangerous journey to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

None of the narrators went on that trip, but they have relatives and friends, who took a chance to leave their country. Telling these stories was the most difficult part for me and for the storytellers. It is not easy to talk about it and try to understand the suffering of these people. I do understand why the refugees do not want to go back to their countries of origin. On the other hand, I will be never capable of completely understanding what they have been through. We are hit by the news about the refugees every day, but we do not go deeper to understand why they flee.

Moreover, I do agree with one of the interviewees, that in the short term giving asylum to the refugees is a solution. But it will not stop others to escape their countries. I do not have a long term solution for that crisis. However, if the authorities of all the countries will just look at the refugees' existence, nothing will change.

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<sup>57</sup> The World Report 2016 on Human Rights. The report taken from the Human Rights Watch. (access online: 15.09.2016)

Available online: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/eritrea>

<sup>58</sup> Ghetto has been defined as "an area of a city, especially a very poor area, where people of a particular race or religion live closely together and apart from other people" and it is also "in the past, an area of a city where Jews were made to live". (Access online: 02.09.2016)

Available online: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ghetto>





## Conclusion

The main goal of the research was to present the Eritrean reality and try to understand why Eritreans leave their country by doing and analysing life history interviews with Eritreans and Ethiopians living in Poland and Portugal. Moreover, I wanted to describe what they feel and what do they think about the crisis. Finally, I wanted to present the social, economic and political contexts, including the interviewees' childhood, education time, or political reality. Furthermore my aim was to focus on the situation of Eritreans living in the refugee camps, and on the assimilation process of my interviewees in the hosting countries.

The theoretical and empirical studies have shown that since Eritrea officially introduced its independence in 1993, the country is constantly abandoned by thousands of people. During the life history interviews with Eritreans and Ethiopians living in Poland and Portugal, my narrators explained why Eritreans leave their homeland.

The national military service is the most common reason given by the storytellers. As it has been described by the interviewees I and IV, the service starts after graduation in high school. By the end of the training, officers decide who stays for the regular service and who can continue the university education. According to the Interviewee I the majority of the trainees is chosen for the regular service. Their life is limited to the Eritrean territory, and obliged to devote their future to the regular military service, which leads us to one person – the president Isaias Afewerki. People try to find the way of not going for the training, just like the Interviewee IV, who escaped to Europe in 2000s.

As it has been told during the interviews, the unreasonable prison, tortures and kidnapping are just right after the military service. People do not feel safe anywhere. Eritreans do not trust each other, because of the spies' network around Eritrea. Everything what the citizens say, can be used against them. The Eritrean narrators explain, that the opponents of the president and the government are punished, kidnapped, tortured, taken into the prison or even murdered. Eritreans blame the president and politicians for the human-rights violations. The storytellers give their personal testimonies, which contain of their stay in prison and tortures.

Since the 2000s Eritreans do not have an access to the international mass-media. The Eritrean television, radio and newspapers are completely censored. As it has been

stated by the interviewees I and IV, all the journalists are under control of the government. Eritreans do not know how the reality looks like. The freedom of speech has disappeared.

Moreover, Eritrea did not have presidential elections since 1993, when Isaias Afewerki has been chosen for the president of Eritrea. Nothing has changed since that time, including the Eritrean constitution. Eritreans are clearly not satisfied with the rule of the president Isaias Afewerki and its government. They want new elections and constitution.

According to the interviewees I and IV the Internet and social media do not work at all. Facebook and Twitter are constantly turned off by the government. They do not want people to communicate and share their thoughts about the politics. And it impedes the contact with families and friends, who are in Eritrea.

As the Interviewee I mentioned basic items are not available around the country. There is a lack of water, food and electricity in whole Eritrea. People are dying, as they do not have water and food. They cannot work without electricity.

All these reasons push Eritreans to flee their country. The Interviewee I emphasizes that even though Eritreans do not live in a civil war, they have to deal with the dictatorship and his orders. In the first place Eritreans choose the neighbouring Ethiopia as the hosting country. The problems start right after registration in one of the refugee camps. A sister of the Interviewee IV told her that, their documents are taken by the authorities of the camp. They cannot receive money from the relatives or friends, as they cannot prove their identity in the bank. There is a lack of water and food. Meanwhile, lots of the refugees get malaria or yellow fever. Without the medicines and health care, there is no chance for survive. Most of the children do not have an access to the education system in Ethiopia. They finish their education at the basic school in the camp.

The Interviewee III states that since 2012, Eritreans decide to seek for an asylum in Europe. They take a risky journey through the desert to Libya, and then to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea. Some of the relatives and friends of the narrators I, III and IV died on their way to Libya as they had not enough water and food. In Libya they are taken to the prison by the smugglers. They pay more than \$2000 per person to have a small space on the boat to Europe. The ones who do not have money are physically abused by the smugglers. According to the storytellers I and III, the majority of women and children are raped, and sometimes killed. As reported by the Interviewee III the

refugees taken on the boat have to face dangerous waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Thousands of them get drown in the sea.

According to the interviewees I, III and IV, the refugee camps bring no future for their inhabitants. They cannot get a proper education like the others. They have to wait for years to get an asylum in a particular country, just like it happened to the Interviewee IV. Without legal documents there is a little chance for them to get a job. Without a job the refugees will not make money for the future. As it has been stated by the Interviewee III, they cannot stay in their countries of origin and they cannot survive in the refugee camps.

The interviewees of this research, especially two Eritreans, admit that they have got a lot of luck. Both of them found a way to escape the military service in Eritrea, and had an opportunity to finish their education in Europe. As they come from the middle-class families they did not have difficulties with leaving the country. They stated, that the majority of Eritreans do not have enough money for food, so they usually lend money from someone or give everything what they have to the smugglers. The interviewees I and IV do not plan to go back to their country as the current situation does not allow them for the trip.

According to the Interviewee II, as long as all the politicians and organizations will just look at the reality of the refugees, nothing is going to change. Giving the asylum might be good in a short term, but it will not work in a long term. He emphasizes, that there must be found solutions for fighting the push factors in the countries of origin. Something must be done. Otherwise, the exodus will take over the world.

My storytellers had lots of difficulties on telling their stories. The interviewees I, III and IV feel sadness and hatred, when they think and talk about the reality in Eritrea and people escaping their homeland. They think very often about their friends and relatives, who stayed in Eritrea. The Interviewee III, whose mother comes from Eritrea, explains how difficult it is for his family to receive news about the refugee crisis. Each information makes them feel depressed and hopeless.

