

Marek SOBCZYŃSKI  
University of Łódź, POLAND

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## **BORDERLANDS IN AFRICA AS AN ASYLUM FOR WAR AND POLITICAL REFUGEES**

Africa is placed second among all continents as to the number of refugees. The number of persons remaining under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR in Africa has reached 6,072,900 (as for January 1, 2002) or 27.86% of all registered refugees on the world (*UNHCR basic...*, 2002). Only in Asia there are more refugees: 38.77%. It should be noted, though, that only a part of refugees are comprised in the UNHCR registers.

Two categories of refugees can be distinguished: international and internal ones. The former includes persons who have crossed at least one state border while emigrating; the latter includes internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The largest group of internally displaced persons is in Sudan where 4 million people have been forced to leave their homes for the last 20 years. In Angola an estimated 2.5 million internally displaced persons were put to flight by civil war armies. Another civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has produced 1.6 million refugees (*UNHCR at 50 ...*, 2001).

There is no clear-cut definition of the 'refugee camp'. This term is applied to settlements that vary as to their size and character. Generally speaking, the refugee camps are restricted areas, accessible only for refugees and people who assist them. The refugee camp are conceived as temporary shelters where refugees are taken into care until they can go back home or move to another place. Contrary to refugee villages or refugee settlements, the refugee camp are usually not self-sufficient (*The state ...*, 2000).

The Standing Committee of the Executive Committee to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Programme (EXCOM) published in June 1999 guidelines concerning detention of asylum seekers and refugees. Non-governmental organisations were invited to submit their suggestions to the Standing Committee. The fundamental principles common to both the recommended practice and the NGO submission are:

- asylum seekers and refugees enjoy a fundamental right to liberty;

– limitation to the right of liberty must be the exception, not the rule, and such detention must be subject to independent monitoring according to internationally accepted norms and standards;

– alternative measures short of detention, for example reporting requirements, should be considered before resorting to detention (Jenkins, 2002).

Three types of refugee camps can be distinguished with regard to their situation in relation to international borders:

1. Refugee camps situated in borderlands within the country of origin. They draw migrants fleeing local civil wars or political prosecutions who, however, do not find the situation dramatic enough to definitely leave their country. Refugees remain in an immediate proximity of the border, always ready to emigrate abroad.

2. Refugee camps situated also in borderlands but outside the territory of the sending country. Refugees remain in touch with their country, waiting for changes in politico-military situation that would make possible their return home.

3. Refugee camps located up-country, often near large cities (capitals in particular). For such camps are not related to border areas, in this paper they are left out of account.

Most internally displaced persons are subject to different difficulties and perils. Usually they land in countries where armed conflicts, social violence and lawlessness are rampant and the human rights are not respected. Very often the physical and legal protection provided for internally displaced persons does not comply with international standards. For instance, in Africa some internal refugees are repeatedly forcibly displaced by authorities or non-governmental organisations thus being fated to permanent destabilisation and danger. The living conditions of internally displaced persons in Africa are extremely poor. Shortage of food, drinking water, health protection and shelter is very common. Women and children who predominate in the refugees' population suffer from destitution and different perils (Deng, 1998).

According to Sollenberg and Wallensteen (2001) 25 large armed conflicts in 23 countries took place in 2000. Compared to the years 1996–1997 this number is rather small. Africa and Asia take the lead as to the number of conflicts (9 each). During the last decade the number of conflicts in Africa – most of them being wars for power – has been fluctuating (Tab. 1).

It seems that entire Africa is permanently embroiled in armed conflicts. Africa is often called 'the most belligerent region of the planet'. It is important, however, to perceive national conflicts in Africa in both local and global context. These conflicts can be explained neither as echoes of wars between western superpowers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century nor as a social and economic price of the cold war to be paid by innocent civilians. Neither the African armed conflicts can be considered only as tribal wars: first, because the term 'tribal' is misleading, pejorative and is never applied for conflicts in northern part of the

world (e.g. Bosnia, Ireland); second the origin and character of African conflicts is not less complex and should not be oversimplified (*Conflicts ...*, 1997).

Table 1. Armed conflicts in Africa 1990–2000

Years	Number of armed conflicts	
	Government	Territory
1990	8	3
1991	8	3
1992	6	1
1993	6	1
1994	5	1
1995	4	1
1996	2	1
1997	4	0
1998	10	1
1999	10	1
2000	8	1

Source: *SIPRI Yearbook*, 2001.

