

Statement by an Agaezi National Union (ANU) Member ወዲ- ዕምረ ዘቢሂረ እግዓዚ

The Forgotten Ethiopian Refugees in Sudan

How are the Ethiopian refugees in Sudan living today?

It has been nearly six years since the outbreak of the Triangular (Asmera, Mekelle and Addis Ababa) Dirty Political War in Northern Ethiopia that forced thousands of Ethiopians to abandon their homes, farms, businesses, and livelihoods. Many sought refuge in Sudan, while others were displaced internally to places such as Shire. In just a few months, six years will have passed since our lives were uprooted.

Despite this prolonged humanitarian crisis, very little attention is given to the suffering of Ethiopian refugees in Sudanese camps. The international community, humanitarian organisations, and media rarely discuss the daily hardships faced by those who remain trapped there.

I speak not only as an observer but as someone who personally lived in one of the refugee camps in Sudan.

During my time there, I publicly opposed what I viewed as atrocities and crimes committed against our people by the various parties involved in the conflict. Because of my views and my public advocacy, I experienced intimidation and increasing political pressure. I was warned that if I did not leave the camp, action would be taken against me. As a result, I was forced to leave the refugee camp and relocate to Khartoum for my own safety.

Many other refugees experienced similar political intimidation. Some chose to remain silent out of fear, while others quietly left the camps to avoid harassment and persecution.

Life outside the refugee camps was equally difficult. Many of us worked under extremely harsh conditions and struggled to survive. We often paid more than **40,000 Birr** in living expenses while facing exploitation, insecurity, and uncertainty, yet our voices remained unheard.

Today, the situation facing Tigrinya-speaking Ethiopian refugees throughout Sudan has become even more dangerous. Sudan's own internal conflict has further exposed refugees to insecurity, displacement, and humanitarian hardship. According to various reports and widespread concerns among refugees, armed actors operating in Sudan have sought to recruit or mobilise individuals from refugee communities. These allegations require independent investigation, but they have created widespread fear among vulnerable refugees.

Unfortunately, very few media outlets, humanitarian organisations, or prominent public figures have spoken consistently about the deteriorating conditions faced by Ethiopian refugees in Sudan.

The Reality Inside the Refugee Camps

Based on my personal experience and communication with other refugees, the major challenges include:

1. **Severe humanitarian shortages.** Many camps suffer from inadequate humanitarian assistance, while numerous families remain separated after years of displacement.
2. **Limited healthcare.** Access to medical services is extremely poor, and preventable illnesses continue to claim lives due to the lack of treatment.
3. **Unsafe water supplies.** Many refugees lack access to clean drinking water, causing waterborne diseases that particularly affect children and the elderly.
4. **Family separation and insecurity.** Ongoing insecurity and fear of armed recruitment have forced many young people and family members to flee separately, leaving households divided.
5. **Protection concerns outside the camps.** Refugees living in cities such as Gedaref, Wad Madani, Khartoum, Kassala, and elsewhere often face insecurity, exploitation, and allegations of pressure from various armed groups seeking recruits. These reports deserve careful and independent investigation to ensure the safety and rights of refugees.
6. **Scattered displacement.** While a limited number of refugees have managed to return to Ethiopia, many others have dispersed across Sudan or continued onward to Libya, Egypt, and other countries in search of safety and a dignified future.

A Call to Action

As a member of the Agaezi National Union (ANU), I call upon:

- The Government of Sudan to uphold its obligations to protect refugees and civilians within its territory.
- The Government of Ethiopia to develop safe, voluntary, and dignified pathways for refugees wishing to return home.
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other humanitarian organisations to strengthen humanitarian assistance, protection, healthcare, and education for Ethiopian refugees in Sudan.
- The African Union, IGAD, and the wider international community to prioritise the protection of refugees affected by conflicts in both Ethiopia and Sudan.
- Independent media and human rights organisations to document and report objectively on the conditions facing Ethiopian refugees and to investigate allegations of intimidation, forced recruitment, and other abuses.

No refugee should be forgotten simply because the world's attention has shifted elsewhere. Every displaced person deserves safety, dignity, access to humanitarian assistance, and the opportunity to rebuild a peaceful life.

The suffering of Ethiopian refugees in Sudan is not only a humanitarian concern—it is a shared human responsibility. Lasting peace in Ethiopia and the Greater Horn of Africa will require protecting civilians, respecting human rights, and ensuring that no displaced community is left without hope or a voice.



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