All of them agree that nothing will change in Eritrea in the upcoming years. They do not have particular solutions for the crisis, but they are aware that as long the president Isaias Afewerki will be in charge, nothing will change.

At the beginning of this research my goal was to do the interviews with the Eritrean refugees who recently fled their country. As it has been described in the chapter

3, due to the lack of time and difficulties with finding the refugees or convincing them to tell their stories I just managed to do the interviews with one Eritrean refugee to whom Polish citizenship was granted and four economic migrants studying in Poland and Portugal. The interviewees I, II, III and V gave the testimonies of their friends and relatives. That is why the goal of presenting the reality in Eritrea by the refugees was not achieved.

However, besides that, I have managed to talk with the narrators, who are closed to the ones, who fled Eritrea or Ethiopia. They were capable of giving testimonies on the reasons, which pushed Eritreans to escape from their homeland. They explained the reality, which the citizens of Eritrea have to live in, and brought closer the lives of refugees' in the refugee camps in Ethiopia and other countries.

Nevertheless, new pathways must be explored in order to present the Eritrean refugee crisis. As there has not been done a research in Eritrea about the crisis and its push factors, it may be an interesting aspect of exploring in the further studies on the refugees' country of origin. Eritrean nation seems to be forgotten, as the scientists focus on the refugees from the Middle East, mainly from Syria and Afghanistan. The more information can be obtained about Eritrea and the Horn of Africa, the more can be done on that topic.



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## **Annexes**

Each life history interview has different scheme and questions. However, all the questions are associated with the categories mentioned in the Chapter 3, including childhood and family, school and university time, economic and political situation in Eritrea and Ethiopia, the Eritrean military service, human-rights violation and migration as its consequence, refugee camps in Ethiopia, hosting countries and assimilation process, and finally, narrators' opinion about the crisis.

### **Annex 1**

#### **Life history interview with the Interviewee I**

Interviewer: Where do you come from and how does your hometown look like?

Interviewee I: I come from Eritrea. Eritrea is a country from between Ethiopia, Sudan and Red Sea. I was living in the capital, which is called Asmara. When I got the scholarship I came here (Porto) to study. My hometown is a small village with around 150 people living in there. It is a small village. All the people are living from farming. I grew up in a small village, which contains of 150 people. It is really small. All of them live from the farm, and the cattle. For some of the people, the money which they receive is not enough to live during one month. Thankfully, in my family, it was not a big problem. We tried to save money, because we knew that we are not rich.

Interviewer: Tell me about your childhood and about your family. Do you have any memories associated with that time?

Interviewee I: I have four younger siblings: 3 sisters and 1 brother. My parents are farmers. To be honest, farming is not a true part of the western countries, but they live from a traditional way of farming. Most of the Eritreans are farmers and they cultivate cattle. Perhaps it is not a big thing, but they try to manage to live in Eritrea.

My childhood was very funny. I remember that Eritrea was under control of Ethiopia. In 1993 I started school, just when independence came. Even though it was a difficult time, I started to play with other kids around. Living in a small village is much easier

than in the city, at least that is what I think. We did not know everything about the political situation; there were so many things to do around: swimming, fishing, and my favourite – hunting the birds. It was a good time. It is good that I grew up in a small community, which made me focus on the beauty of small things. It was a perfect time.

Interviewer: How is the high education in Eritrea? How are the universities?

Interviewee I: We have only one university. The government did not want to continue that university so they tried to construct colleges. At this time there are 7 colleges in Ethiopia. Most of the students apply for the Institute of Technology or College of Health Science in Asmara.

Interviewer: How do you feel and what is your opinion about the current Eritrean refugee crisis?

Interviewee I: I feel so bad, that people and whole families take a risk and escape their homelands. Sometimes they die on their way to reach a destination, and it is very terrible, I feel really sorry for them. They should live in a country where they feel safe and where it is peaceful, you know? Actually, that is the problem of the politicians, I mean they just do not care about the people, their nation. They (politicians) just want to be in power all the time, and the citizens do not feel secure about anything. Before the war with Ethiopia in 1998-2000 everything was different, even economy was more developed. At this moment politicians manipulate the people, they just go into their minds and try to manipulate them as much as it is possible.

Interviewer: What makes these people leave their country? How do you feel about that?

Interviewee I: Generally speaking, I do understand why people leave the country. Thankfully, I did not have to escape from Eritrea. I have just got an opportunity to study abroad with a full scholarship. After that I will go back there, just because of my parents. That is the only reason. But others... If they have rights and opportunities in Eritrea, they will leave. They already do that. They flee to Libya through Sudan. The smugglers promise them an easy and peaceful trip to Europe by boat, asking for more than \$2000 per person. Some of the smugglers take the money and never come back. Lots of my friends fled Eritrea this way. One of them did not say anything to his family. He left at night and called his family 3 weeks after, when he arrived to the Libyan coast. At this moment he lives happily in Italy. When I talked to him few weeks ago, he said,



that he wants to forget this journey. It was the worst trip ever. He saw people dying on their way from Sudan to Libya. There was not enough water or food for everybody. But then, he admits, that if he had to repeat the trip, he would have done that again, because he cannot live in Eritrea.

Interviewer: What is the most frequent reason of leaving Eritrea?

Interviewee I: After graduating from the high school it is mandatory to enter the national military service. Within 18 months the officers decide whether you stay in an active military service or if you can continue the education as a reservist. It was a new reality for me, I felt like it is a completely different planet. Making new friends was the only advantage of that experience. Besides that, I did not see any positive side of the military service. The government keeps on telling us in how bad situation the country is. That it is possible, that the very next day we can be attacked by our enemies. Usually, he gives examples of Ethiopia, Sudan or Yemen. There is no life inside the army. There is a monotonic routine of fulfilling the orders. I was lucky. My family helped me in leaving that place. I wanted to study and have a proper future. It was not legal, but we had no other choice. They knew someone in the government, who immediately had decided about my exit. Unluckily, nothing is for free in Eritrea. My family had to pay a lot of money, so that I could leave the army.

Interviewer: When you used to live in Asmara, how did you find the city and how did you find yourself in there?

Interviewee I: I had to find out about the city "system" - going out and what is happening in the city. It does take some time to get used to that. I have noticed that people know what is happening around with the government, that there is a separation, there is no good policy to lead the country and the people. The president is the one who is responsible for the refugee crisis. Eritreans live under a dictatorship: no freedom of speech, the eternal military service, tortures, kidnapping, and murders. People cannot survive with the money they receive. I completely understand why people leave. Our country is a hell on earth. But something must be done; otherwise it will never stop...