Having acquired half million refugees (including 330,000 from Sierra Leone and 125,000 from Liberia), Guinea comes second in Africa (after Tanzania) as to the number of refugees. An anti-refugees speech by president Lansana Conte in September 2000 provoked a series of attacks including rapes and sexual assaults made of refugees living in the Conakry area. The situation in Guinea got even worse in 2000 when refugee camps at Forecariah and Gueckedou (at Sierra Leone border) were attacked and both refugees and local population got killed, inhabitants were displaced and thousands of people were forced to come back to rebels-controlled areas in Sierra Leone. Some cross-border attacks were directed against UNHCR structures. In September 2000 unknown persons murdered the UNHCR office director at Macenta and on December, 7 the UNHCR office at Gueckedou were destroyed in the aftermath of fighting between Guinea army and the rebels. Hundreds of civilians got killed during this fight while thousands of others, including refugees, were put to flight. Imperilled by armed incursions from Sierra Leone and Liberia, Guinea stopped absorbing Sierra Leone refugees in August 2000 (*UNHCR at 50 ...*, 2001). Since 2001 the UNHCR has repatriated nearly 9,000 Sierra Leoneans while 22,000 have returned home on their own (*Guinea refugee ...*, 2001).

Since 1975 some 167,000 Saharawis – forced into exile after the Moroccan invasion to Western Sahara – have lived in refugee camps in Algeria. Over 80% of this group are women and children. Dispersed after the war, Saharawi refugees are to be found in Mauritania, in camps in Algeria, on the occupied territory of Western Sahara, even in Spain. Most Saharawi men serve in the

insurgent army Polisario Front whereas the women manage the refugee camps. Many families have remained separated for 25 years. Their tragedy seems to be forgotten and ignored long ago (*Saharawi ...*, 2001).

In the discussion on refugees special attention should be given to women and children – two groups that particularly need an adequate assistance. The protection of women is often seriously compromised in refugee settings. Women frequently make up a high proportion of refugee populations and there are large numbers of female-headed households, especially in conflict situations where men are either engaged in fighting or have been killed, or where male family members are farming, working, or trading outside the refugee camps.

Children suffer disproportionately during refugee crises, often with little official attention to their particular vulnerability.

Refugee camps became a common phenomenon in contemporary world. There is, however, gross disparity between the refugee camps in Africa and those situated for instance in the Balkans. The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees is spending about 11 cents a day per refugee in Africa. In the Balkans, the figure is \$1.23, more than 11 times greater. Some refugee camps in Africa have one doctor for every 100,000 refugees. In Macedonia, camps have as many as one doctor per 700 refugees. Refugees at most camps in Albania, across the border from Kosovo, have readily available clean water. In Eritrea families as large as 10 are given about 13.2 litres of water every third day. The camps in Africa hold as many as 500,000 people. Up to 6,000 refugees there die each day from cholera and other public health diseases. In Macedonia, the largest camp holds 33,000 people. So far, there have been no deaths from public health emergencies such as an epidemic or starvation.

Another major difference between refugee facilities in Africa and those in Europe is in the type of food supplied. World Food Program officials say both European and African refugees are getting about 2,100 calories a day of food rations. But for the Kosovo Albanians, those calories come in the form of tins of chicken pate, foil-wrapped cheeses, fresh oranges and milk. In some ready-made meals, there is even coffee and fruit tarts. Water is plentiful in most of the camps in the Balkans. At one camp in Macedonia, German officials have even installed a fully functioning sewage treatment system.

That contrasts with Africa, where refugees are far less likely to get ready-made meals and have to make most of their food from scratch a practice reflecting the simpler lifestyles of the area. Instead of meals, the refugees are given basic grains such as sorghum or wheat. In Africa, where many refugees lead an existence in seminomadic tribes, the bare provisions of shelter and health care offered by the refugee camps are a step up in life for many. But in Europe, where many of the refugees from, for instance Kosovo had two cars, a city apartment and their own business, canned food is synonym of misery.

Borderlands have been the setting for many refugee crises over the last decades because the largest part of the world refugee population is hosted just

across the border from the country they have fled. Refugee law stipulates that persons who fear persecution and can no longer be protected by their own state have the right to seek asylum in another state, in order to become a refugee one has to cross a border. However, international borders have often separated people sharing the same ethnic background. The refugee regime is fully dependent on the existence of international borders, since individuals are identified with nation-states (Adelman, 1999).

