



TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL AND LEGAL DIMENSIONS OF EMERGENT ERITREAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS¹

Tricia Redeker Hepner, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of
Anthropology
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

thepner@utk.edu

September 2007

**Migration Studies Working Paper Series #36
Forced Migration Studies Programme
University of the Witwatersrand
<http://migration.org.za>**

¹ An earlier version of this paper was prepared for the African Studies Association – UK conference, London, September 11-13, 2006. Data collection and analysis for Germany relied on major contributions by Bettina Conrad (University of Hamburg).

Migration Studies Working Paper Series

This series provides a forum for researchers to publish preliminary findings on themes related to migration and displacement in Africa. These papers may be cited (including the full URL and the date downloaded), but reproduced only with direct permission of the author. Submissions are welcome by email (MS Word format) sent to the series editor: landaul@migration.wits.ac.za. Authors whose work is included here are encouraged to resubmit papers for publication elsewhere.

The ten most recent papers are:

- **[Working Paper #35](#)**
[Timothy Mechlinski, *Factors Affecting Migrant Remittances and Return Migration: A case Study of South Africa \(Migrant Remittances and Return: South Africa\)*](#)
- **[Working Paper #34](#)**
[Alex Perullo, *Migration and the Cultural Commodity of Congolese Music in Dar es Salaam, 1975-1985*](#)
- **[Working Paper #33](#)**
[L.B. Landau and Tamlyn Monson, *Immigration, Sovereignty, and Power in South African cities*](#)
- **[Working Paper #32](#)**
[L.B. Landau and Iriann Haupt, *Tactical Cosmopolitanism and Idioms of Belonging*](#)
- **[Working Paper #31](#)**
[L. Smith, *A Home in the City: Transnational Investments in Urban Housing*](#)
- **[Working Paper #30](#)**
[L.B. Landau, *Reconsidering Inclusion in Africa's Cities of Shifting Sands*](#)
- **[Working Paper #29](#)**
[L.B. Landau, *Protection as Capability Expansion: Practical Ethics for Assisting Urban Refugees*](#)
- **[Working Paper #28](#)**
[D. Vigneswaran, *In Direct Control?: Territorial Exclusion of Migrants in South Africa 1998-2004*](#)
- **[Working Paper #27](#)**
[K. Mathers and L.B. Landau, *Tourists or Makwerekwere: Good Versus Bad Visitors and the Possibilities of Ethical Tourism in South Africa*](#)
- **[Working Paper #26](#)**
[L.B. Landau, *Shaping Urban Futures: Human Mobility and Poverty in Africa's Globalising Cities*](#)

TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL AND LEGAL DIMENSIONS OF EMERGENT ERITREAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS²

Tricia Redeker Hepner, Ph.D.

Since 2001, Eritrea has been experiencing what may best be described as a crisis of human rights.³ Following the destructive border war with Ethiopia (1998-2000), the country began a rapid descent into political turmoil, economic decline, and social repression. Beginning with the closure of the independent media and the imprisonment without charge of eleven government reformers and more than a dozen journalists, the government then began targeting known or imputed political dissidents. In 2002, this expanded to include ‘cultural dissidents’ whose religious beliefs and identities and alleged financial linkages to foreign churches were deemed illegal and polluting to the authenticity of state-sanctioned traditions of Orthodox Christianity and Islam. Intensifying militarism and compulsory conscription both entrenched and masked further abuses, as large numbers of young people were subjected to treatment that meets the criteria of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment as specified in international human rights instruments to which Eritrea is state party (such as the ICCPR).

The crisis of rights in Eritrea has been well-documented by international human rights groups (e.g. Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; Freedom House). It has also been described in harrowing detail by new refugees who have fled the country since 2001 and sought asylum in Europe, North America, and elsewhere. While pro-regime voices and the government itself have dismissed reports of rights abuses as rumors or outright lies, others in the diaspora

² An earlier version of this paper was prepared for the African Studies Association – UK conference, London, September 11-13, 2006. Data collection and analysis for Germany relied on major contributions by Bettina Conrad (University of Hamburg).

³ The concept of human rights in its broadest definition includes civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights. However, the focus of this paper is on civil and political rights in particular, as construed by international legal regimes and by human rights instruments; in national settings vis-à-vis refugees and asylum seekers who are non-citizens; and in Eritrea, where rights are constructed largely around definitions of political and cultural loyalty rather than citizenship (e.g. Adejumobi 2001), and are *de facto* unguaranteed.

have developed initiatives that represent genuinely new features on the Eritrean scene. Often created or led by recent refugees with firsthand experience of Eritrea-in-crisis, these new efforts make a decisive break with patterns that have long defined Eritrean political praxis, namely its insularism and narrow nationalist utilitarianism. At the same time, deeply rooted tensions dating back to the independence struggle (1961-1991) have dramatically shaped most diaspora communities around the world. The EPLF-ELF civil war of 1972-1981, which produced large numbers of refugees, many of whom were ELF combatants, continues to dominate the stage where new struggles play out. The ascribed identification of new rights-based approaches with the historic opposition has complicated these approaches as much as the charge that they represent foreign agendas, neo-liberal imperialism, and inappropriate cultural forms, including the notion of individual civil and political rights.