Interviewer: What Eritreans think about the refugee crisis? How do they feel about information given in the newspapers or in TV? Do they believe in everything what are they told?

Interviewee I: No, people in general believe in things which are said in the news. I remember when Eritrea was under control of Ethiopia. It was difficult for people around the country. Though, I did not understand what was going on, I have noticed that my family is quite nervous, especially when they were watching TV. It was not a stable time for anyone. There was no money; people were fighting for food and water. It was one of the worst times ever. But when Eritrea defeated Ethiopian government in 1991, all the people started building the country from the very beginning. People keep on watching the Eritrean TV but they do not really believe in the things which are said there anymore. I was in the capital with my uncle, and he turned news on and I used to go out, because I could not stand it anymore. Besides that, people watch TV just on Saturday and Sunday when there are funny TV shows shown. But in other days nobody is watching TV, because everything is fake, it is a lie.

Interviewer: What about the access to the Internet? Is it available in all the territory of the country?

Interviewee I: Around 2002 we had the best Internet connection in Africa. But the government said that the Internet is bringing problems and decided to decrease the connection. It is really difficult to call my family or someone else in Eritrea. Sometimes it is better, but in general the Internet in Eritrea does not work at all. Additionally, social media like Facebook or Twitter do not work at all.

Interviewer: Do people think that government is helping people and working properly? Do they trust the government?

Interviewee I: The problem in Eritrea is that there is no freedom of speech. All the articles and news are censored. Journalists who want to tell and write the truth are taken to the prison. Isaias Afewerki wants to show the people, that the country is in a good and stable situation. Moreover, we do not have an access to the international TV or radio. From time to time, there is no access to the Internet. The government tries to block social media, including Facebook and Twitter. That is the only way for Eritreans to check what is going on around the world.

Additionally, there are lots of spies around Eritrea. People cannot say anything against the president and the government. Eritreans are scared of talking with everyone. They do not trust their families, because everybody can turn to be a spy. Even I was taken to the prison.

Interviewer: Why did they put you in the prison?

Interviewee I: Once I was taken into a prison. My friends invited me for a dinner. We chose a nice place outside in the downtown. The restaurant was completely full and the tables were close to each other. Meanwhile, we started discussing politics and our disappointment on lack of the access to the international mass-media. Five minutes after, two of the customers sitting nearby arrested all of us. I stayed there for a week. The conditions inside of the prison are horrible. It is impossible to survive in this place. No one could visit me in there, as the visits are strictly prohibited. People are tortured there during months or years. If they do not survive these violations, they die...

Interviewer: What about the international relations between Eritrea and other countries? Are there many companies from outside who have their headquarters in Eritrea?

Interviewee I: You do not see people from other countries. Before the war with Ethiopia I guess that there were few companies from outside of Eritrea, but not anymore. There were some Italian companies back then.

Interviewer: What about the economic situation in Eritrea?

Interviewee I: If you have your own business, you can survive in Eritrea. But if you work for the government – in the national service – life is very hard. It is impossible to save some money or even survive until the end of the month. It is very difficult to cope with the economy and its crisis in the country. Most of the people depend on the remittances from their siblings and friends, who live outside of the country. Each family has someone living abroad. Starting with the 30-years-war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, people have decided to seek for better opportunities in Europe and in the United States. Additionally, lots of Eritreans left to Angola or Sudan.

Interviewer: Do you actually think that Eritreans leave their country because of the refugee crisis or because of the money which they can eventually get in their destination?

Interviewee I: It depends on the people. It is very difficult to cope with the economy and its crisis in the country. It is completely impossible. Starting with the 30-years-war against Ethiopia, people have decided to seek for better opportunities in Europe and in the United States. Additionally, lots of Eritreans left to Angola or Sudan. One of my friends left at night and called his family 3 weeks after, when he arrived to Libya. Right

now he lives happily in Italy. When I talked to him few weeks ago, he said, that he wants to forget this journey. He saw people dying during the trip. There was not enough water for everybody. But then, he admits, that if he had to repeat the trip, he would have done that again, because he cannot live in Eritrea. Also, I have heard about the children, who leave Eritrea, because they follow the others. They are not affected by the reality, they do not even know what is going on in the world or country. The smugglers are very smart; they know how to encourage kids to go on a boat to Europe. As the children do not have money for the trip, they are physically abused and tortured by the smugglers.

Interviewer: How is the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia? Is it possible for Eritreans and Ethiopians to cross the borders or not?

Interviewee I: Politicians try to create a feeling of hatred between those two nations. Our people fled to Ethiopia, and Ethiopians accept that. I think that the problem is with Eritreans. It is hard to accept Ethiopians for them, just because we were under the colonization before. But I still believe that everything is possible to change that problem. Politicians need to work on it very hard. But at this moment people want some peace. That is what they need. Before the war in 1998-2000, Eritreans and Ethiopians could cross the borders without any problem. Right now it is impossible for them to cross.

Interviewer: How do you feel about living in Europe? How is it for you to live in Portugal right now?

Interviewee I: I was surprised by what I have seen in Portugal when I arrived. The unemployment is quite high, but still, people live quite wealthy. Everyone is going out, you can see full restaurants all the time. In Eritrea, when you have a job, you just stay at home. People do not want to spend their money on unnecessary things. From time to time we do not have electricity, so we cannot cook even at home. Additionally, there is lack of water in my country. Here people do not really care about the basic things. They can live properly.

Interviewer: Is it expensive in Eritrea?

Interviewee I: People do not have enough money for shopping. It is really expensive in the shops, actually not just there. Nobody wants to invest in Eritrea. If there is no investment, there is no job for the people. It affects whole country. Even in the

construction area. The government stopped all the constructions. And the construction gives a lot of opportunities for the people. When I arrived to Asmara to start the university, I could not find people selling things on the street. There are a lot of controls checking on the salesmen and their products. That is why the sellers decide not sell anything, and they struggle to survive.

Interviewer: And what about studying? Do you like to live in Europe? What is your plan for the future? Are you planning to go back to Eritrea?

Interviewee I: As I am graduated in public health, I would like to work in the developing countries. If Eritrea will become more stable soon, I would love to go back, but for now I do not think so. I would like to continue my education (PhD) in Europe and afterwards to work in the developing countries. It would be a great experience. In Europe everything works in a different way. In the developing countries it would be different, they deal with things in a different way. I had an opportunity of studying and going abroad. But most of my friends, whom I have met inside the army, did not have the chance to leave. They are still there. They have no choice. I had an opportunity of studying and going abroad. But most of my friends, whom I have met inside the army, did not have the chance to leave. They are still there. They have no choice.

