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Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt

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Introduction

Eritreans have been seeking asylum in east Sudan for more than five decades and the region now hosts more than 80,000 refugees. East Sudan has also become a key transit region for Eritreans who are on the move to Egypt, the Sinai desert and Israel. According to UNHCR statistics, the number of Eritreans crossing the border from Sinai to Israel has increased from 1,348 in 2006 to 17,175 in 2011.¹ Coupled with this dramatic growth in numbers, the conditions on this route have caused growing concern. Testimonies from Eritreans who arrive in Israel have increasingly referred to torture, extortion and kidnapping at the hands of human smugglers and traffickers.² Recent testimonies also seem to indicate an escalation of these practices in Sinai and east Sudan.

The smuggling route from Eritrea to Israel is long, complex and involves many different actors. As such, it cannot be examined in its entirety in a single paper. This analysis consequently focuses on the movement of people from Eritrea to east Sudan, and from east Sudan to Egypt.

The paper is structured as follows. Following brief contextual information the paper opens with an examination of motivations and aspirations to leave Eritrea. This includes an overview of the current situation in Eritrea and the importance of the Eritrean diaspora in decision making. Part two addresses the changing refugee dynamics in east Sudan and why Shagarab refugee camp has become predominantly a place of transit rather than refuge.

The following section examines the role of smugglers in east Sudan. One group of smugglers mentioned in many testimonies are a group known as the Rashaida. In order to explain their ubiquity in testimonies this section places human smuggling in the context of wider processes of trade, underdevelopment and Sudan-Eritrean relations. Specific routes and locations are examined. Testimonies from Eritrean refugees and key informant interviews provide an understanding of the situation from the available data. To conclude the challenges and possibilities for protection, assistance and security are reviewed.

Global context

There has been increasing and sustained attention to this issue over the past two years. A UN Monitoring Group on Eritrea and Somalia has been established and addresses smuggling and trafficking. An EU resolution was passed in March 2012 on human trafficking in Sinai (European Parliament 2012). The UN High Commissioner for Refugees visited Kassala earlier this year to highlight the issue (AFP 2012) coupled with increasing media reports providing global attention to the various points on the route (BBC 2012a; CNN; Independent).

The politics of the region adds to the complexity of the situation. The Sinai border area is highly sensitive from a political, strategic and security perspective. In addition to the national security concerns related to sensitive border areas, these complexities include Nile-Basin inter-governmental relations, Egyptian-Israeli bilateral relations including recent airstrikes in

¹ Statistics provided by The Population, Immigration and Border Authority of Israel

² Physicians for Human Rights, Israel have collected more than 1,300 testimonies from Eritrean asylum seekers who have suffered extreme abuses at the hands of smugglers and traffickers in Sinai. See Physicians for Human Rights (2011)

Sinai (BBC 2012c), continuing Eritrea-Ethiopia tensions, the social and economic marginalization of the Bedouin and Rashaida tribes in Egypt and Sudan and the regions in which they reside, and the lack of government control over parts of the smuggling route. To this must be added the reports of Eritrean Government involvement in the route (UN Security Council Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2012: 20); the impact of Egypt's and Libya's 2011 revolutions; the tensions between Libya and the European Union regarding Mediterranean boat crossings (UNHCR 2012a) and the deteriorating conditions for asylum seekers in Israel.

Eritrea has tense relations with its neighbours which makes it difficult to address border crossings. Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in 1991 and following seven years of good diplomatic relations, started a war over a border dispute.³ There are also ongoing border disputes with Djibouti (UN Security Council 2010; paras 11-18). Eritrea also exists under UN sanction due to its involvement in supporting the radical Islamist Al-Shabaab movement in Somalia.⁴ Sudan is the exception with restoration of diplomatic ties in 2006.

In the reviewed literature there is very little information regarding smuggling journeys and no data are available to define the changes in these routes in recent years. Eritrea and east Sudan have restricted the work of international organizations adding to the difficulty of verifying information (UN Human Rights Council 2010; para 75: Sudan Tribune 2012). With notable exceptions there has been a dearth of recent scholarly articles on east Sudan with much more focus on the south of the country (Pantuliano 2005: Young 2007, 2011).

As previously stated Rashaida are consistently mentioned in testimonies of Eritreans who have embarked on this journey. However there has previously been very little attempt to understand the dynamics of this group and their history and relationships within the region.⁵ Also the involvement of large numbers of Eritreans in this process has also not been fully addressed. It has also been reported that human smuggling from Eritrea is one piece of a larger international, organized criminal network reaching from the ports of Eritrea to Sinai and beyond.

Legal context

There are a number of legal instruments that protect the rights of migrants and refugees and impose a duty on states to respect those rights. The 1951 Geneva Convention defines a refugee as someone who has a well-founded fear of persecution. It also includes Article 33, the principle of non-refoulement. Eritreans who apply for asylum in another country are considered traitors and may be subject to life imprisonment or the death penalty. It is therefore impossible for many to return.⁶

³ Relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea are complex and beyond the scope of this paper. For an overview see Ambroso and Crisp 2011

⁴ UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 2023 (2011) [on expansion of the mandate of the Monitoring Group re-established by resolution 2002 (2011)], 5 December 2011, S/RES/2023(2011)

⁵ Rashaida are particularly difficult to approach due to their isolated position in the region. Knowledge is mainly based on an ethnography undertaken in 1978 – 1980 (Young, 1996). Notable work has been undertaken by Postma (forthcoming).

⁶ Article 37(3) of the Proclamation on National Service No. 82/1995, 23 October 1995 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3dd8d3af4.html>; Articles 296 to 302 of the Eritrea Transitional Penal Code, Proclamation No. 158 of 1957), 23 July 1957 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49216a0a2.htm>

The concept of ‘mixed migration’ recently developed by UNHCR is particularly relevant here. The term refers to migratory movements, usually irregular ones, of people taking the same routes and same means of transport but travelling for ‘different reasons’ and having ‘different protection needs’ (UNHCR 2011). Mixed movements also include those who have been recognized as refugees in a first country of asylum and are making a secondary movement to increase their livelihoods or for family reunification. Mixed migration can also include mixed motivations within the same individual. In the case of Eritreans this may be partially political repression and partially the desire to have a better life chance than a lifetime in military conscription.

The legal definition on smuggling is enshrined in the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air which entered into force 28 January 2004. It is used to supplement the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The definition of smuggling states:

Smuggling of migrants shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident (UN General Assembly, 2000a).

The legal definition of human trafficking enshrined in the Palermo Protocol states ‘Trafficking in persons’ shall mean:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (UN General Assembly, 2000b).

The distinction in law is therefore clear. It is notable that the definition of a human trafficking victim is very narrow. Therefore even Eritreans who undergo traumatic tortures may not meet the definition of exploitation as enshrined in the Palermo Protocol. Due to this, smuggling shall be primarily used here but it should be noted that smuggling in this case often involves high levels of coercion, violence and abuse.