Many African borders are arbitrary, sometimes just drawn as straight lines on the map. Nevertheless, they must be drawn somewhere in order to create a modern state. International borders have been essential for the creation of national identity, or nationhood. Since independence, African states have generally accepted existing borders and aimed to reinforce, or create, national identity (Merkx, 2000).

Some refugees after crossing the border happen to find themselves in a similar ethnic environment. There is the example of Zambia and Angola, where self-settled Angolan refugees of Lunda origin are fully integrated in northwestern Zambia. The borderland of Mozambique and Zimbabwe was the scene of refugee movements in the 1970s across an international border, but refugees and hosts were both Shona and had much in common. The Kivu provinces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo have populations closely related to the populations of Rwanda and Burundi. The refugees from Somalia who are assisted in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya live among Kenyan Somali. There is no doubt that many other examples of refugee movements involving transnational communities in borderlands can be found.

Among 45 African countries covered by the UNHCR statistics there is great disparity as to the range of knowledge on refugees (Tab. 2). Such states as Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Swaziland have full control of the situation. Algeria, Botswana, Central African Republic, Congo, D. R. Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe control over 90% of refugees on their territories. There is, however, a group of countries where the number and distribution of refugees totally ignored which hampers any international aid. The worst situation in this respect is in Eritrea (0.2% of refugees under control) and Somalia (0.3%). Only slightly better informed are authorities in Angola, Cameroon, Mauritius, Sierra Leone (less than 5%). Nevertheless taking Africa as a whole 71.9% of refugees are kept under supervision which is a relatively high proportion.

It is easiest to exercise supervision over those refugees who are concentrated in refugee camps. In Africa on average 48.8% refugees live in refugee camps. This means that more than a half of refugees are deprived of aid of host countries. Only in six countries (Eritrea, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Tanzania) all refugees were put into refugee camps.

Table 2. Displacement of refugees in Africa by type of location

Country	Location of refugees (in %)			Share of covered refugees in country
	Refugee camps	Cities	Other and unknown	
Algeria	97.4	2.6	0.0	99.8
Angola	95.2	3.4	1.4	4.3
Benin	0.0	0.0	100.0	43.1
Botswana	98.2	1.8	0.0	98.1
Burkina Faso	0.0	0.0	100.0	68.7
Burundi	11.7	58.6	29.7	28.1
Cameroon	0.0	100.0	0.0	8.9
Central African Rep.	70.2	16.7	13.1	96.9
Chad	0.0	0.0	100.0	84.8
Congo	30.1	0.5	69.3	94.8
Côte d'Ivoire	98.2	1.8	0.0	100.0
D. R. of Congo	43.5	2.1	54.4	95.1
Djibouti	90.9	9.1	0.0	98.2
Egypt	0.0	100.0	0.0	37.9
Eritrea	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Ethiopia	99.7	0.3	0.0	98.5
Gabon	5.9	64.4	29.7	100.0
Gambia	14.4	85.6	0.0	98.1
Ghana	85.9	9.0	5.1	96.4
Guinea	100.0	0.0	0.0	99.8
Guinea-Bissau	7.3	13.6	79.1	92.8
Kenya	95.9	4.1	0.0	93.8
Liberia	48.6	0.1	51.3	29.4
Libya	49.8	51.1	0.0	17.4
Malawi	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Mali	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Mauritania	100.0	0.0	0.0	1.2
Morocco	0.0	15.9	84.1	42.7
Mozambique	30.3	6.5	63.2	91.7
Namibia	64.0	36.0	0.0	97.6
Niger	0.0	100.0	0.0	99.4
Nigeria	48.4	10.7	41.0	100.0
Rwanda	92.8	7.2	0.0	53.4
Senegal	0.0	13.3	86.7	99.9
Sierra Leone	0.0	100.0	0.0	1.2
Somalia	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.3
South Africa	0.0	100.0	0.0	61.8
Sudan	44.5	55.5	0.0	99.9
Swaziland	11.0	89.0	0.0	100.0
Tanzania	100.0	0.0	0.0	72.8
Togo	93.8	6.2	0.0	97.1
Tunisia	0.0	100.0	0.0	39.9
Uganda	98.6	1.4	0.0	91.4
Zambia	45.8	5.7	48.4	99.8
Zimbabwe	22.0	78.0	0.0	98.4
Average	48.8	30.4	21.7	71.9

Source: *Refugees and others ...*, 2002.