Interviewer: How do you see the future of Eritrea?

Interviewee I: I do not really think that something is going to change in Eritrea soon. The government has a lot of money, but they do not care about people, and will not listen to the European Union or the United Nations. I really do not know. I know that I will swim again in the lake close to my hometown. I do not know when, but it is going to happen. One day...

## **Annex 2**

### **Life history interview with the Interviewee II**

Interviewer: Where do you come from and how does your hometown look like?

Interviewee II: I was born in the capital city Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). Since it is the capital city it does not need further description. I was born in 1984.

Interviewer: Tell me about your childhood and about your family. Do you have any memories associated with that time?

Interviewee II: My father is not alive, he passed away few years ago. My mother is still alive. I have two sisters, unfortunately I am the only boy in the family. I am the youngest one in the house. I had a lot of luck, because my sisters took care of me. Sometimes it is really good to be the last one. My childhood was full of happiness! It was a very memorable and good time. I was very lucky to be honest, I have just good memories. I come from the middle-class family, so we did not have lots of problems with living. I was born during the Ethiopian Orthodox Christmas (Ganna in Amharic). We celebrate Christmas separately, sometime after the Catholic Christmas. We used to invite all our neighbours to come to our place, no matter what was their religion. Even though, my family is Christian, we used to celebrate Muslim holidays as well. We are all even, we do not put people in different boxes.

Interviewer: Do you have any memories of important friends in your life back then? Especially the ones whom you remember from you childhood and maybe you still have a contact with them?

Interviewee II: I still have contact with my neighbours, my high school friends. Thanks to Facebook and other online networks I have recently made some connections with people from the primary school. That is a really beautiful thing about the Internet right now. At this moment, I even remember their childhood face and all the memories we share from that time. It is very interesting to meet your friends after several years. It is really great to talk about things which you did at the school and so on. I do not have any particular memory at this time but were playing football and different types of our local games. We used to play in the field, we were running, hiding, nowadays in our country

the teenagers do not play like that. They glue themselves to the TV and computers. But during our time, the TV was not really known as it is right now. We had just one channel back in my childhood. We did not have any other alternative. There are many types of different games.

Interviewer: How do you describe the educational system in Ethiopia from your time and how do you compare that to nowadays?

Interviewee II: My school... it was nearby, I did not have to use any transportation, both for my primary and secondary school. My family used to prepare some food for me and my siblings, usually very traditional. That was very memorable time. I have pictures from my primary school; whenever I see them, I feel very happy.

Interviewer: You had English classes. Did you have an access to any other languages? When did you start learning English?

Interviewee II: English is a must to learn in Ethiopia. The classes at university were delivered in English. Nowadays, there are a lot of disciplines provided in the local languages. I think that until the 8th grade. Some of the courses at the university are delivered in other languages, depending on the course of course. But if the person is graduating from any other course, they have all the classes in English.

Interviewer: When did you start your university and where was it? How was the experience?

Interviewee II: I was entering the university with the grief of my father's death. I remember that my mother took me to the university. It was for me a first or second time to go away from home. The experience at the university was incredible. When I graduated a lot of work opportunities showed up. When I graduated from Haramaya University in Ethiopia, I have got an opportunity to do my master's degree at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. I was not capable of accepting that, as the fees were very expensive. Thankfully, the administration of the university offered to pay the fees, as I have been a very good student on my previous university. I was extremely lucky. But not everyone has the same opportunity. The youth do not enter the university, because their parents cannot afford it. The government should change something. Lots of my friends stayed at home, helping their families, or they decided to migrate. There is basically no middle-class in Ethiopia. While walking on the street of Addis, you can

find either reach people or completely poor. That is why we are in the crisis

Interviewer: Do you remember any discussion clubs at your university and others? Political, cultural?

Interviewee II: Political and religious discussions and clubs are not allowed in Ethiopia. But apart from that, there were lots of students who participated in debates, music and arts clubs or in the writing club. I was not very active in such activities.

Interviewer: Do you remember something about how the students were taught about the history between Ethiopia and Eritrea?

Interviewee II: To tell you the truth, I was not born on that part of the history. I remember from the childhood that we used to listen to the radio or to watch one channel on the TV. We were studying about that during our classes as well. There were around 2 chapters that period. I do not have such a special memory about it.

Interviewer: Do you have any friends from Eritrea? Do you have any contact with someone from there?

Interviewee II: Eritrean friends ... you know... it is very difficult to say something about that. I am sure that you are aware that Eritrea was once part of Ethiopia. I remember we had neighbours, who were forced to leave the country after the war. That was a very common phenomenon. Even Eritreans were married to Ethiopians and the opposite. It was a part of Ethiopia. There were a lot of students at my university whose mother or father was Eritrean.

Interviewer: Do you know if it is difficult for Eritreans or for Ethiopians to go to the other country (in that case either to Ethiopia or to Eritrea)?

Interviewee II: Ethiopians do not go to Eritrea. Why would they go there? (laugh) But Eritreans come to Ethiopia on a daily basis. There are also refugee camps, which host Eritreans in Ethiopia. Right now in Eritrea the situation is very difficult, as you already know very well. But Ethiopians go to the other countries on a daily basis, and even Eritreans. Ethiopia is one of the biggest countries in terms of hosting the refugees in the world. There are lots of refugees from the South Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia. Especially the Somalians are living in the refugee camps in Ethiopia or in Addis Ababa. In the Boile area of Addis Ababa there is an area called "Little Mogadishu" because of the presence of Somalians in there.



Interviewer: What do you know about the refugee camps in Ethiopia? How many and if they are really big?

Interviewee II: It is not to glorify the Ethiopian picture or to say something else but Ethiopian people are very hospitable. I do not say that everything is nice and so on. Just as an observer, I must say that refugees are welcome in here. I do not know the number of the refugee camps, but there are not considered as public. But in Africa the largest camp is found in Kenya. It is a centre of the media attention at this moment, as Kenya has been attacked by the terrorists, and the government wants to close the camp.

Interviewer: Do you know about any Ethiopians who decided to follow the same route as Eritreans and other Africans to go to Europe?

Interviewee II: I can assure you that it is a very common phenomenon. No one denies that people flee to other countries because of the various reasons. Unluckily some of them die on their way by trying to reach Europe. This is one of the headaches in our country. There are people who used to be in the same school, who used to live in our neighbourhood, who are living in relatively better conditions than others. And most of them are going to Europe trying to find a better life. There are many people that I know who left this way. There are many people. I do not want to talk about particular people, but I can assure you... this is a very common thing. People are going on a daily basis. Trying to find a better job or fleeing something. And there are many friends of mine who are in Europe, some of them are successful and some of them are not really. But I am not interested to talk about mentioning their name or their life conditions, but it is a very common thing.