This paper is an exploratory analysis of emergent rights-based initiatives among Eritrean refugees and exiles in the United States, Germany, and South Africa. I draw on preliminary interview data collected either face to face or over electronic mail in the US, Germany, and South Africa, as well as primary documents and testimonials produced by new rights-based groups and actors. Drawing on earlier research on Eritrean diasporic and transnational phenomena (see Hepner and Conrad 2005; Hepner 2003, 2007, and forthcoming; Conrad 2003, 2005, 2006), I attempt to trace the contours of these new initiatives within an already-existing transnational social field that links together Eritrea, its exiles around the world, and the nation-states in which they reside. To begin situating and interpreting the Eritrean material, I draw on contemporary anthropological frameworks for understanding human rights norms and practice within the context of transnationalism, legal pluralism, and rapidly changing migration policy and discourse in the US, Europe, and South Africa.

Emergent Eritrean rights-based initiatives are organized simultaneously around themes related to international human rights claims, the national conditions facing refugees or asylum seekers in countries of safe haven, and the unimplemented Eritrean Constitution. Thus, these initiatives articulate human rights concerns specific to Eritrea on three different levels. At the international level, they seek to connect Eritrean exile organizations with global human rights organizations, strategies, and norms. At the national level, they support and advocate for the rights of new refugees and asylum seekers vis-à-vis countries of residence within the national human rights and forced migration policy environments. And finally, at the transnational level, they resist the policies, practices, and ideologies of the Eritrean government which have severely compromised basic rights and freedoms within Eritrea and the diaspora.

Resistance to the one-party government is accomplished by a combination of efforts. In particular, by making rights claims at the mid-level (e.g. seeking asylum or assisting in asylum procedures within the nation-state of residence) and by establishing connections with rights regimes at the international level, the crisis of rights in Eritrea is elaborated and publicized. Further attention is drawn through explicit calls to implement the Eritrean Constitution and efforts to incite non-violent change in Eritrea through public actions abroad and the dissemination of human rights discourse within Eritrea via shortwave radio, the Internet, and word of mouth. And finally, new rights-based initiatives also share linkages with exile political organizations that advocate for political change in Eritrea, viewed by many as a prerequisite for improving immediate conditions and effecting long-term transformation. In the following, I address each of these dynamics and make some initial assessments regarding the potential efficacy of Eritrean rights-based initiatives.

The Transnational and Nationalist Contexts

Emergent rights-based initiatives among Eritrean exiles are situated within a historic and contested transnational social field that binds the Eritrean nation-state and its citizens abroad. Since the late 1960s, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and especially the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) forged and utilized institutional linkages with refugee populations around the world to channel exiles' economic and political support into the nationalist independence struggle. The transnational social field that developed during the independence war helped solidify the power and ideological authority of the EPLF and later the PFDJ, such that by the time independence was achieved in 1991, the worldwide diaspora was either organized beneath its administration or, at the very least, subject to its policies and procedures. The latter, increasingly documented by researchers, includes the 2% annual tax and other financial contributions, restrictions on identity cards, passports, visas, property sale or transfer, and any other official documentation or transactions, depending on one's degree of political and financial compliance with the party-state.⁴

A fuller history and analysis of Eritrean transnationalism and its 'enforced' or repressive characteristics is provided in recent scholarly work (al-Ali et al 2001a, b; Hepner 2003, 2007, and forthcoming; Hepner and Conrad 2005; Woldemikael 2005). For the present analysis, it is important to note that, while the mechanisms for transnational behavior are well-developed from the internal perspective and goals of state-defined nationalism, they have been heavily circumscribed in the areas typically defined as 'civil society.' That is, while organized political and civic groups linked directly to EPLF/PFDJ (such as the front prior to independence, and PFDJ party chapters afterward; the national unions of women and youth/students; and

⁴ According to the citizenship proclamation of 1992, any person born to one Eritrean parent anywhere in the world is a citizen of Eritrea. In practice, however, citizenship tends to be defined largely on the basis of one's compliance and support for the government and one's financial contributions, including payment of the annual tax. Adejumobi (2001) argues that this 'loyalty' conception of citizenship is common in postcolonial Africa, and is a key factor in contemporary conflict, civil war, and rights abuses.

community associations led by EPLF/PFDJ party members) have been efficacious in channeling exile funds and political support into Eritrea, those groups and organizations which resist identification with PFDJ, represent sub-(or supra-) national identities or interests, or are critical of government policies, have been marginalized, at best, within the transnational environment. Groups created or led by those with ELF, reformist, or non-partisan sensibilities, and religious-based or civic groups whose goals include non-governmental development, aid, and/or cultural participation in Eritrean society, have been forcefully curtailed. Routinely subject to delegitimation, exclusion, and even intimidation, these groups have in some cases been actively destroyed by the state and the transnational institutions and actors that help comprise it (see Hepner 2003, 2005, 2007, and forthcoming; Woldemikael 2005).