The extent of the suffering that many Eritreans undergo in Sinai should not be underestimated⁷. Abduction is distinguished from smuggling or trafficking to describe a situation where there was no initial motivation on the part of the individual transported to move. In practice the distinction between smuggling, trafficking and abduction can become blurred particularly due to insecurity and conditions on the route. For example, some Eritreans may have an initial intention to leave however they quickly ‘lost control’ of what was happening to them.⁸ Different practices of coercion and the informal nature of the movement also adds to this complexity.

⁷ See Amnesty International 2008., Fishbein 2010., Hotline for Migrant Workers 2011., Human Rights Watch 2008., Physicians for Human Rights 2011.

⁸ Interview with Egyptian NGO, 2 August 2012

Secondary movement

There are a number of destinations that Eritreans use to reach safety. Yemen and Libya are both destinations for Eritrean asylum seekers.⁹ Egypt has also increasingly become a destination with numbers steadily growing throughout the last decade. However, NGOs report that due to the harsh conditions in Egypt many Eritreans have tried to improve their situation by travelling to Israel (Brown, 2004). Recently, Egypt, and more specifically Sinai, has become a transit region for migrants travelling to Israel whereas earlier migrants to Israel had often lived in Cairo for many years.

For those who do not pass through Cairo but travel through Sinai three possible outcomes may transpire. One scenario includes being caught at the border, placed in one of the detention centres that run from Aswan through to Al Arish and subsequently deported either to Ethiopia or Eritrea. Secondly those who manage to traverse the Sinai (some may be held captive and subject to torture and extortion) may be shot or seriously wounded at the border with Israel. Thirdly, there are those who are successful and make it across the border to Israel where migrants face increasingly harsh conditions.

Despite the dangers, the popularity of this route is indicated by the numbers of Eritreans recorded crossing the border with Israel. The Population, Immigration and Border Authority of Israel states 59,858 asylum seekers entered Israel between January 2006 and March 2012. Of these 57 percent (33,912) were from Eritrea.¹⁰ Smuggling of Eritreans through Sinai to Israel started in 2006 (Afeef 2009). There were 1,348 applications for asylum in Israel in 2006. By 2008 this had increased to 7,700 and by the end of 2010 almost 1,000 people were crossing the Sinai to Israel per month. The refugee context in Israel is important for explaining why Eritreans continue to use this route despite numerous awareness campaigns by UNHCR and the Eritrean diaspora (ICER 2011).

It has become known that employment can be gained in Israel and, although the journey is arduous and involves a dangerous border crossing between Israel and Egypt (Amnesty International 2008, Human Rights Watch 2008), it is a cheaper alternative in comparison to smuggling fees for the crossing from Libya to Europe. The swift rise in numbers has led to some particular changes in Israeli law concerning asylum seekers and refugees resulting in an increasingly harsh asylum system (Perry 2011).

The most fundamental change occurred on January 10, 2012 when the amendment to the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law the Israeli Parliament was passed (Human Rights Watch 2012). All irregular border-crossers are now defined as ‘infiltrators’. There is no distinction between refugees, undocumented migrants or those with an intention to harm Israel’s security (Hotline for migrant workers 2012a). All infiltrators can be detained by the Israeli authorities for three years before their deportation except for unaccompanied minors.

In addition, a series of deterrence measures have been implemented including a fence along the Sinai-Israeli border which is due to be completed in October 2012 and building a 10,000-person detention center in the Negev (Hotline for migrant workers 2012b). There is also a proposal to impose fines on employers who hire irregular workers. The most recent reports indicate that there has been a drop in border crossings from 1,706 in May to 289 in July

⁹ UNHCR Online Population Statistics database

¹⁰ Data provided by UNHCR Israel

2012.¹¹ However it is too early to conclude whether this trend will continue. It is unclear whether the decrease in Eritreans entering Israel represents fewer people undertaking the route. Due to the speed within which the decrease in numbers has occurred this would seem unlikely.

Motivations and aspirations for migration

This section will detail the reasons why such large numbers of Eritreans seek a life outside their country of origin. Eritrea has a turbulent young history. In 1952, after 10 years of British colonial rule, Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia. A decade later, Ethiopia annexed Eritrea as one of its provinces which led to the Eritrean struggle and a destructive war lasting from 1961 to 1991. After its de facto secession from Ethiopia in May 1991 (ratified in a referendum held in 1993 in which 99.8% of its inhabitants opted for full independence from Ethiopia) the Eritrean Government has remained in power without any multiparty elections.

According to an official UNHCR position paper in 2004 ‘the human rights situation in Eritrea has seriously deteriorated...with regard to the treatment of opposition political groups and movements, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, arbitrary detention...and the treatment of draft evaders. There is an absence of civil society, political opposition or independent media’ (UNHCR 2004).¹²

Forced conscription is also a major component of the Government’s policy under the 1999 National Service Proclamation (NSP) which was extended in May 2002 under the Warsai-Yikaalo Development Campaign (WYDC). There is no specific definition of this campaign and no official figures regarding how many people are in active service.¹³ However high school children must undertake one year of military school at the Sawa training camp to be able to complete their course of studies. Those formally demobilized remain members of the National Reserve Army and are frequently called up for military duty, training or work service.

There are a number of recurring reasons provided by asylum seekers to explain why they left the country. Many state the lack of political freedom, educational opportunities or freedom of movement. The most common motivation recorded by Müller in her study of Eritreans in Tel Aviv was ‘being free’ (Müller 2012, 455). When questioned further this implied being able to work and earn a salary and not work for nothing. This refers to the stipulations of the WYDC.

The Eritrean diaspora

It is difficult to get a precise picture of the Eritrean diaspora. Movement of people from Eritrea was not only integral to its formation but is one of the defining features of its survival. Diaspora remittances helped fund the war for independence and have accounted for more than 30 per cent of Eritrea’s GDP in every year since it was achieved. The two percent income tax levied is still regarded as a duty at least by those who have been in the diaspora

¹¹ Figures gained from Saharonim prison authorities. The figure for July represents those that were registered on 17 July 2012

¹² Eritrea scored the lowest globally in the Press Freedom Index between 2010 and 2012. See Reporters without Borders http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=1034

¹³ For the consequences of the campaign for Eritreans see Hirt 2010 and Kibreab 2009

for a long time.¹⁴ These diasporic connections have undoubtedly been instrumental in the motivations of those inside the country to migrate. Many of those living in Eritrea have family members in the diaspora who assist the movement, providing information and resources to those who are residing within the country.¹⁵

The migration decision

There has been a change in where Eritreans plan to move. According to reports from interviewed refugees in December 2010 the main reason for leaving Eritrea was to find job opportunities in Sudan.¹⁶ By July 2012 around half of the interviewees made a conscious decision followed by proactive plans to come to Israel while still living in Eritrea. One Eritrean man said he would “die or succeed, but it was worth the risk. In Israel they treat you like a human; our government does not have even basic rights.” (Furst and Jacobsen 2011: 7)

One Eritrean young person wanted to ‘use their time effectively’. This man said that he decided to come after seeing friends in Israel who had made a life for themselves. He had a university business degree and the Eritrean Government was constantly “disturbing” his business. In Israel, he hoped to use his degree and to grow professionally (Furst and Jacobsen 2011: 7).