Interviewer: What is your opinion about the current refugee crisis?

Interviewee II: It has been already said, that the current refugee crisis is the biggest since 1945. But people are not addressing it in a way that it should be. We have to look for the route cause. People are not willing to live in the other countries, unless they really have to seek for the asylum somewhere else. In a short term, asylum is always good. But in a long term, I have no idea. There is no proper answer for it. Moreover, it is the politicians, who are supposed to change something. They are responsible for the migration. Temporary solutions do not solve problems of the crisis. I am not interested to live outside of country for a long time. I prefer to stay there, no matter what is the situation. I guess that I am not the only one, who has the same opinion.

## **Annex 3**

### **Life history interview with the Interviewee III**

Interviewer: Where do you come from?

Interviewee III: I come from Ethiopia, from Mekelle region in the north part of Ethiopia.

Interviewer: Tell me about your childhood and about your family. Do you have any memories associated with that time?

Interviewee III: We are in total 5, 3 sisters and one brother. My mother is alive, but my father passed away in more or less 2001. My childhood was very careless and happy. I was doing everything what the rural family had to do. I was helping my family with the house and with the farm, including farm and the cattle. All the events from that time were memorable. We used to meet mostly because of the religious events and celebrations. Just when I started grade 4, we used to gather in the main square of my city Mekelle and celebrate with friends and family.

Interviewer: Do you remember your friends from your childhood? How did you spend time with them besides helping your family?

Interviewee III: We had a lot of social events. We were meeting around especially because of the religious events and celebrations. Starting with the grade 4 I remember that we had a lot of public holidays, we used to gather. We used to play together with the other kids in the area.

Interviewer: What about your friends? Are there lots of your Ethiopian friends who actually still live in there?

Interviewee III: I lost basically all the contacts with my friends in Ethiopia. Most of them did not finish their school, or did not even think of starting the university. I have no idea what is going on with them. But I feel bad about that. I am just a simple man, who got a marvellous opportunity to graduate and study abroad. My mother told me

about our neighbours from my age, who have no future, or who took a risk and left to Libya. Unfortunately, their families did not hear any information from them until now.

Interviewer: What about the education system in Ethiopia? How do you remember your school time?

Interviewee III: We have a five-stage education system in Ethiopia. It does start with the kindergarten. The very elementary school is up to grade four, where the children learn basic things. The second stage starts with grades 5, 6, 7 and 8, which prepares kids to the first half of the high school. The third and fourth stages consist of grades 9, 10, 11 and 12, where all the disciplines are given in English. And the last stage finishes at the university. I do remember the first half of the elementary school. It was located in the rural area. We had all the same cultural background, norms or traditions. I felt very comfortable. But when I had to go back home, my parents were giving me lots of work in the farm. And later in the evening we did not have electricity, so I could not do my homework and study for exams. It was quite complicated. Sometimes when my father allowed us to use the gas light, I could read books for school.

Interviewer: What kind of language did you have in your school? What did you learn?

Interviewee III: People in the cities may also go the private English schools. We did not have such an opportunity. And they can be better than us. But all the other things are similar to the other places, except for the minor differences. For instance English language starts definitely earlier in Addis Ababa than in the rural area. In my case, I have been attending all the classes in Tigrinya, in my local language (from the north of the country) until grade 8. But since the grade 1, I have been learning English and Amharic. In grade 9 everything was taught in English language.

Interviewer: How was your experience at the university?

Interviewee III: I had to interact with the city boys and with a different culture and traditions. It was not very easy, though. I understood that there are lots of differences between the city and the village. Most of my friends did not finish their school. But I feel bad about that. I am just a simple man, who got a marvellous opportunity to graduate and study abroad. My mother told me about our neighbours from my age, who

have no future, or who took a risk and left to Libya. Unfortunately, their families did not hear any information from them until now

Interviewer: You come from the north of Ethiopia. There are lots of different cultures and languages in there. Can you describe that area and traditions?

Interviewee III: In terms of the languages Ethiopia is completely divided. We do speak Tigrinya in the north of the country and we are neighbours with Eritrea. We do not have any difficulties, because as soon as we attend school we learn Amharic, which is the official language of Ethiopia. For the Tigrinya speakers it is not an issue, it is actually an advantage because they can speak one language more than the other Ethiopians.

Interviewer: Do you remember history classes from any school which you attend?

Interviewee III: I just remember that Eritrea was a part of the Italian colony, and we remember that Ethiopians have been never colonized by any country. We blame Italians for dividing two nations, that they are responsible for all the conflicts. Eritreans consider themselves as better than Ethiopians, they followed the same path as Italians - they were the ones who introduced that attitude.

Interviewer: That means that people did not really talk about the civil war?

Interviewee III: They did talk about it actually. Some of the politicians and not just them still claim that Eritrea is a part of Ethiopia until now and it has to come back. Officially Ethiopia accepts Eritrean independence from the end of the 20th century.

Interviewer: Do you have any friends from Eritrea?

Interviewee III: Actually quite a lot. My mother is from Eritrea, so I am half Eritrean and half Ethiopian. I grew up in the countryside, my family lives in the rural part of the country in the north. It is quite difficult for me and my family to talk about the current situation in Eritrea. We have relatives and friends in there. My mother's relatives come from Asmara. I have been to Asmara when I was a kid, sometime before the war in 1998-2000. Checking the news from Eritrea is very painful for my family. We do not understand how it is possible, that the government is destroying the country and its nation. Then, the authorities are surprised with the high level of people who migrate or escape the country.

Interviewer: Do you know anyone who crossed borders from Eritrea or Ethiopia to another country (Ethiopia or Eritrea)?

Interviewee III: Yes, I did, there were lots of situations like that in the history and it still happens, more and more times actually. From Ethiopian side I did not here about people crossing the border. I just remember three Ethiopians, who crossed to Eritrea but they opted for this military opposition in Eritrea. But there are many Eritreans who flee to Ethiopia on a daily basis. My home is close to the border and to the refugee camps. And yes, I do know people personally who decided to flee Eritrea because of the horrible living conditions. I also had more than 8 Eritrean students at the Mekelle University. They crossed the border at night, just to look for a better life, and opportunities for a better future.

Interviewer: Do you have any information about the refugee camps in Ethiopia?