In another 11 countries over 80% of refugees are in refugee camps (Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Togo, Uganda). However, the concentration of majority of refugees in refugee camps does not always mean that they are effectively controlled by state officials. For instance, Angola that keeps 95.2% of refugees in camps maintains effective control over merely 4.3% of them. Senegal is an opposite case: having no special refugee camps it manage to supervise as many as 99.9% of refugees.

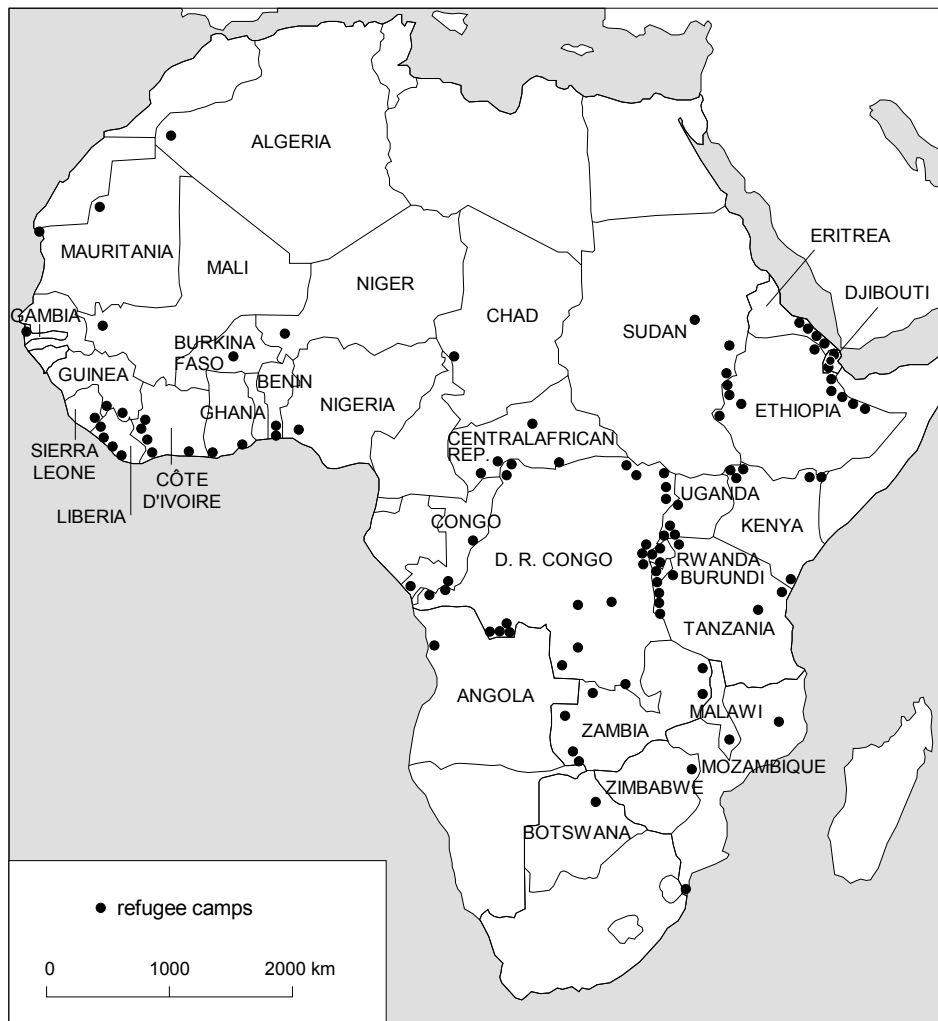


Fig. 1. Refugee camps in Africa

Another common way of dealing with refugees is settling them in big urban agglomerations. In seven countries (Cameroon, Egypt, Niger, Sierra Leone,

Somalia, South Africa, Tunisia) the refugees live in towns only. In Burundi, Gabon, Gambia, Libya, Sudan, Swaziland and Zimbabwe over 50% of refugees are concentrated in urban settings. Nevertheless, for Africa as a whole the proportion of refugees living in towns is only 30.4%. It results from the fact that some countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Eritrea, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Tanzania) intend to keep refugees away from towns. This group includes also countries where the refugees are kept exclusively in refugee camps.

There is also a group of countries that purposefully disperse the refugees throughout rural areas or are not able to counteract such trends. In Benin, Burkina Faso and Chad all refugees live outside refugee camps and towns whereas in Congo, D.R. Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Morocco, Mozambique and Senegal this ratio exceeds 50%. In Africa on average only 21.7% refugees dwell in rural areas. Probably most refugees living in rural areas concentrate in borderlands of the receiving countries.