Some decide to travel to Israel after spending a period of time in Sudan, usually in Shagarab refugee camp or in Khartoum where they learnt about the economic opportunities in Israel. Others make the plan after spending some time in the refugee camp:

I'm Christian, single and 23-years-old. I arrived in Israel from Eritrea on November 23, 2010. I got to Israel after eight months of military service in Eritrea, during which I realized what my life would be like – no freedom, no salary, no chance of living in my home. In January 2010 I fled the army and crossed the border to Sudan. There I went to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and lived in the Shagarep Refugee Camp for ten months. Life in the camp was hard, and when I heard about the option of reaching Israel, I decided to try my luck (Hotline for Migrant Workers 2011: 25).

It is unclear whether those that make the journey are aware of the dangers that exist at the hands of Bedouin in Sinai and whether this affects the decision to migrate.

In May 2010, I crossed the border to Sudan. From Sudan I continued to Israel, because Eritreans in my village had already reached Israel, and conveyed that things there are fine. They didn't say that getting there was so difficult (Hotline for Migrant Workers 2011: 12)

There seems to be different levels of awareness within the Eritrean community regarding the abusive processes in Sinai. A radio programme¹⁷ promotes awareness of the situation and reportedly almost all Eritreans in the diaspora encourage their family and friends not to make the journey to Israel or Libya.¹⁸ There has also been a degree of awareness-raising within

¹⁴ UN Security Council, 6674th Meeting SC/10471 <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10471.doc.htm>

¹⁵ A review of the unique characteristics of the Eritrean diaspora is beyond the scope of this study, however for an overview please see Müller 2012 and Kibreab 2007

¹⁶ Interviews collected by UNHCR Israel

¹⁷ ‘Voices of Eritrean Refugees’ Radio Erena (www.arena.org)

¹⁸ Interview with Meron Estafanos 18 July 2012

refugee camps and this is expected to increase in the coming months.¹⁹ Therefore it seems unlikely that those with relatives abroad or a connection to the diaspora would be unaware of the dangers. Paradoxically, those with family members abroad perhaps have a stronger motivation to leave the country.

Reportedly, many Eritreans know the stories but do not believe they will be caught in the hands of the ‘bad smugglers’. For every story of torture there are still many success stories of Eritreans who have made the journey.²⁰ There also seems to be a significant number of people who state they would rather have a chance of a better life in Israel than languish in a refugee camp with no opportunities. The depth of awareness of the current situation can be gauged by the number of women who take a contraceptive injection prior to embarking on the journey in case they suffer rape.²¹

The change in the demographic profile of those leaving the country is an indication of the altering motivations of movement. The old caseload in Sudan is comprised of lowland Western Eritreans, whereas those leaving Eritrea now are young with an average age of 24²², travel alone are Tigrinya from southern Eritrea and urban. They have aspirations to make a life for themselves outside the oppressive state of Eritrea and have access to education and jobs that many of their friends and relatives enjoy in the diaspora.²³

One recent development is the emerging reports from Eritreans that state they have been abducted from the border between Eritrea and Sudan. Although this is a small number when compared to broader population who enter Israel, it is increasing in frequency. Furthermore when asked where they might stay after their release from detention this group does not seem to have any relatives or friends in Israel. They may have made an initial decision to leave but were then approached and made to travel against their will. The role of smugglers in the route will be explored following an examination of the situation in east Sudan.

East Sudan: from refuge to transit

East Sudan is made up of the states of Red Sea, Kassala and Al-Gedaref²⁴ and has particular characteristics that help shape the dynamics of mixed movements.²⁵ Relationships between Eritrea and Sudan are currently amicable. However the relationship is tenuous and complex. Those within the region see the Eritrean Government as playing a large influencing role over

¹⁹ Ethiopia Refugee Update June 2012 UNHCR Ethiopia <http://www.unhcr.org/4fffe9db9.html> [accessed 26 July 2012]

²⁰ Interview with UNHCR Israel 2 August 2012 and Karin Keil, Hotline for Migrant Workers 11 July 2012

²¹ Interview with Karin Keil, Hotline for Migrant Workers 11 July 2012. Based on referrals for gynaecological treatments and pregnancy terminations arranged by PHR-Israel in 2010, more than 600 women suffered sexual assault or rape.

²² Information compiled by UNHCR Israel from 70 in-depth interviews with asylum seekers in Saharonim detention centre.

²³ Fifty four per cent of the Eritrean population is below the age of 20. This generation has no experience of war or the ‘culture of martyrdom’ (Tsfai 2002) that was inspired during the struggle for independence with Ethiopia.

²⁴ See Pantuliano, 2005 for economic and political overview of the region

²⁵ These states are among the poorest parts of the country and are characterized by low levels of rainfall, chronic food insecurity, poor development indicators and limited support from central government. There have been recent initiatives to address the impact of refugees on the surrounding community in East Sudan such as the SOLSES project. <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=7175&catid=235&typeid=13> It is also reported that the Commission for Refugees in Sudan has also expressed plans to close Shagarab and establish a new camp along with 3 screening centres and 2 RSD centres.

the politics in east Sudan and vice versa. The Government of Sudan allegedly provided support to Islamic elements amongst the Eritrean youth in refugee camps in the 1990s. Similarly the Eritrean Government supported opposition groups to destabilize east Sudan. This is an example of what Cliffe has called 'mutual interference' where governments routinely support the dissidents in neighbouring states and use these dissidents to pursue their own interests (Cliffe 1999). As Young notes the area has hardly been peaceful since the 1961 Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), originally composed mainly of Muslim lowlanders, launched a secessionist insurrection starting the war for independence.

Small numbers of Eritreans crossed the border to east Sudan at this time however the numbers dramatically increased due to escalation of warfare with Ethiopia, famine, forced conscription and fighting between the ELF and a new secessionist movement, comprised of radicalized highland people, calling themselves the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). The EPLF subsequently dominated and intensified its struggle against Ethiopia (Ambroso and Crisp 2011).