In addition to the marginalization or rejection of transnational actors who challenge the party-state's power and official nationalist doctrine, the historic Eritrean transnational social field has also been characterized by its insularism. While some loose linkages did form in the earlier years of the liberation struggle between pro-EPLF Eritrean activists and other anti-colonial, left-wing, or black nationalist groups, these were largely pragmatic alliances designed to help publicize and further the objectives of EPLF nationalism. Indeed, evidence from US-based activism the 1970s indicate that the *internationalist* impulses present among some organized Eritrean activists were deliberately quashed by EPLF (Hepner 2005).

The forging of genuine cooperative ties between Eritrean organizations and non-Eritrean ones that go beyond a calculated interest on the part of nationalists to serve immediate needs or goals has been virtually absent in the Eritrean experience. Those ties which have formed at one time or another, either during the independence struggle or after, have typically proven short-lived and subject to the political whims of party-state leadership. Whether for economic needs,

including emergency relief and development efforts, or for socio-cultural and political interventions, the role of international or foreign-based organizations has been limited in Eritrea (see Hayman 2004). Stemming from the ethic of self-reliance that underpins nationalism and party-state policy, this insularism has helped protect Eritrea from a range of potentially damaging external interests, from structural adjustment programs to zealous religious missionaries. However, it has also reinforced and perpetuated the powerful notion, also foundational to nationalist identity, that Eritrea has been ignored or forgotten by the rest of the world. From a historically-informed transnational perspective, however, it rather seems that political elites have for many years rebuffed external actors who might contribute or participate in Eritrean society and affairs. This hostility towards ‘foreign influences’ is justified in a range of ways, including in terms of national security; economic, political, and cultural sovereignty; and models of development that reject or critique Western neo-liberal assumptions and formal or representative democracy in favor of those characteristic of East Asia and China in particular (Hepner and O’Kane, forthcoming). As we shall see, the rejection of broadly-defined foreign influences and concerns about maintaining sovereignty in a world dominated by neo-liberal globalization (see Ferguson 2006), also underpins the logic of the current crisis of human rights in Eritrea.

Today, the Eritrean transnational social field is still largely characterized by the dynamics described above. However, it has also diversified in significant ways. Since the Ethio-Eritrean border war (1998-2000), and the subsequent decline of internal socio-political and economic conditions of which the rise in human rights abuses has been a part, Eritrean exiles all over the world have created new organizations that actively seek linkages with non-Eritrean bodies and articulate a broader ideological position. Whereas Eritrean transnationalism to this point has largely been confined to those flows which connect the party-state and its interests to citizens

who actively support, or grudgingly submit, to its policies in order to secure belonging in the national community, more recent developments indicate that patterned, structural changes may be at work. New rights-based initiatives not only represent a challenge to the exclusionism and internecine political conflict among ELF and EPLF that marks the historic transnational social field, but to its insularism and xenophobia as well. That is, organizations and coalitions are proliferating that not only resist the ubiquitous influence of the party-state and its 'orthodox' nationalism, but also reach out to non-Eritrean organizations and internationalist or universalist discourses, such as those based on human rights. These efforts are helping restructure the Eritrean transnational social field from one whose flows and networks are largely confined within and between Eritrea and its scattered exile populations, to those which extend into many different organizational, national, and international environments (see Glick Schiller et al 2002; 2005). This is important for several reasons, not least of which is the departure it marks from the 'methodological nationalism' that has been operative among Eritrean transnational actors and researchers to date (see Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

As this process unfolds, moreover, Eritrea and Eritreans become drawn into the global environment in ways that may be at considerable odds with the party-state's objectives. At this point in time, it seems that the proliferation of rights-based initiatives among Eritrean refugees has been accompanied by perhaps an escalation in rights abuses in Eritrea itself. Escalating abuses then complicate the ability of groups striving for a non-partisan, rights-based platform to retain autonomy from opposition political groups, who advocate for regime change in Eritrea as the only solution to the current situation. This, in turn, re-identifies rights-based approaches with 'the opposition,' retarding their appeal among skittish exiles and shunting communication with PFDJ party members and pro-regime loyalists. I explore how these dilemmas play out on the

ground in the next section, where I sketch the experiences of several new rights-based initiatives in the US, Germany, and South Africa vis-à-vis countries of settlement and Eritrea.