Interviewee III: My students came from the refugee camps in the northern part of Ethiopia, just like I told you. I also know one journalist who works in one of the Eritrean opposition radio stations. But I do not particularly know now individuals in the refugee camps. But the major camps are just around my home, three of them. The fourth one is in Afar region, especially for Eritreans.

Interviewer: Do you know anyone from Ethiopia or Eritrea who decided to take that risky journey to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea?

Interviewee III: We do not hear a lot about the refugee crisis in Eritrea. I try to search for things, because I am half Eritrean, I have family and friends there. My cousin fled Eritrea one year ago. He could not stand the military service anymore. It was too much for him. He knew that the situation in the refugee camps in Ethiopia is not really good, so he managed to escape to Libya. But in Libya everything became more difficult. The smugglers have their prisons around the Libyan coast. First they put Eritreans, Somalis and Ethiopians in the prison, then they choose who goes on the boat to Europe. He said that most of the young women are raped before going on the boat trip. They have no other choice; otherwise they will be killed... My cousin told me, that they journey through the Mediterranean Sea was not that bad as what he saw in Libya. It was even worse than in Eritrea. My students come from the refugee camps in the northern part of Ethiopia. They crossed the border at night, just to search for a better life, and new

opportunities. I also know one journalist, who works in one of the Eritrean opposition radio stations. He is trying to find a way to leave the country. I know that it is not easy for him... I live close to the border with Eritrea. The three major refugee camps are close to my town. The fourth one is in Afar region, mostly inhabited by Eritreans. I am not surprised that they do not want to live in the camps. My Eritrean students from the Mekelle University told me that the conditions are terrible. They left their countries, because they were looking for normal conditions. And at the end, they get the same thing. I had a friend from Ethiopia, who died in Libya. He was my roommate in the dormitory during university time. His name was Mickel. I honestly do not know why he decided to leave. I just know that his destination was Italy. He tried to go from Sudan to Libya, but very recently I found out, that he died on the desert in Libya. Apparently, he did not have enough water for the whole trip. It was terrible news for me. As far as I know, he did not have any problems with the government. I did not expect him to go. But people leave. Nowadays, it is a part of the daily news in every country around the world. It is definitely the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War. And if nothing will be changed, it might be a disaster for the world.

Interviewer: What do you think about the government in Ethiopia right now?

Interviewee III: Well, I think in two things right now. Through the history, I think that Ethiopia is better right now. According to the constitution it is a democratic country. The procedures and everything are there. And in terms of the economics it is quite ok. But then from the other side, it is a country where there was no democracy to be honest. There is just constitution. I do not really think that the government actually takes care about the constitution. I do not also believe in the opposition to be honest. There is no compromise sometimes. Political parties consider themselves as the enemies not as the alternatives. We have 65 legal registered parties. Of course the government says that it respects the other political parties, but that is not true. Yes, there are some parties which I admire, but it is not really a big thing. I cannot really say that everyone and everything is fine in Ethiopia. For instance I do write in the newspapers in Ethiopia in Tigrinya and in Amharic, and I heard that the government is not happy about me, because I like to oppose things. They try to harass you actually.

Interviewer: Do people talk about the refugee crisis in Ethiopia?

Interviewee III: I think that Ethiopians do not care about the Eritrean crisis. In majority they consider themselves higher in the hierarchy. So why would they care about Eritreans? It is unbelievable, what politics and the will of possessing the country can do with the humans' feelings...

Interviewer: How did it happen that you are in Poland? Did you get any scholarship?

Interviewee III: Yes, we (students) are sponsored by one American organization. We also had an opportunity to go for the summer class to Istanbul, Turkey.

Interviewer: How do you feel in Warsaw and in Poland?

Interviewee III: In general I was prepared for the trip to Poland. But I must admit that I was challenged by the cold weather during the winter time. Additionally, there are expected cultural differences. Though, they were not really shocking for me. Some of the people do not speak English, especially the older generation. But I knew about that already, that was not new.

## **Annex 4**

### **Life history interview with the Interviewee IV**

Interviewer: Where do you come from?

Interviewee IV: I come from Asmara, Eritrea. It is a diverse country with lots of ethnic groups and languages. Eritrea is a very hospitable country, where people take care about each other. When my mother worked, our neighbour used to come and babysit us until my mom did not come back home. During the war in 1998-2000 spending time during evening on the street was very dangerous. I did not have good time with my friends like in other countries. My mother did not want me to play outside of the house, because she was scared that something might happen. Everyone was scared of going out, houses had to be closed. I and my sister used to believe, that one day it is going to an end, and eventually Eritrea will become a free country.

Interviewer: How do you remember your school time in Eritrea?

Interviewee IV: I used to attend private school in Eritrea. Later on I went to the public secondary school. At that time – in 1980s, teaching in Tigrinya was strictly forbidden. All the disciplines have been taught in Amharic. That was an enormous problem for all the children. I did not know the language, because no one taught me that before. But we (the children) had to manage somehow, even though it was very difficult and challenging. Afterwards we had classes provided just in English.

Interviewer: What is your opinion on the Eritrean education system?

Interviewee IV: Nowadays, I think that it is a bit better than in the previous century. What is the most important – each Eritrean has a free access to education. When Eritrea was under the occupation, not everyone could go to school. Especially in the smaller towns or villages. Plus, most of the streets were cut off and schools were destroyed. After high school each Eritrean, no matter the gender, must enter the military service for 18 months.

Interviewer: Did you also finished the service?

Interviewee IV: Well, I was supposed to finish. But I managed to escape. Just after Eritrea has officially introduced its independence in 1993, the president Isaias Afewerki



encouraged people to keep the spirit of fight for freedom and to build the country from the beginning. In accordance with that, everybody had to help in building the country. After 18 months, everything was supposed to change. Unfortunately, in 1998 the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia started and those 18 months turned to be eternal. The majority of Eritreans stays in the service for longer than that time. Trainees get one or two days off from the training but they have to be back to each military unit on time. Otherwise they are punished or taken to the prison. I remember the day when I received a letter from the army. When they ask for one day off, the officers' chairman asks about the places which they tend to visit. He always gives the exact amount of money which is "needed" for the day, so that they will not spend much. It is usually 2-3 dollars. I did not want to live the same reality, so I tried not to go to the army.

Interviewer: How did you manage to escape?