It is within this context characterised by decades of struggle for independence and forced conscription that thousands of Eritrean refugees started seeking sanctuary in east Sudan.²⁶ By the end of the 1980s there were 800,000 Eritrean refugees (still at this time Ethiopians) in Sudan.²⁷ Many were Muslim lowlanders, from the Beni Amer ethnic group which straddles the Eritrean-Sudanese border. Between 1993 and 2004 around 118,000 Eritreans of all ethnic groups voluntarily repatriated from Sudan²⁸ or left for Khartoum or elsewhere. Therefore over 90 percent of the remaining camp population stems from the western lowlands in Eritrea and are very similar to the local population in east Sudan (Ek 2009).

Ninety-seven percent of Eritrean asylum seekers who arrive in east Sudan are recognized as refugees. The few Eritreans whose claims are rejected are normally allowed to stay on humanitarian grounds. While Sudan has maintained a generous open door policy towards Eritrean refugees it is a difficult protection environment. No refugee has the right to free movement within the country. Controls have become increasingly strict as a result of political tension following the separation of South Sudan; improved relations between Sudan and Eritrea; and a reinforced effort to prevent trafficking and smuggling. UNHCR estimates that approximately 3,000 persons enter Sudan from Eritrea every month. Of those on average 2,000 persons seek asylum in Sudan and are subsequently hosted in Shagarab camp located near the town of Kassala.

Due to its longevity Shagarab refugee camp has developed into a lively market and it is common for the local population to trade and socialize inside the camp. Refugees with social networks in Sudan may be able to bypass the regulations imposed by the Government, acquire citizenship, ID cards, travel permits, live in towns, and sometimes gain access to higher education.

There is a marked difference between the majority of the refugee population and those now leaving Eritrea. Those now leaving the country are young, Christian, Tigrinya from urban areas. Much like young Sudan-born refugees, the new arrivals are generally unwilling to remain in an enclosed camp setting without access to higher education or employment. In some cases, particularly journalists, high ranking officers and political opponents, the camps'

²⁶ For a comprehensive analysis of National Service and WYDC see Kibreab 2009 and Bozzini 2011

²⁷ UNHCR Online Population Statistics database

²⁸ UNHCR Online Population Statistics database

close proximity to the Eritrean border causes further anxiety and need for immediate secondary movement. This is increasingly pertinent when relationships between Eritrea and Sudan are amicable and where the deportations of Eritreans in Sudan over the border are becoming increasingly common (Amnesty International 2012).

Reports of human rights violations in Sudan may also be a motivation for swift onward movement²⁹. More than 75 percent of the new arrivals therefore remain in Shagarab camp for only a matter of weeks, in most cases just long enough to receive refugee documentation from COR. The country's strict encampment policy causes new arrivals to seek onward transportation offered by smugglers in an attempt to find opportunities.

The role of smugglers in primary movement

As outlined in the previous section movement is deeply entrenched in the history of Eritrea. Due to the tight exit controls that have been in place in the state since its inception, Eritreans have developed multiple routes and strategies to leave the country. Not all of these routes involve smugglers. Furthermore, it should be noted only a small number of smugglers commit abuses and many act as an important link for Eritreans to flee to safety.

Sudan's eastern border with Eritrea extends over 660 km with legal entry points at only three locations (Awad, Lafa, and Gergif). Not all of those making the journey use smugglers. Most of those who live in the lowlands, in particular those who live relatively close to the border reportedly trek the whole distance until they reach the Sudanese territories. Sawa, the military training camp, is 18 miles away from the Sudanese border and some may use this as an opportunity to evade national service. For example 30 percent of teachers assigned to Sawa reportedly use this route to leave the country (Müller 2012: 458). Those travelling from further afield may have a permit to travel by bus closer to the border areas such as Tesseney or Golluj while others walk the whole distance (reports suggest from as far as Keren, Asmara and Ghindae).

Where smugglers are used to cross the border Rashaida are mentioned with particular frequency.³⁰ Focus is therefore given to this group due to the number of testimonies where Rashaida are consistently mentioned. An explanation of their history and way of life indicates why they might be so ubiquitous in testimonies.

Thought to have originated from Saudi Arabia in the mid-19th century³¹ the Rashaida, as late arrivers to the continent, did not have access to regular water sources.³² They became nomadic camel pastoralists confined to the more arid, inner areas of east Sudan but used their

²⁹ For documented human rights abuses in Sudan see U.S. Department of State 2011 and Human Rights Watch 2009

³⁰ It should be noted that not all Rashaida are involved in smuggling people. It is very difficult to get accurate numbers however it is believed that there are currently this many Rashaida in east Sudan and with possibly six or seven large extended families involved in smuggling people.

³¹ This is a view that is now propagated by some Rashaida namely, Mubrouk Mubarak Salim, from the Rashaida tribe he is the leader of a political opposition group the Rashaida Free Lions. In 1996 Mabrouk Mubarak Salim had published a study, on the genealogy, history and 'folklore' of the Rashaida: *The Rashaayda, the descendants of the Abbs, between past and present*. According to research undertaken by Postma, Rashaida are aware of this book even though many of them cannot read. Interestingly according to Postma, Rashaida can relate their distant history but were hesitant to relate their more recent migration history to the continent.

³² This has had long standing implications as local administration in east Sudan is based on land ownership.

connections with Gulf States and later with Egypt³³ for trade and employment. Those that remained on the coast traded Sudanese goods across the Red Sea. They have been described as the 'axis of movement all the way from Tesseney to Hailaib'.³⁴

Rashaida hold a particular position and are generally seen as detached from the rest of the area.³⁵ On one hand, labour migration to the Gulf beginning in the mid- 70s, de facto freedom from conscription in Eritrea and their sophisticated trading and smuggling networks have allowed some to become highly self-sufficient and independent. They have maintained a way of life despite draughts, conflict and political repression. On the other hand Rashaida are endogamous, isolated, and their predominantly nomadic lifestyle has not emphasized the need for education.

For the most part the Rashaida have avoided fighting in the many conflicts³⁶ that have beleaguered the region and avoided affiliation to any political group.³⁷ They are easily identifiable by their appearance and are usually heavily armed. They are located in an area to the west of Kassala called Mastora with smaller numbers reported in Gederef, and the coast of the Red Sea around Port Sudan.³⁸ They also reside on the border area with Eritrea and are active in smuggling goods between the two countries.³⁹

Rashaida traders are not the only group involved in benefitting from Eritreans who want to leave the country. Eritreans of other ethnicities have an important role acting as brokers between those who want to leave the country and Rashaida. Some of the brokers have links with Rashaida inside Eritrea:

Smugglers take you from Asmara and then drop you a few kilometers before Massawa (port in Eritrea). Then a Rashaida guy takes you from there at 10pm. Then you walk all night until 9 in the morning. By that time you will leave Massawa to your right and get to the middle of the desert where no one can spot the Rashaida because they are supposed to come there on a pick-up truck.⁴⁰

While some arrangements seem very informal, other elements of the route seem to be part of a highly organized criminal network. It has come to light that some members of the military and Eritrean Government are complicit in smuggling (UN Security Council Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2012: 20). The Bedouin in Sinai have been reported to ask for

³³ The only camel meat market in the region is situated in Egypt and therefore when there was a surplus of camels families grouped together to make the journey and share the risk of travelling from the Red Sea to Cairo. Other goods would be brought back to sell in the markets in Sudan.