How to Spell Human Rights: EAI, EMDHR, and EHRAG

A cursory search on-line for all things Eritrean returns an overwhelming array of acronyms, each representing a group somewhere along the continuum of inception to disintegration. After the establishment of mission statements, by-laws, and listserves, many of these organizations seem to wither away rapidly. The Eritrean cyberworld is littered with the empty shells of well-intentioned ‘civic societies’ whose names are the only remaining reflection of the passion with which they were conceived. During a recent interview, a US-based leader of one of the more successful web-based groups commented wryly that after tracking the proliferation of new civic associations around the globe for some months, he discovered that most had died out in the interim.

The ephemeral nature of Eritrean exile organizations demands that analyses of their activity and any assessment of their potential impacts be undertaken with caution. Most of these proliferating groups (or individuals masquerading as groups) exist only in the internet public sphere (see Bernal 2005; Conrad 2006) and rarely hold meetings or events in real time and space. Like their ephemerality, this preference for virtual organization is related to the exigencies of the independence war and the historic transnational social field that has been dominated by EPLF/PFDJ institutions and policies.⁵ For reasons already noted, most organizations that form autonomously from the government have been deliberately stunted by political interference from the state and its actors abroad. Even those which have been permitted or sanctioned by the EPLF/PFDJ have often tended towards internal conflict and malaise as a result of tensions dating

⁵ Other issues also complicate organization-building in diaspora, including interpersonal conflicts, jealousies, and antagonisms emerging from disparate interests or identities.

to the EPLF-ELF civil war and attempts by PFDJ members to ‘lead’. As another US-based leader explained, “There is a great mistrust which dates to the armed struggle. People in exile want to do something but they do not want to be told what to do, and there is always intervention from political groups, trying to control them.” Understandably, groups wishing for some kind of autonomy find it less risky, in more ways than one, to mobilize via the Internet. Moreover, that Eritreans are literally scattered across the globe and reside in communities that are dwarfed by other immigrant and refugee concentrations makes web-based communication and action an attractive and practical option.

So while it is questionable to what extent the currently existing rights-based organizations may endure, a considerable structural shift does seem to have occurred in recent years and is impacting the Eritrean transnational environment. This shift has several interrelated causes, the first of which is the objective deterioration of conditions in Eritrea following the border war with Ethiopia, which has led to an increase in new refugees since 2001. These new refugees, many of whom belong to younger generations, are leaving independent Eritrea mainly due to escalating militarism, restrictive educational and employment environments, economic hardship, and a repressive political and cultural climate. Following earlier paths of refugee resettlement and migration, many have gone to places like North America and Europe, while others have opted for South Africa, India, or the Middle East. However, changing immigration and refugee policies in Western countries since 9-11, and in South Africa as a result of a spike in African immigration since the end of apartheid (and accompanied by xenophobia and corruption; see Crush and McDonald 2000, 2001; Handmaker 2001; Handmaker et al 2007; Klaaren and Ramji 2001; Landau 2004; Nyamnjoh 2006; Peberdy 2001) add additional layers of hardship, wherein persecution at home is compounded by increasingly stringent conditions with respect to asylum

and refugee status abroad. It is possible that these empirical changes may actually contribute to the growth of more durable rights-based initiatives among Eritreans, whose historical frame of reference is shifting from that of the independence struggle to the post-independence environment, and whose practical realities entail a complex mix of navigating migration policies and laws as well as appealing to human rights norms. For the purposes of this analysis, the objectives and activities of several new organizations formed around rights-based approaches to transnational activism are explored below.

The three organizations addressed in this paper include the Eritrean Anti-Militarism Initiative, EAI, based in Frankfurt, Germany; the Eritrean Movement for Democratic and Human Rights, EMDHR, based in Pretoria, South Africa; and the Eritrean Human Rights Advocacy Group, or EHRAG, based in California, USA. All three groups have formed within the past four years, and with the exception of EHRAG, which was initiated by men from the revolutionary guerrilla generation, are led by younger, recent migrants from Eritrea. All three groups also share a stated commitment to furthering human rights agendas in Eritrea by building consciousness (at home and abroad) about what constitutes universal rights and rights-based activism, as well as assisting new refugees and asylum seekers from Eritrea to develop their legal cases vis-à-vis American, German, and South African immigration authorities. All three groups have also begun building relationships with non-Eritrean organizations, including international human rights organizations, local agencies that provide legal aid to refugees and asylum seekers, and in the German case, the Protestant church. Finally EAI, EMDHR, and EHRAG also participate in a newly formed Eritrean coalition called the Global Anti-Tyranny Network, which aims at coordinating the many ‘civic societies’ burgeoning around the globe to draw international attention and apply pressure to foreign bodies and governments regarding the crisis of rights in