Interviewee IV: I did not have many problems. Two weeks after graduating from high school, I was supposed to show up to start my military service. I did not want to do that. At the beginning, I just had to move to another city nearby. I must admit, that I had a lot of luck. Later on, I have been constantly sick, so my mother's friend, who is a doctor, wrote an official letter to the administration of the army, saying that I am not capable of entering the service. But it just postponed my service. Finally, thanks to my family and friends I managed to flee to Paris, France at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I have got a status of an asylum-seeker very soon. One of the NGO's helped me, as I wanted to study. I will be eternally grateful for all the people who helped me back then. It was very difficult to escape from the country. I do not want to think what would have happened if I had not managed to escape. I did not want to live like my parents or friends. In Europe people do not hear about our reality. And even if they do, they do not really care about that.

Interviewer: How was the history between Eritrea and Ethiopia told when you attended a school?

Interviewee IV: Unfortunately, we were always told that we are a part of Ethiopia. That we will always rely on Ethiopians. That Eritrea is not even a country and our future rely on Ethiopia. But we (Eritreans) knew the truth. After classes, when we came back home, my parents used to tell some stories about our country and its struggle for the independence. There was no freedom of speech that is why teachers could not say the

truth. Otherwise, they would be taken into a prison. Most of the teachers were from Ethiopia, they did not speak Tigrinya, which was a big problem. At that time – in 1980s, teaching in Tigrinya was strictly forbidden. All the disciplines have been taught in Amharic. That was an enormous problem for all the children. I did not know the language, because no one taught me that before. But we (the children) had to manage somehow, even though it was very difficult and challenging.

Interviewer: For years Eritreans flee their country. Is the military service the only reason?

Interviewee IV: There are lots of reasons. Besides the national military service, there is no freedom of speech, all the mass-media are under the governments' control, human rights are violated, people disappear – they are kidnapped, tortured, taken to the prison and eventually their bodies are found on the streets.

My sister, graduated in Journalism and Communication in Asmara in 2010. I remember when she called saying that from now on everything is going to change for better. Everyone is tired of the news in Eritrea, we do not believe in anything what is written or said in media. Her dream was to change something, to change the reality in Eritrea. She started working as a journalist assistant in the national newspaper. She was so excited to work in there! Every time she finished an article, she was supposed to send it to the organization, which censors information. She got tired of lying to Eritreans, and she did not send her articles to that organization twice. The same day she was arrested. After two weeks she has been released – beaten and emaciated. The same day she fled the country. She could not work in the newspaper anymore. She thought that, she might find an asylum in the neighbouring Ethiopia. But it turned out, that the reality in there is not better.

Interviewer: Did your sister tell you how does it look like to live in the camp?

Interviewee IV: My sister is there already for years, seems that she will stay there forever. Eritreans are not treated well in the camps in Ethiopia. As she told me life in there is really hard. The day she has registered in the camp all the documents she carried were taken by the administration of the camp. They are completely under control of the administration, it is unbelievable. Some time ago, I have sent money to my sister, who lives in the refugee camp close to Addis Ababa. I found out, that she could not receive the money, as she has no documents. Thanks to my friends in Poland and in Ethiopia,

she has received the money in other way. That is not the only problem in the refugee camps. The refugees have a limited access to food, water, not mentioning about the medicines. I know that they feel safer than in Ethiopia, but they are supposed to receive basic things – without food and water they cannot survive. Especially, that the climate in Ethiopia is a bit different than the one in Eritrea. People get malaria and yellow fever. These diseases do not exist in Eritrea, so we (Eritreans) are not used to that. Once, my cousin got malaria in the camp. The medicines were given too late and he passed away. What is more, I cannot accept the fact that children in the camps have few disciplines at school. Kids get basic education in the camps, which usually finishes with the primary school. Learning how to write and read takes much more time than in the public schools in any other country. It slows down their growth.

Interviewer: You mentioned that your sister was taken to the prison. Did she share any memories from that time?

Interviewee IV: She did not really want to talk about that time. She just mentioned, that life in there is terrible! It is impossible to survive that place. Inside the prison, they (prisoners) do not get any food or water. Very often the prisoners never come back home. Few weeks or months after, their bodies are found on the streets of Eritrea. Outside of Eritrea no one knows about the reality of our country. Eritreans want to live the country. I listen to the news every day, there are more and more Eritreans dying on their way to Libya or they get drown in the Mediterranean Sea. The politicians cannot treat people, who fought for the independence in such a way. It is very painful...

Interviewer: What Eritreans think about current government and its policies?

Interviewee IV: Unfortunately, there are still some people who support the Eritrean government. The majority is completely against Isaias Afewerki and his dictatorship. People are killed by the spies on a daily basis. That is impossible! People want elections and new president and government. People cannot be treated like animals.

Interviewer: How do you feel in Poland? Was the assimilation process difficult for you?

Interviewee IV: I am very happy that I am in Poland right now. As I already told you first I came to Paris, France, where I have got a chance to study at one of the universities. I met there my future husband, who after graduating wanted to go back to his country – Poland. We got married in France, but we moved to Warsaw few weeks

after. I did not know that getting legal approve for my staying in Poland will be so difficult. There were lots of documents to fill in, many interviews, I was really scared that I will have to go back to Eritrea. I could not stop thinking about that. Thankfully, the decision for my staying in Poland was positive. I think that I have a lot of luck in my life. Not everyone has it. Nowadays it is very difficult to be allowed to stay in Poland.

Interviewer: Was it difficult to get used to the life in Poland?

Interviewee IV: Well, I had some problems at the very beginning, I cannot deny. In France everything was easier, especially that there are so many people from different countries and cultures. In Poland people still have problems when they see someone with a different colour of skin. I cannot understand that. People were asking where I come from and what do I do here. For them it did not make any sense to be in Poland, they were off the opinion that we (Africans) should stay in our countries. I got used to that, I had to. But the problem came back when I gave birth to my two daughters. Everything started when they went to the kindergarten. Kids were touching them and not playing with them, because they did not understand why they are different. I had to take them to the private international kindergarten. People make questions, and they will never stop. The only solution for that is the conversation. As long as they do not know the answers, they will be suspicious and distanced. But when I try to talk to them and tell my story, everything changes. They become open and trustworthy.

Interviewer: Do you talk with your daughters about Eritrea?

Interviewee IV: Of course I do. I find it mandatory to talk with them about Eritrea. They are half Eritrean, they need to know about my country of origin. They always ask when they will go and visit her grandparents. I do not even know what to say. If I had a chance, I would go to Eritrea even for one day. I cry from time to time. It hurts a lot to see how Eritrea is destroyed, step by step. I cannot stand it. I would love to see my whole family having a dinner in Asmara. Maybe one day, in few years...

## **Annex 5**

### **Life history interview with the Interviewee V**

Interviewer: Where do you come from?

Interviewee V: I come from Ethiopia, I am from the north part of the country - Dessie. Now I live in Addis Ababa, in the capital.