³⁴ I am grateful to Sara Pantuliano for this phrase

³⁵ There are three groups of Rashaida who reside in different areas of east Sudan and west Eritrea. Different families differ in their adherence to traditional values and have differing levels of political affiliation and power.

³⁶ During British administration of the region the Rashaayda were allowed to continue their trading activities in return for non-interference. This immunity from government interference seems to have continued.

³⁷ With the exception of the formation of the Rashaida Free Lions headed by Mabrouk Mubarak Salim

³⁸ Despite building houses, for the majority of the year Rashaida do not live in them. Either the women are left behind if the man is in Saudi Arabia or the whole family is absent and is travelling. Men are definitely very mobile and will be absent during rainy season (from May/June to October, however this is becoming more unpredictable because of climate change). More often than not they are considered storage spaces. Interview with Metje Postma June 5 2012

³⁹ Number of Rashaida are notoriously difficult to gauge. The leader of the Free Lions Mabrouk Mubarak Salim believes there are half a million Rashaayda in Sudan. However it is more likely to be around 50,000. Metje Postma June 5 2012

⁴⁰ Eritrean Youth that fled from Eritrea in 2010. Interview with Metje Postma June 5 2012

ransom money to be deposited in many countries throughout the world, with brokers complicit in each country.

Smuggling people seems to be just one piece of a wider smuggling network that extends from Eritrea to Sinai and beyond. General Teklai Kifle, commander of the Eritrean western military zone is censured as the main perpetrator in this process and the trafficking of arms and people has been found to operate through the same networks using the same vehicles (UN Security Council Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2012: 20). One testimony states the route of the weapons:

On my way to Israel in 2011, I spent 20 days in the Sinai. I worked as a translator for the smuggler Abu Ahmed. Abu Ahmed is the boss of his family of smugglers. He brings people from Libya and Sudan to Israel and charges them \$15,000 each, no more, no less. He also smuggles weapons. The way he brings them is through Sudan but their journey starts in a place called Allai, in the highlands of Eritrea. From Allai they are taken to Tesseney, which is the exit town of Eritrea.

From Tesseney they go to Wadi Sharifay in Sudan, which used to be a refugee camp. From Wadi Sharifay to Sitau Ashrin; which is also a refugee camp. There are two high ranking Eritrean soldiers involved in this, I know them well. Their names are Borhame and Yesef Hadege. The main man who is in charge of all of this is Manjus. The other two are the ones working. They bring the weapons in their cars to Wadi Sharifay. Then Manjus calls the Rashaida and they come and there is a handover — the smugglers take the weapons. These are the same gangs that smuggle people. I know the name of one of them is Abed. They are very tight with the military.

The weapons are taken in a big truck from Eritrea to Sudan. But when they are transported from Sudan to Sinai, they are covered with people so they are not exposed to the satellites.

The routes into Egypt come from all different directions but they all cross at exactly the same point on the Suez Canal. They carry the weapons in ships covered with cartons and bags so as not to be detected and people sit on them (UN Security Council Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2012: 20).

Rashaida traders have a history of moving commodities from Eritrea through Sudan to the border with Egypt. Eritrean migrants are seen as highly lucrative. As demand from Eritreans to move from Sudan has grown, it seems as though the number of Rashaida traders involved has increased.⁴¹

A further concern is the increasing reports of abductions from within Eritrea by some Rashaida. These are small in number and difficult to verify. However one testimony from Tel Aviv states that four of his brothers and cousins were kidnapped by Rashaida from Forto Sawa (Eritrea) on their way to work in a farm. Another youth whose brother is an Israeli resident was kidnapped from Gramaica (Eritrea) on his way to Sudan. All were asked to pay \$4,000 for safe exit to their destination. However, after paying the amount demanded they were sold to another smuggler who asked a further \$30,000 for their safe conduct to Israel (ICER 2012).

⁴¹ It should be noted that these reports are strenuously denied by Tesfamariam Tekeste Debbas, Eritrea's ambassador to Israel. Avi Granot, head of the Africa division in Israel's foreign ministry, also denied any knowledge of Eritrean arms entering Israel (Sydney Morning Herald 2012)

There are also many reports of brokers operating at many different points within Eritrea. ‘There are brokers everywhere inside Eritrea so there is no problem – you will know someone who knows someone – these networks have been established for a very long time’.⁴² Müller notes from a recent visit to Eritrea that ‘there is a significant group of young people on the streets of Asmara, who are well heeled and spending money freely with no apparent danger of being sent to Sawa...their existence is a visible sign of how certain shadowy networks dominated either by the PFDJ, the military or a combination of both, demarcate spheres of political and social life’ (Müller 2012: 460).

There are also some reports of families in the diaspora who pay a broker to smuggle a family member out of Eritrea only to be told that the person has subsequently been kidnapped by Rashaida.⁴³ They believe the brokers are complicit in abduction as they always manage to avoid being caught themselves. It is reported that if there was the political will Rashaida traders could be stopped. However, as the main movers of goods and hard currency within Eritrea, the political will might be lacking.

The role of smugglers in secondary movement

East Sudan is not the final country of destination for Eritreans currently leaving the country. The motivations and aspirations of Eritreans to move and the changing demographics of those crossing the border have already been established. However there are a number of different routes Eritreans utilize in order to leave Sudan. Each route involves different levels of awareness and volition at each stage. Also changes can occur many times along the route, with an individual moving across migration categories.

At the border

Consistently NGOs and UNHCR offices in Israel and Cairo report testimonies that state there was no intention to travel to Sinai and that abduction had taken place around the border area. Although they are small numbers of testimonies they seem to be increasing in frequency. Kidnapping from the Eritrea-Sudan border was reported by four of the 70 individuals interviewed by UNHCR Israel between September and December 2011. They claimed that they were kidnapped shortly after crossing to Sudan while they were making their way to Shagarab refugee camp. However more than half those identified during the March visit to Saharonim detention centre claimed they had not planned to travel to Israel, but rather to the Sudan area (Shagarab refugee camp, Khartoum, or South Sudan).⁴⁴

UNHCR Kassala stated they receive between 30 and 50 cases a month of people claiming that they had been kidnapped. These individuals have been caught by the police. Claims of kidnapping have only emerged slowly over the past five years. The ransoms have steadily increased with the highest standing at \$15,000.