Eritrea today. However, each group is also unique in its character and particular approach as a result of the national and cultural environments in which they reside and the character of their formation and leadership, with generational differences being of particular relevance.⁶

The Eritrean Anti-Militarism Initiative

The Eritrean Anti-Militarism Initiative (EAI) was founded by a partnership of two asylum seekers who arrived in Germany in 2002 and 2003, respectively. Based in Frankfurt the group remains deliberately small in membership, with less than thirty members, most of whom are also recently arrived asylum seekers. Three Germans also belong to the organization, including the pastor of an Evangelical Church. The latter have greatly facilitated EAI's emergent linkages with several non-Eritrean groups, including War Resisters International (WRI), a non-governmental organization founded in 1921 to further the rights and principles of conscientious objection and non-violence worldwide; PRO-ASYL, a prominent refugee rights and legal aid NGO founded in Frankfurt in 1990 to advocate for policy change and provide assistance to refugees; and Connection e.V., a local non-profit with a platform nearly identical to that of WRI.

Organized broadly on a rights-based platform, EAI is therefore partly an advocacy organization for the rights and dignity of Eritrean asylum seekers and especially those with a background of military resistance or desertion. This is significant insofar as deserters usually stand little chance of successful asylum in Germany due to the perception that desertion from compulsory military service does not constitute grounds for claims of political persecution or human rights abuses (a similar dynamic is often observable in the US). However EAI is also a forum for Eritreans to record in detail human rights abuses they experienced in Eritrea and encourage others to do the same, within the broader framework articulated by WRI and

⁶ The three groups analyzed here do not represent the full range of rights-based activity among Eritrean exiles. In cities as far flung as London, Sydney, Oslo, Washington DC, and Khartoum, numerous groups advocating for human rights have emerged.

Connection e.V., and facilitated on the legal front by PRO-ASYL. One aspect of EAI's work in recent years has been the publication of asylum seekers' testimonials (see EAI/C.e.V. 2005) describing the abuses they endured in compulsory military service and how these influenced the development of their anti-war and pro-human rights perspectives.

EAI is distinct in the Eritrean transnational environment for its commitment to principles of conscientious objection and non-violence, values which do not have cultural or historical precedents in Eritrea, but are strongly rooted in the experiences of post-war Europe and Germany in particular. Defining itself as 'an antimilitarist or anti-war organization independent of any party politics,' EAI has developed a trenchant critique of the negative impacts of war in Eritrean society and particularly since the Ethio-Eritrean border war. Although not a religious organization, EAI does have a link with the German Evangelical Church through the membership of a pastor who worked in a Frankfurt asylum center and helped link Eritreans with Connection e.V. Eventually, she facilitated the founding of EAI, which is not a registered organization itself but operates under the umbrella of Connection e.V. Also important was an asylum lawyer who has been dealing with Eritrean cases for the past ten years.

In its efforts to forge a coherent cultural or historical linkage between its philosophy and Eritrean experience, EAI connects its principles of conscientious objection to similar values espoused by Jehovah's Witnesses in Eritrea, who have long been subject to persecution and denial of basic citizenship rights under EPLF and later PFDJ. To trace one's roots to one of the most despised and oppressed 'foreign religions' in Eritrea, and to profess principles of non-violence, conscientious objection, and anti-militarism in the context of one of the most militarized societies in the world, is a striking break from Eritrean political culture, including submission to the demands of nationalism and the coercive power of the state.

EAI's focus on conscientious objection and non-violence developed through the interaction of Eritrean asylum seekers within the German human rights environment, which was itself shaped by the devastating impacts of two world wars. German anti-militarism movements spoke a language that reflected the Eritrean experience in a way that was unthinkable in Eritrea: "It is a new experience for me that there are groups which are engaged with the issues of CO [conscientious objectorship] and advocate against war... As a soldier I would have never thought that this was possible. In Eritrea you cannot even talk about it ...Here I learned that resistance is possible" (EAI/C.e.V. 2004, German edition). Also of relevance here is the current legal and policy environment, which demands that asylum seekers not only frame their experiences of persecution within a discourse that is intelligible to the German and larger EU context, but requires them to abide within the constraints of a legal system and national culture hostile to immigrants and refugees. Facing the constant threat of deportation and unable to obtain secure residence or employment while their cases are pending, asylum seekers must also cope with a national environment that ultimately rejects the permanent integration of immigrants and refugees as citizens (Bosswick 2000; Kastoryano 2002). It is likely that the development of a discourse of conscientious objection among secular Eritreans in Germany (or those who do not belong to the Jehovah's Witness religion specifically) is at least partly influenced by the historical and cultural construction of human and refugee/immigrant rights in that country. The linkages developed with War Resisters International, Connection e.V., and PRO-ASYL both reflect and reinforce EAI's particular focus. The concept of conscientious objectorship has provided a useful frame around which EAI can build both a political and rights-based critique of the Eritrean government while at the same time fostering durable linkages with German and international NGOs. The latter not only have considerable experience working within this arena,

but may also provide an avenue through which EAI can raise funds and secure support for individuals during the asylum seeking process.