Interviewer: Tell me about your childhood and about your family. Do you have any memories associated with that time?

Interviewee V: We are a big family, we all used to live together. Now my mother is alone as everyone left the family place. My childhood... well, my family was not rich nor poor. But no matter what we were all very happy! Why? Because we were all together, we lived together. I grew up just like any other kid in Ethiopia. I did spend a lot of time with my friends, we were playing together, and studying.

Interviewer: Do you remember any particular game or something that you played back then?

Interviewee V: There are lots of games. Some of them I really do not remember at that moment. I do not know the names in English, some of them are... but there are really a lot of them. Like jumping to the river, or playing football and so on. Some competitions, running, swimming, playing football. It was a memorable time. And of course there was also a game with hide and seek. And all those games from the childhood, which of course I do not remember.

Interviewer: Where did you go to school? How do you remember the time from school?

Interviewee V: Most of my education I finished in Dessie (Ethiopia). At that time – in 1980s, the children started English classes just in the grade four. In the grade nine I chose a profile of my class with history and geography as the main disciplines. Since the early beginning I loved arts classes. In my high school all the disciplines were given in English. Additionally, we had some classes in Amharic and in Tigrinya. Afterwards I went to Addis Ababa University. I studied Arts with a specialization in painting. And

then I studied African Studies. It was not very easy, but still I was happy. The worst part was to move to the city, which was far away from my place. We had dormitories and we had food there, so there is no problem with this. And also you are making new friends, but I was excited and it was lovely. I remember the first day in the dormitory place. A friend of mine asked me who I am, what is my religion, from which ethnic group do I come from and whom do I support politically. Honestly? I have never had such an experience before. It was very strange to hear such a question. It was a shock for me. But from that day those questions continue.

Interviewer: Do you remember any students' movements at your university?

Interviewee V: The time which I spent at Addis Ababa University was truly memorable. I liked studying and spending the time with my friends. I wanted to be helpful and feel like I am doing something important, so I have decided to join one political movement at my university. It was my first year there. I did not like the fact of having real policies at the university. So I wanted to change something. It seemed like feel secure was not a priority for the university's authorities. We organized lots of protests, I was involved in that. But somehow the aim of the movement changed, and it turned to be a political party. That did not interest me at all. One day, the police came and arrested few of us, including me. I spent there 2 horrible weeks, without water or food in the worst conditions ever. It turned out that the government did not like our movement at the university. We just wanted to feel safe in the city and at the university, I had no idea that it would turn to be a problem for Ethiopian government. But our authorities did not treat the people as the human beings. Something had to be done.

Interviewer: Did you have just English classes at the university?

Interviewee V: It was English all the time, but some of the professors they might have used Amharic language, the official language of Ethiopia. I was also in jail for 2 weeks while being a part of that political movement. I was actually arrested. It was a bad time because our government was not treating us as the human beings, you know? They did not give us water, or food, especially for the first three days, there was completely no food and no water, and we were really hungry. And yes, that was really bad. I truly hate my government... And also after that, in the second year, we had a course to do some graphic art, and it was like doing stamps. So usually we did like some stamps with

Ethiopia or something like that. But I was extremely angry about Ethiopia and I really dislike it because of the government. And I started to do some stamps only like Kenyan stamps you know? (laugh)

Interviewer: What teachers were telling you during classes about the history of Eritrea and Ethiopia? About their conflicts?

Interviewee V: Just early in my elementary time, because Ethiopia and Eritrea were the same and I mean there is no history, but you learn about it. You learn about all these cities, like Asmara and so on.

Interviewer: Do you have any friends or family in Eritrea or from that country living somewhere else?

Interviewee V: Actually, Eritrean and Ethiopian people there are the same you know? Even now. Eritreans cannot actually come to Ethiopia, nor can we go to Eritrea. If you want have a contact with someone from there you really have send the letter to another country, so that someone in there can send it to Eritrea. Maybe in social media it is quite ok, I guess. I do have friends and family in there, especially before that Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict in 1998-2000. We even used to live together in both countries, so there was no difference.

Interviewer: Is it really difficult for both of the nations to cross the borders?

Interviewee V: It is forbidden to go actually. Only those, who are refugees, try to flee their country but this goes illegally. And actually it is really difficult for them also to cross. It actually started because some people were crossing to Ethiopia. And I know that there are a lot of refugees in Addis Ababa, and generally speaking in Ethiopia. There are a lot of them who want to go the US, and they are just waiting for the papers so that they can go there. And I know some others who actually make it to Europe as well.

Interviewer: What do you know about the refugees in Ethiopia?

Interviewee V: I really do not know how many people are crossing the border. But I know that they are a lot of people. And a friend of mine told me that he stayed in this

camp for a year and a half. And that they had a difficult life in there actually. And right now he is in Europe.

Interviewer: Is it easy for Ethiopians to go to the other countries?

Interviewee V: In general for Ethiopians to go abroad is not really easy you know? Especially, to get the visa. Maybe it is a little bit easier to go to other part of the world, but to Europe and to America it is really difficult. Most of the migrants, if they have a chance, they want to stay forever in those countries, so that they can have a better life. The US does not want to give visa to everyone, there are lots of restriction policies for Ethiopia.

Interviewer: Do you know any Ethiopian refugees who decided to leave their country because they had problems with the government?

Interviewee V: Yes, I heard, not quite a lot, but yes I had. Some journalists, they did not come back to Ethiopia because of these political problems. I know some, who stayed in England, and in the US.

Interviewer: What people say about politics in Ethiopia? Do people agree with the government? Do they follow the path of the politics?

Interviewee V: In my opinion, Ethiopian people, they are like Eritrean people in my opinion. They like each other. But I think that there is a problem with the governments, both of them. We have families in there, and they have families in Ethiopia. And if you do not have families you have friends. The people want to be somehow together, but the governments do not help with that.

Interviewer: Is it difficult for a student or and individual to live in Ethiopia?

Interviewee V: It is quite difficult to survive in Ethiopia. Prices in the supermarkets are really high, they grow every single day. We do not have a stable market. Every time it is different. That is why people leave Ethiopia, or Eritrea. One time, the government decided to collect taxes when we do art. Not when we just sell. You cannot paint, you cannot write, even music, that is forbidden. So we have an organization for artists and we question to the government especially to the ministry of culture.



Interviewer: What do you think about the relations between Eritreans and Ethiopians?

Interviewee V: In my opinion, Ethiopians and Eritreans are the same. We like each other, especially that we are so similar! But there is an obvious problem with the governments. They do not care about the people, just about their own good.