Some of those who are abducted reported they were given the option of release in Sudan for \$10,000 or can ‘chose’ to be taken to Sinai for \$3,000. This is usually a false promise as even if the ransom is paid for release in Sudan, individuals are nevertheless forcefully taken to Sinai. However this depends on the particular smuggler (Fishbein 2010).

⁴² Interview with Jemal Ferah 27 July 2012

⁴³ Interview with Meron Estefanos 18 July 2012

⁴⁴ Interview with UNHCR Israel 2 August 2012

The purpose of the capture is to extort money as quickly as possible. If an individual cannot raise the funds they may be sold to another group in Sudan or taken to Sinai. The location of camps is reported to be just outside Kassala.

People crossing the border on foot are especially vulnerable to the very mobile, organized and flexible Rashaida. The latter would prey upon people exhausted and wandering in the wilderness all alone. They would offer to give them a ride or force them on board their pickups. Hoping to find people that would travel to Israel, they subject people to interrogations and extreme tortures until they would be 'forced to plan' to go to Israel (Mehari 2010).

It seems as though Rashaida who engage in this practice are becoming less wary about their activities. Recently there are increasing reports that asylum seekers are taken whilst en route to Shagarab refugee camp. For example there was recently an incident in the south between the border and Shagarab camp. A COR bus was taking between 10-15 asylum seekers. Heavily armed Rashaida approached the bus and took everyone on board apart from one boy.⁴⁵

I did not plan to come to Israel. I left Eritrea in November 2011 for Khartoum, Sudan, where my aunt lives. I planned to work with my aunt. But I could not reach Khartoum, because in Kassala, Sudan, the rashayda (smugglers) kidnapped me. They took me to the desert, where they held me for a month. The smugglers called my aunt and demanded that she pay \$10,000 to release me to Khartoum. My aunt told them that she would pay them once they brought me to Khartoum. The smugglers did not take me to Khartoum; they kept me there and raped me. After a month, the smugglers told me that they were transferring me to Khartoum, but they lied and transferred me to Sinai.⁴⁶

Safety in the camp is an immediate concern of many 'this is very much a risk everyone is told to avoid: stories of people being abducted from the safety of their houses, let alone newcomers sleeping outside...' (Mehari 2010)

Eritrean brokers are key to arranging onward movement with Rashaida from within the camp. The facilitators in the route are usually of the same ethnicity as those embarking on the movement (Hamood 2006: 50). Furthermore, life in the refugee camp is characterized by ethnic divides. Different ethnicities are thought to have different aspirations. One testimony states that people from Akele-Guzai region are thought to have strong connections abroad and to be most likely going to Israel. Those from Maekel region are believed to be going to Europe, while those from Gash Barka are simply associated with smuggling people out of Eritrea and settling in Sudan (Mehari 2010).

Testimonies state that often this was the main reason why an individual agreed to the journey. Someone who spoke their language and came from a similar area in Eritrea told them about the potential opportunities in different towns and cities.⁴⁷ New arrivals are particularly vulnerable.

Many of those that decide to stay in Shegerab for a longer time are engaged in the business of trafficking people out of Eritrea to Khartoum or Israel. In fact, the scale of this business

⁴⁵ Interview with UNHCR Kassala 28 June 2012

⁴⁶ Female, from Eritrea, arrived to Israel in February 2012, was kidnapped to Sinai and held there for three months, paid \$3,000 for his release (interview conducted by the Administrative Tribunal in the Saharonim prison in February 2012)

⁴⁷ Report from UNHCR Protection assistant Melaku Gutema December 2010.

astonished me. Most of the people that stayed here over 6 months and that I spoke to are one way or the other engaged in this business mostly as middlemen (Mehari 2010).

They are told they are being taken to Khartoum or other Sudanese towns for the purposes of finding work. None of them are asked to pay money immediately. Refugees interviewed in detention in Israel seemed to think the smugglers operating from within the refugee camp were more trustworthy.

Vast numbers of Eritreans in the camps, particularly in Shagarab work as middle men, at various levels. Depending on the level, their involvement with the Rashaida, and their role, they may be either Sudan born Eritreans, or later arrivals looking to make some money.

Those from the border regions, with knowledge of all routes and with personal networks may work as smugglers and then sell the 'clients' on to the Rashaida or other traffickers. They are able to speak both fluent Tigryna and Arabic. They work as the middle men in the sense that they scout for people wanting to travel to Khartoum, to Cairo or to Israel in the camps. They gather the people for the trips and sell them on to the Rashaida after exiting the camps. They may simply also give people information on when the next car will be leaving the camp (Smith 2011). 'Mostly these people do this as a temporary solution to their financial problems in Shegerab. Yet, after a couple of rounds, few quit the business' (Mehari 2010).

The route to Sinai

Although the locations and way Eritreans enter the route differ, the route to the Egyptian border seems similar. Rashaida gather people in groups and then make the journey when they have the amount of people they require.

When one lands on an agreement with one group (of brokers) he or she is made to stay in one particular place, mostly in houses in the outskirts of Shegerab, along with fellow travelers. When enough people are gathered, they are then handed over to the Rashaida who in turn transport them to Kassala. Finally a convoy of 7 – 10 pickups – each carrying around 15 people... 4 fully armed vehicles at the front and back of the convoy set on a 4-7 days journey to Sinai and Israel (Mehari 2010).

The most common place where people are kept is Mastora – an ever developing area of west Kassala home to a primarily Rashaida community. Other locations are further along the main highway between Khartoum and Kassala. Halfa, Al Jedida, and Port Sudan are mentioned but with less frequency (ICER 2012).

The route to the border with Egypt is 1,500km by road however there are around four to five checkpoints along the route and therefore Rashaida often travel through the desert at high speeds. There is often more than one vehicle and one group of people used along the journey. Therefore a large network operates different parts of the route. Those embarking on the journey may have to wait at particular points for the next vehicle to pick them up. Depending on how much has been paid some parts of the journey may have to be made on foot and rivers crossed.

The Rashaida put us into a building, where we stayed for 17 days, while others were brought. Everyone was then put into 6 open trucks. It was to take a day-and-a-half to cross the desert to Egypt. But it took 2 additional

days, because the trucks broke down – and they would get bogged down in the sand, and the refugees would have to push the truck to free it. After getting loose, any refugee that didn't make it back into the truck right away was left behind in the desert. At the Sudan-Egypt border, the Rashaida turned the refugees over to Egyptian Bedouins in exchange for payment (Free Eritrea 2011).

The group I tried to reach Israel with had four trucks, with 25 Eritreans on each one. There were 14 women and four children in the group. The journey from Sudan to the Sinai Desert took one week. Every night the smugglers stopped the cars and told us to sleep somewhere. Everyone got a glass of water a day and some bread. Some of us had cookies as well. The smugglers had weapons and would forcefully cover us. If we moved they would beat us. They were violent before we reached the Sinai Desert. They would beat the women, but not the children. They didn't beat me on the way, only in Sinai (Hotline for Migrant Workers 2011: 20).