Without implying that a conscientious objectorship strategy is purely an instrumental one, it is important to note how EAI's stand differs somewhat from its German and international partners and from the religious espousal of Jehovah's Witnesses. In a face to face interview held with contributing researcher Bettina Conrad in Frankfurt, one of the co-founders and leaders of the group emphasized that EAI's main goal is to simply raise consciousness among Eritreans (and ideally inside Eritrea) that an international rights regime exists which provides people with an option to refuse serving in the military and/or participating in war. EAI does not raise a universal objection to military service (which is an unrealistic aim given conditions and widespread cultural attitudes in Eritrea), but rather seeks to develop awareness about the ways in which compulsory military service in Eritrea masks widespread human rights abuses by the government, and how abuses originating within the military context are indistinct from those in civilian contexts. This particular leader used the example of the how the government threatens the family members of military deserters and either offers them payments if they return their absconding relative to the military, or levies heavy fines on them because a relative has deserted. He also referred to the incident at Adi Abeyto prison, where thousands of suspected military evaders were detained and at least a dozen shot and killed.⁷ Here, EAI reflects the empirical evidence contained in asylum testimonials: that many human rights abuses in Eritrea today take place within the military, where the perpetrators and/or government are shielded from critique by

⁷ See "Eritrea: Fear of torture / Incommunicado detention/ Arbitrary killings: Thousands of people held at Adi Abeto army prison," Amnesty International, AI Index AFR 64/008/2004.

both the secrecy of the military environment itself and the ideological justification of compulsory service to the nation-state.

While EAI's overt focus is therefore on the right of conscientious objectorship for Eritreans, its subtextual reference is actually the problem of militarization and human rights abuses overall. Framing its mission in these terms has helped EAI to not only articulate its perspective on human rights, but also to tap into a discursive and activist environment that is well developed in Germany. These linkages in turn provide support through the asylum process by connecting Eritrean experiences to a wider human rights framework that resonates in Germany and soliciting the detailed legal aid they need.

Despite its small size, which has been a deliberate choice of the leadership, EAI has participated in an impressive array of projects organized either amongst itself and other Eritreans or in conjunction with NGOs like WRI. EAI leaders and members attended and made presentations to a seminar on Eritrean issues held in Cologne ("Focus on Eritrea," September 18-19, 2004), as well as one in Italy that was organized by the Network of Eritrean Civil Societies, a coalition based in Sweden. They have provided information on Eritrea to groups like Connection e.V., PRO-ASYL, and Amnesty International. They have held press conferences on Eritrea, taken part in the annual German Protestant Church Symposium, coordinated demonstrations with other Eritrean organizations, collected signatures for a petition to grant Eritrean military deserters asylum in Germany, and given a five minute presentation on Eritrea at a human rights hearing at the United Nations in Geneva. They also produced two booklets with Connection e.V. that detail the human rights crisis and articulate a conscientious objectorship position for the Eritrean context. The booklets contain detailed testimonials from several asylum seekers about the abuses they suffered in the military (EAI/C.e.V. 2005). In May 2006 EAI also toured several

German cities giving presentations about the human rights situation in Eritrea. For the first time (at least in some locations) a larger number of Eritreans were in the audience, some of them government supporters. These kinds of partnerships, and the outreach work done by such a small group as EAI, represent a significant change from the heretofore insular and nationalist-centered character of Eritrean transnational mobilization.

EAI's experience relative to the broader Eritrean transnational social field has been rather less successful, not surprisingly. In addition to being the leader of a group like EAI, one of the co-founders also produces a television program for another independent civic group known as Sinit Selam, or 'Peace Party.' Whether for his work in EAI or his presence on television, he described being stared down, rebuffed, and treated rudely by groups of compatriots in public, while often being approached by individuals who quietly confessed their appreciation for his work. It is well known to EAI leaders and members that their work is closely monitored by the PFDJ government, including through the presence of party officials at their events. EAI members have also report being videotaped and photographed by government officials during demonstrations, and have been turned away at the Eritrean Consulate when seeking paperwork related to their legal status in Germany. Two young women associated with the group were shouted at, insulted as traitors, and told they were blacklisted and would not receive any help from the Consulate because they were no longer considered Eritrean. One EAI leader also suspects that a pre-arranged meeting he had with a strong PFDJ supporter was clandestinely tape recorded. While no EAI member has been openly threatened or harmed, the group, like others who attempted to forge autonomous groups abroad, has clearly been marginalized and subject to obstacles and intimidation within the state-dominated transnational social field. Finally, some EAI members and leaders share links with Eritrean political parties in exile, including the

Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP) and the ELF-RC, which lends to the perception that they comprise part of the broadly-defined ‘opposition.’

Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights

The Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights, or EMDHR, was formed in Pretoria in 2003-2004 among graduate and post-graduate students sent to various institutions in South Africa in 2000-2001 by a PFDJ government program funded by the World Bank. EMDHR’s Constitution was adopted in October 2004 and defines the organization’s mandate as a non-partisan, independent civic organization dedicated to the promotion and defense of human and democratic rights for all Eritrean citizens inside and outside Eritrea (EMDHR 2004:5). In particular, the organization opposes the PFDJ’s ruling of Eritrea without a constitution and its denial of basic rights and freedoms to its citizens. It also opposes compulsory National Service and the *Warsay-Yeka’alo* campaign,⁸ viewing them as ‘a pretext for the mistreatment and abuse of youth, women, and the underage’ (EMDHR 2004:2; see also Hepner 2007). Like EAI, EMDHR advocates the principles and practices of peaceful change through non-violent means. With a membership of approximately 600 Eritreans throughout South Africa, many of whom are students, EMDHR also entails an advocacy component for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in the South African national environment.

The founders and leaders of EMDHR did not originally appear in South Africa as refugees or asylum seekers. Rather, they were members of the most well-educated and urbanized strata of Eritrean society, who received the special recognition and privilege of being selected for the World Bank-funded program. In developing the program, the PFDJ’s stated aim was to send

⁸ Literally meaning “the inheritors of the struggle and the ones who made independence possible,” Warsay-Yeka’alo is a package of policies and programs designed to transmit the values of the guerrilla generation to the post-independence one. One component of the campaign is compulsory military and national service. The campaign also extends into the realm of education, labor, and public culture.

its best and brightest to Africa's finest institutions of higher learning so they could develop the skills and credentials needed to serve national development. All those participating in the program were required to sign contracts with the government, affirming that they would return to Eritrea upon completion of their training. However, the program was initiated at precisely the time when the negative consequences of the border war were becoming obvious and when the government began steadily clamping down on the incipient public sphere. The young men (and few women) sent to South Africa were ushered out of the country during a time when their less fortunate colleagues and compatriots were being sent to labor camps; were being punished for forming and participating in an independent student union that was critical of university and government policy; when private presses were being shut down and journalists were being arrested; and when eleven reformist members of the government were arrested for dissidence. As the students witnessed these developments from South Africa, they not only suspected that the program was at least partly designed and implemented to get them out of Eritrea during a time when they, too, may have been critical of the government, but that had they remained in Eritrea, they may also have been detained and held indefinitely without charge (see Mekonnen and Abraha 2004).

Following a pattern which harks back to the nationalist activism of the 1970s diaspora, EMDHR formed 'spontaneously,' as one leader put it in an interview conducted over electronic mail, in response to the mounting political crisis in Eritrea. After several months of exchanging information and opinions with one another over the Internet and via informal and largely personal meetings from Capetown and Stellenbosch to Pretoria and Johannesburg, the students began developing common critiques of Eritrean government policy and issues related to civil and political rights since independence. At meetings held with the Ambassador of Eritrea to South

Africa, the students raised some of these issues and concerns. Shortly thereafter, as one leader reported in an interview,

“The government started to put pressure on us by different means – threats, telephone calls, and bringing divisions among the Eritrean community [in South Africa] by smear campaigns, etc. Nevertheless, this bonded us together to further our plea in an organized way. [And] there were many initiatives in the different cities of South Africa, some of which we were aware, and some of which were clandestine. So we decided to make a call and form an interim committee that will draft a constitution and conduct a founding congress [for EMDHR].”

Initiated by those who wanted to articulate civil and democratic criticism of the state since independence and the border war in particular, EMDHR was actually solidified as a result of PFDJ’s repressive transnational response. Thereafter, the pattern continued to escalate. Several people were singled out by officials at the Embassy in South Africa and had their funding, health insurance, and passports revoked by the Eritrean government, which then notified the South African Department of Home Affairs that they were ‘illegal’ and should be deported to Eritrea (Mekonnen and Abraha 2004). The incipient EMDHR leadership, some of whom were studying human rights law, rallied behind their colleagues and articulated the situation to the South African authorities with respect to human rights law and the South African Bill of Rights (*ibid*). As a result of these developments, many of the people in question saw their status transformed from international students to asylum seekers and refugees. Now clearly marked as dissidents for their critique of the government and for their skillful mobilization of international human rights instruments and South African migration policy and law, not to mention their membership in the emergent EMDHR, many Eritreans in South Africa found their status radically altered. The transnational presence of the government had carried the repressive political situation in Eritrea to South Africa, and EMDHR activists used the national context to fight back transnationally.