The analysis of the distribution of the largest refugee camps in Africa (Tab. 3, Fig.1) shows that most of them lie within 100 km from a state border. Centrally situated refugee camps usually (with some exceptions e.g. Nampula in Mozambique, Chogo in Tanzania, Mbuji-Mayi in D.R. Congo) are connected with their localisation near state capitals. In some countries, such as Ethiopia, Kenya, D.R. Congo, Zambia, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire or Tanzania nearly all borderlands change into settlement areas for internally displaced persons or international refugees.

Another issue, as important as international refugees, is related to internally displaced persons. These are persons displaced within the territory of their home country who have been forced to leave their homes in order to avoid risk of being killed by the government army crushing secessionist movements or to escape terror of the secessionist guerrillas, or more rarely, to escape foreign armed forces making raids against their defenceless country. The largest group of internally displaced persons is in Sudan (4 millions) which results from the civil war between the government army and rebels in the southern part of the country (Tab. 4). Similar internal displacements following civil wars occurred in Angola, D.R. Congo, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia and Liberia. In Uganda and Algeria internally displaced persons emerged in result of a religious conflict between the society and Islamic fundamentalists. In Ethiopia and Eritrea this problem was produced by a war between these two neighbouring countries, whereas in Senegal the IDPs flee from the secessionist province of Casamance.



Table 3. Ethnic structure of the international refugees in Africa and main refugee camps (2001)

Country	Number of refugees and country of origin	Main refugee camps and its population
Algeria	85,000; Western Sahara – 80,000, Palestine – 5,000.	Tindouf
Angola	D.R. Congo – 12,000	Viana near Luanda (6,000)
Benin	5,000; Togo – 1,000 from, D.R. Congo – 1,000	Cotonou; Kpomasse (1,000)
Botswana	3,000; Angola and Namibia – 2,000	Dukwe (1,000)
Burkina Faso	1,000;	Ouagadougou (1,000)
Burundi	28,000; D.R. Congo – 27,000, Rwanda – 1,000	Rugombo (3,000), Ngagara near Bujumbura (1,000)
Cameroon	30,000; Chad – 30,000	
Cap Verde	600; Guinea-Bissau – 600	
Central African Rep.	50,000; Sudan – 35,000, D.R. Congo – 10,000, Chad – 2,000	Mboki (35,000), Kaga-Bandoro (200), Bangui (8,500), Molangue (2,000)
Chad	15,000; Sudan – 15,000	Ndjamena (200)
Comoros	11;	
Congo	100,000; D.R. Congo – 80,000, Angola – 15,000, Rwanda and Burundi – 5,000, Central African Republic – 2,000	Pointe-Noire (10,000), Kintele near Brazzaville (3,000), Loukolela (2,000),
Côte d'Ivoire	100,000; Liberia – 100,000, Sierra Leone – 2,000	Nicla (7,000), Abidjan, Danane, Tabou, Guiglo
D. R. Congo	305,000; Angola – 180,000, Sudan – 70,000, Burundi – 20,000, Central African Republic – 20,000, Uganda – 10,000, Congo – 3,000, Rwanda – 2,000	Kilueka and Nkondo (23,000), Kisenge (15,000), Divuma (15,000), Tshimbumbulu (15,000), Kahemba, Kulindji, Bindu, and Tshifwameso (10,000), Kinshasa (30,000), Aba (25,000), Biringi (15,000), Dungu (10,000), Doruma (20,000), Zongo, Libenge (25,000), Uvira, Mbuji-Mayi, Goma, Lubumbashi, Bukavu
Djibouti	22,000; Somalia – 20,000, Ethiopia -2,000	Ali Adde (12,000), Holl Holl (10,000), Obock
Egypt	75,000; Palestine – 50,000, Sudan – 18,000, Somalia – 4,000	
Equatorial Guinea	no refugees	
Eritrea	2,000; Somalia – 1,000, Sudan – 1,000	Gash Barka, Dehub,
Ethiopia	115,000; Sudan – 80,000; Somalia – 30,000, Eritrea – 4,000	Fugnido (30,000), Dimma (15,000), Bonga (15,000), Sherkole (13,000), Darwanaji (30,000) Teferi Ber (46,000), Daror (36,000), Yarenja, Grat Reeda, Camabaker (29,000), Hartisheik (41,000), Kabribeyah (11,000), Rabasso (17,000), Dollo (8,000), Moyale (9,000), Aisha (15,000)
Gabon	20,000; Congo – 17,000	
Gambia	15,000; Sierra Leone – 10,000, Senegal – 5,000	Banjul (1,000)
Ghana	12,000; Liberia – 9,000, Sierra Leone - 2,000, Togo – 1,000	Buduburam – near Accra; Krisan
Guinea	190,000; Sierra Leone – 100,000, Liberia – 90,000	Kola (6,000), Kounkan (13,000)