Involvement of security and police

A small number of testimonies state the involvement of both Eritrean and Sudanese military and border patrols in the smuggling route. One of the seventy people interviewed by UNHCR Israel stated that he along with three friends were stopped at the border by Sudanese police and that it was they who handed them over to the smugglers⁴⁸.

I'm 21-years-old. I worked my entire life as a shepherd in my village in Eritrea, and I never went to school. In April 2010 I left Eritrea for Sudan, hoping to find a good job. I didn't plan to come to Israel. I hadn't heard of this country when I was in Eritrea. When I crossed the border between Eritrea and Sudan, a soldier caught me and demanded money. I had no money, and that soldier transferred me to Bedouin smugglers, who transferred me and many other people to Sinai. I didn't know they were taking me to Sinai. In Sinai we were taken to Davit, from Eritrea, and two Bedouins: Khalid and Abdullah. They told us to pay to be smuggled to Israel. Only then did I understand that they wanted to transfer us to Israel (Hotline for Migrant Workers 2011: 18).

It was also noted by Pantuliano in her interviews with local youth in Kassala and Port Sudan that some government members might be trying to ignite tribal tensions to their advantage. This was particularly in reference to offering of assistance to pro-government Beni Amer militia to patrol the border. This group of Beni Amer are of Eritrean origin and are now living in Sudan and might have repercussions for their relationships with other Beni Amer groups in Sudan. From testimonies regarding experiences in Shagarab there seems to be very close relationships between Rashaida smugglers, security, border guards and some of those working within the camp. The threat of being abducted or sold to Rashaida from within the camp is feared by many.

⁴⁸ In-depth interviews were compiled by UNHCR Israel until December 2011. Later testimonies also suggest this pattern.

Abuse at the hands of smugglers

Most vehicles used are pick-ups and are open at the back. There are numerous reports that refugees drop out of the back of the vehicle because it is driving at such high speed over uneven terrain. There are reports that people have been left in desert or seriously injured. There are also reports of deaths of refugees due to road accidents occurring due to the speed they travel.

It was indicated by some refugees that the smugglers failed to provide enough food and water. Due to starvation and thirst many refugees lost their life in the desert as the travel to Sinai takes more than 8 days. According to the observation made by some refugees, individuals with heart problems especially had difficulties when crossing the Sahara desert. Being harassed and tortured by smugglers seems common according to the testimonies collected. Women are often victims of rape and sexual assault.

One concerning trend is reports of abuse similar to those taken place in Sinai, to Eritreans held in east Sudan. More concerning are reports that when exact locations and people are identified to the police, no action is taken. According to UNHCR Israel, the first documented abuse of this type was recorded in Saharonim detention centre in February 2012.

The IC was put into the back of the car and driven to a compound in the wilderness. He was tied with chains to a tree, arms stretched and legs clipped with another set of chains. He was given some water and little food. Every day, he was beaten and tortured. Some the men used their knives to dig at his flesh or cut any part of his body. His clothes were filled with blood (Smith, 2011).

Possibilities and challenges for protection

The interest from the international community and increasing media attention may have contributed to Sudan's focus on this issue.⁴⁹ Beyond this, smuggling and irregular movement is a concern for states for a number of reasons. One recent paper from IOM concludes that smuggling 'corrodes the integrity and effectiveness of democratic government and ultimately undermines its authority, neutrality and the rule of law' (IOM 2009:9).

However there are many separate issues that make protection for Eritreans on this route difficult. It is evident that the route operating within Eritrea and stretching to Sinai and beyond is composed of groups of networks containing actors with varying levels of organization and experience and using different shades of coercion and violence. There are some members of network, such as those acting as guides along the Eritrean-Sudanese border or operating as brokers inside refugee camps who are using the smuggling route as an opportunistic and short term strategy to make money. Similarly it is thought there are varying levels of experience and organization within the groups of Rashaida who engage in taking Eritreans to Sinai. However other networks, such as those organized by some members of the Eritrean Government for smuggling arms are highly organized.

⁴⁹ James Copnall BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16903627> Melissa Fleming Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.com/melissa-fleming/sudan-women-rape_b_1279733.html UNHCR video <http://unhcr.org/v-4f2bdf376> Ian Timberlake from AFP <http://www.rnw.nl/africa/bulletin/eritrean-refugees-kidnapped-killed-unhcr-chief>

One of the key problems with alleviating this situation is the lucrative nature of smuggling and the profiles of the individuals who benefit. It has been calculated by the UN Monitoring Group that General Teklia Kifle may stand to gain \$3.6 million from smuggling of arms alone. The amount of ransom money demanded is also increasing. Demands from smugglers ranged from \$3,500 to \$5,000 in 2011 however testimonies now report ransoms in east Sudan of up to \$15,000. Furthermore, on release individuals may be transferred to another smuggler and forced to pay a further ransom. As stated above, there is an increasing trend of Eritreans being held captive in Sudan for these purposes.

Smugglers therefore stand to make large amounts of money very quickly. Due to the amount of money involved one testimony states that a number of 'copy-cat' operations may have sprung up. Also there are many others involved including brokers, translators, border guards, security and police. Not only is the money untaxed but it may be used to fund further illicit activities.

There are a number of steps currently being taken. The Sudanese Government is currently drawing up anti-trafficking legislation which is being consulted by IOM. However it must be ensured that the legislation is effective and enacted.⁵⁰ Also the Sudanese Government does not categorise this movement as trafficking and therefore it remains to be seen whether this will have an effect on Eritrean movements.

Increased security is also a key issue in this route. The Sudanese Government frequently calls for monetary support to help police the border between Sudan and Eritrea. However as has been noted by many testimonies, many border guards, police, security and those at check points on the route may be benefitting considerably from the movement of Eritreans through the country. This could make capacity building at the local level highly problematic.

It has been demonstrated that multilateral measures are key to addressing smuggling across borders (Long and Crisp 2009). This seems particularly challenging considering the countries involved in this route, their diplomatic relations and the history of the region. This makes it even more important to act whilst relations are amicable between particular countries involved in the process. It is also clear that for anti – smuggling measures to be effective they must be complemented by opening up legal migration channels. This poses a particular challenge in Eritrea where the current regime exercises strict control over its population. There are tight restrictions to obtain passports and exit visas which are unlikely to be significantly relaxed, forcing Eritreans to use illegal routes.

It is well established that measures to combat smuggling and trafficking should focus on the perpetrators of these activities and not those who are moving. Some Rashaida traders are undoubtedly involved in these practices. However a government initiative to target the Rashaida involved must be treated sensitively in order to prevent unforeseen consequences. As previously outlined Rashaida hold a particular position in the region and all actions should be placed with reference to recent political history.

