

# Abstract

## Refugees in Africa. An Ethnography of Violence and Suffering

The book is a critical analysis of the determinants of forced migration in Africa as well as the whole ineffective refugee protection system. It is an ethnography in the sense of the method and description of various violence and suffering spheres. A history of people connected by the experience of exclusion, stress, being constantly on the way, homelessness and the hope for a better tomorrow. I suggest here a problematisation of all the issues related to migration and a reflection upon both its causes and previous failed attempts to solve these problems – a review of contemporary humanitarianism mired by contradictions and powerlessness in the face of anguish it pledged to remove.

This work is situated in the field of the so called “refugee studies” which are interdisciplinary by nature. I refer here to my long-standing experience in researching the migration phenomena and refugee camps in Africa.

In eight chapters I present the issue of migration starting with explaining its phenomenon and evolution (of understanding the term of migration and the religious genesis of the need to protect refugees, as well as the migration history in the pre-modern era and the contemporary protection of refugees in independent African countries on the example of Sudan). Then, in the second chapter I discuss the economic and environmental conditions of forced migrations (developmental, demographic and environmental factors, the draught period in the Sahel zone between 1984 and 1985 as well as its repercussions in Darfur and the understanding of the term “environmental migration”). In the third chapter I focus on the etiology of migration from the aspect of human rights, beginning with the fundamentals of the country’s institutional system (the case of the Republic of Sudan), the power of bureaucracy, the oppression system, the judiciary system, violence, slavery and persecution. In the fourth chapter I concentrate on the issue of war as a source of migration (the background, reasons behind and the progression of the conflict in South Sudan, the military violence, the decline of the conflict and the creation of the Republic of South Sudan). In the fifth chapter I display contemporary refugee migratory routes and

exemplary stories of asylum seekers. In the sixth chapter I present the so called “Internally Displaced Persons” referring to my experiences from Sudan, especially Chartum. In the seventh chapter I discuss the problems of refugees, who cross a national border, this time drawing back on my observations in refugee camps in Kenya. In the last (eighth) chapter I present the issue of the so called “self-sufficient refugees”, who deal with their misfortune in a completely different way.

I approach the issue of forced migration broadly, showing its essential sources, which in African realities are often interconnected (environmental crisis, economic underdevelopment, wars and conflicts as well as the fear of political persecution), showing that so far no effective solution has been found to the problems of how to prevent this phenomenon and how to protect and help refugees. I take a critical approach towards the current Western system of refugee protection, especially the concept of refugee camps as modern refugia where “protection” means control and keeping the inmates alive without letting them lead independent lives. With great sympathy I look upon the attempts of domestic solutions (chapter eight), where the refugees settle without assistance, just like ages ago creating their own refugee zones with their own unique cultures. I point out thereby to significant discrepancies between humanitarians’ declarations and the actual results of their actions, stressing the fact that the current aid system, called humanitarian, is quite convenient for African countries providing them with steady income as well as guaranteeing a good relationship with the West and lifting the burden of dealing with refugees directly.

transl. by Agata Moroz