Guinea-Bissau	7,000; Senegal – 6,000; Sierra Leone – 1,000	
Kenya	245,000; Somalia – 160,000, Sudan – 70,000, Ethiopia – 5,000, Uganda – 5,000, Tanzania – 2,000	Dadaab (130,000), Kakuma (70,000), Shimoni, (2,000), Mandera
Lesotho	no refugees	
Liberia	60,000; Sierra Leone -60,000	Lofa (30,000), Sinje (15,000), Banjor, Samukajo, VOA-1, Zuannah all near Monrovia (18,000)
Libya	11,000; Palestine – 8,000, Somalia – 3,000	
Madagascar	50;	
Malawi	3,000; D.R. Congo – 2,500	Dzaleka
Mali	9,000; Mauritania – 5,000, Sierra Leone – 2,000	Kayes (5,000)
Mauritania	29,000; Western Sahara – 25, 000, Mali – 4,000	Zouerate, Nouadhibou
Mauritius	350	
Morocco	2,105	
Mozambique	5,000; D.R. Congo – 3,000, Burundi – 1,000, Rwanda – 1,000	Maputo (3,500), Nampula
Namibia	27,263;	
Niger	1,000; Mali -1,000	Niamey (600)
Nigeria	7,000; Chad – 3,000, Sierra Leone – 2,000, Liberia – 1,000	Oru (2,000)
Rwanda	35,000; D.R. Congo – 33,000, Burundi – 2,000	Gihembe (17,000), Kiziba (15,000) Kigeme (500)
Senegal	43,000; Mauritania 40,000	
Seychelles	no refugees	
Sierra Leone	15,000; Liberia – 15,000	Kenema (10,000)
Somalia	no foreign refugees	
South Africa	22,000; Somalia – 5,000, Congo – 5,000 Angola – 4,000	
Sudan	322,000; Eritrea – 300,000, Uganda – 5,000, Ethiopia – 12,000, Chad 5,000	Kassala, Khartoum, Gedaref,
St. Tome	no refugees	
Swaziland	690	
Tanzania	500,000; Burundi – 350,000, D.R. Congo – 120,000, Rwanda – 25,000, Somalia – 3,000	Kitali Hills, Karago, Lugufu, Nyarugusu, Lugufu, Mbuba, Mkuyu, Chogo
Togo	10,000; Ghana – 10,000	
Tunisia	436	
Uganda	175,000; Sudan – 150,000, Rwanda – 15,000, D.R. Congo – 8,000, Somalia – 1,000	Nakivale, Oruchinga, Kyaka II, Kyangwali
Zambia	270,000; Angola – 210,000, D.R. Congo – 50,000	Nangweshi (15,000), Ukwimi, Meheba (50,000), Mayukwayukwa (23,000), Kala (23,000), Mwange (23,000)
Zimbabwe	9,000; D.R. Congo – 4,000, Rwanda – 3,000, Burundi – 1,000	Tongogara (1,000)

S o u r c e: Author's compilation on the statistics of the United States Committee for Refugees, 2002.

Table 4. Internally displaced refugees in Africa (31.12.2000)

Country	Number of displaced persons in thousands
Sudan	4,000
Angola	1,100 – 3,800
D.R. Congo	1,800
Sierra Leone	500 – 1,000
Burundi	600
Uganda	500
Eritrea	310
Somalia	300
Ethiopia	280
Algeria	100 – 200
Rwanda	150
Kenya	100
Congo	30
Liberia	20
Senegal	5

Source: *Principal sources ...*, 2001.

The internally displaced persons constitute one of the most burning questions in most African countries. Huge waves of displacements have totally disintegrated several countries in Africa e.g. Somalia, D.R. Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Angola. No doubt, this problem will be of grave consequences for geopolitical and economic situation of Africa in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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