In order to understand the Sudanese and Eritrean Governments' response to the Rashaida and other groups in the region a brief overview is important. As mentioned earlier the various groups of Beja, Rashaida and Beni Amer peoples live on both sides of the Sudan-Eritrea

⁵⁰ Egypt has a very good anti-trafficking legislation but it is rarely implemented. United States Department of State, 2012 Trafficking in Persons Report - Egypt, 19 June 2012

border. They pursue pastoralist economy and are very combative (Young 2007: 17). Under such conditions, these borderlands and border peoples have become transit belts for conflicts.

The East Sudanese Peace Agreement forms the basis for the power agreement in the east and determines government relationships with Rashaida. Signed in October 2006 it brought to an end the opposition of the Eastern Front which was an alliance between the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions. The Free Lions, spear headed by Mubrouk Mubarek Salim, organized those who held grievances against the Government.

This disillusionment had been growing since 1991 and was based on some Rashaida's increasing allegiances with the Gulf States.⁵¹ Police also reportedly took livestock or equipment and generally harassed some of the Rashaida population.⁵² Coupled with depleting livestock, draught and constriction of nomadic lands those with few other options joined the opposition Free Lions.⁵³ The Eritrean Government mobilized this group between 2000 and 2006 in order to destabilize Sudan through disrupting the oil pipelines that run through the east of the country.

In order to bring this situation to an end the signing of the peace agreement ushered in numerous changes. Rashaida were given positions in the police force and Mubrouk Mubarek Salim, was given a position in the Government as Secretary of State for Bridges, Roads and Transport. However the Eastern Peace Agreement did not benefit all Rashaida. Many of the Free Lions' fighters who lived in camps around Tesseney that came to Sudan within the frame of the Peace Agreement returned to Eritrea as they didn't find any support or work in Sudan. It is not clear how many are still inside Eritrea or at the border. Also since the signing of the Peace Agreement there are many displaced pastoralist Rashaida, who never settled in one of the camps, still living on the border between Eritrea and Sudan. It is thought some went to the smugglers-camps at Ali Gidr.⁵⁴

The leadership within the Rashaida population also is far from clear. From the 1980s the Rashaida requested from the Government the appointment of their own Nazir, the highest tribal authority, which would give them authority in local administration. However, Nazirates are linked to the possession of tribal land and historically the Rashaida have no claim to land in eastern Sudan (Pantuliano 2005: 15). In 1989 the Government of Sadiq el Mahdi decided to grant the Rashaida a Nazirate, but this provoked heated reaction and the Government downgraded the Nazir to the rank of Rais al Idara (Head of Administration), a de facto Nazir without land. The dispute is still not settled today and Rashaida claim that they have a full Nazirate with land that has been granted to them by the current government. The nominated Nazir, who is also a member of the national assembly, Ahmed Hameed Berki more closely allied to the Government than Mubrouk Mubarak Salim.⁵⁵

It is therefore important to note that Rashaida are not united under one leader and there are important circumstantial, political, intergenerational and gender differences. Some divides

⁵¹ Mubrouk Mubarak Salim has been instrumental in propagating the idea of a 'Pan-Rashaayda movement'. This movement has developed since the nineties in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Sudan where there are Rashaayda that acknowledge their mutual kinship. Rashaida sided with the United Arab Emirates in supporting Kuwait in the Gulf War. Sudan, supporting Iraq at the time, subsequently confiscated 400 vehicles given to Rashaida from Kuwait in gratitude for their assistance causing tension in the region.

⁵² Interview with Sara Pantuliano 27 July 2012

⁵³ Interview with Metje Postma 5 June 2012

⁵⁴ Interview with Metje Postma from field notes collected in 2007

⁵⁵ Interview with Metje Postma 5 June 2012

exist as there are beliefs the Government favours some lineages over others politically. There are three lineages in Sudan (with sub branches) and all are very aware and very proud of their own lineage and may not support other groups.⁵⁶ It is reported that the nominated Rashaida Nazir cannot prevent the young men from smuggling activities, as this is the only form of income they have. The large 'Rashaida Market' on the highway between Girba and Kassala is highly active, however the police do now have a specific 'anti-trafficking' unit and are regularly seen towing large loads of electronic goods into their compound. However the less money Rashaida and other traders are able to make in electronics and other illicit goods, the higher their demand for human life.

Another element in the politics of the region is the little mentioned border with Egypt. In 1994, Egypt co-opted a piece of land called the 'Halaib triangle' and has kept it under its control, building infrastructure and services there. In the view of those in the Red Sea State this further underlines the Government neglect of the area. This piece of land is located along one part of the smuggling route demonstrating the complexity of increasing control in the area.

The strength of the Eritrean diaspora must also be considered. Routes of movement have to be seen within the context of wider social frameworks, of which the smugglers only form a part. Family, friends, and peers have a role in supporting those in transit either with financial resources, information or contacts, including on smugglers. The informality of this part of the movement makes it highly challenging to combat smuggling activities and in particular those at the early stages of the smuggling route (ICMPD 2008: 30).

As highlighted in a paper addressing mixed movements to South Africa (Crisp and Long 2009), governments cannot just respond with enforcement measures and efforts to obstruct or deter movements. As can be seen with the tightening of the route to Europe through Libya, or the conditions in Egypt the resulting flows can be more dangerous and drive migrants further underground. This seems to be the cause of the flow to Sinai. It seems as though the issue of this mixed movement can only be dealt with effectively through the abolition of impunity on all sides.

This paper has reviewed the motivations and aspirations of Eritreans to migrate and the changing refugee dynamics in east Sudan. The role of some Rashaida traders in this route has been examined and placed in the context of their particular history, the current regime in Eritrea, diplomatic relations between Sudan and Eritrea, and underdevelopment providing few options for the long standing and new populations in east Sudan.

This paper has not sought to offer definitive answers to cease practices of smuggling but instead tries to place these practices within the history and politics in the region. It has offered some explanations into the underlying dynamics of the route and the environment through which these processes have developed. It is evident that whether smugglers are involved or not, Eritreans would find a way to leave the country. It is hoped that it will provide some insights and possibilities for alternative solutions to alleviate the conditions faced by those travelling from Eritrea.

⁵⁶ It is important to note that the genealogical history of Rashaida is unclear and conflicting. However this does not mean that Rashaida are unable to place their genealogy. As Postma says 'Bedouin oral tradition as a form and mode of representation should be perceived more as a way of affirming social ties, than as factually accurate chronological history'. Rashaida has become somewhat of an umbrella name that offered a form of protection in

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times when it was crucial to belong to a strong tribe. The political leaders however also represent the Rashaida history in Sudan, in a nationalistic political context, as part of Sudanese history.

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