Of all new rights-based initiatives to emerge in diaspora, EMDHR seems the largest and most developed in terms of its platform, which remains squarely focused on the articulation of a universalist rights-based framework appropriately “vernacularized” for Eritrea (see Merry 2006), the dissemination of concepts of rights throughout Eritrea, and non-violent methods of social and political change. Because so many of its members and leaders have become asylum seekers and refugees as a result of their transnational political activism in South Africa, EMDHR also provides support for those engaged in the asylum process. With the help of its own members who received legal training in South Africa, as well as its linkages with local refugee and immigrant legal aid organizations and forced migration policy research groups, EMDHR also advocates on behalf of asylum and refugee issues. At the international level, it has developed links with Amnesty International and has received some practical assistance and funding from the Massachusetts-based NGO Grassroots International, as well as from the National Endowment for Democracy. Recently, it worked closely with the founder and owner of the popular Eritrean website Asmarino.com to establish and run a daily radio broadcast, Voice of Meselna Delina, which is heard daily on shortwave radio throughout Eritrea and on the internet and other local Eritrean radio programs throughout the diaspora. In addition to providing commentaries and analyses of basic human rights related concepts and issues, the radio broadcast also reads statements by various Eritrean organizations and other human rights NGOs about the state of affairs inside the country. EMDHR recently translated and read over the radio a press release by Amnesty International on prisoners of conscience, and it is thought that the prisoners themselves may have heard the report from inside their cells. EMDHR has also held numerous meetings and seminars, and has authored a booklet on non-violent struggle, anti-militarism, human rights, and democracy, which they disseminated via the internet and by other means. Its

leaders and members have largely rejected involvement with any organized political groups and have incorporated into their outreach and education a focus on the distinction between civic organizations and political parties.

Eritrean Human Rights Advocacy Group

Finally, the Eritrean Human Rights and Advocacy Group (EHRAG) operates from California, USA, and in some ways is the most ‘virtual’ of these new initiatives, lacking a discernible membership and role beyond its close affiliation with the larger and somewhat controversial Awate Foundation. The Awate Foundation itself exists largely on-line and speaks exclusively through its website, www.awate.com. Primarily “a media source which is argumentative and polemical in nature,” according to one of its founders, Awate.com aims to provide both free-flowing information about Eritrea as well as a voice to those who have been repressed but who have not articulated their experiences either due to fear, inexperience, or lack of knowledge about their rights. Founded in 2000, Awate’s mission is to create a democratic space where Eritreans can read, write, and think in an environment of democratic but critical dialogue “regardless of party affiliation.”

The Foundation, the website, and now EHRAG, are organized and funded entirely by a five-person board, one of whom is located in Eritrea. Although none of the board members may themselves join Eritrean political organizations, at least two of its leaders were at one time affiliated with the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). Their experience in the armed struggle clearly informs their objectives. Reflecting on the history of nationalism and war in Eritrea, one of Awate’s founders described the ‘parallel universes’ that Eritreans live within and must constantly navigate and manage. These universes, he continued, roughly correspond to the divisions of Tigrinya and Arabic, Muslim and Christian, highland and lowland, and ELF and

EPLF. Awate's mission was therefore to move beyond these divides to draw the parallel universes into conversation. Building on the notion of reconciliation, inspired in part by the South African model, Awate envisions the establishment of forums and institutions that are conducive to collective healing from war, the growth of democratic social and political behavior, and eventually, democratic governance in Eritrea proper.

Awate's origins among former ELF fighters, and its tradition of writing in English, Tigrinya, and Arabic, as well as its hosting of various opposition political organizations' writings, has led to the widespread perception that it is merely a tool of the ELF or broadly-defined opposition. Its leaders firmly reject this idea, stating that it is precisely this kind of zero-sum political thinking that Awate, working through the concept of reconciliation, aims to overcome. Moreover, within a diasporic climate that is strongly polarized due to the long-term transnational interventions of first the EPLF and later the PFDJ government, Awate has aimed to create a forum that is open, democratic, and neutral. The chief writers for Awate define themselves as 'equal opportunity critics,' meaning they subject each different political organization and agenda to similar analytical rigor. And rigorous they are – some of the most talented and sophisticated of Eritrea's organic intellectuals produce columns, essays, and reports for Awate.

EHRAG, as the advocacy wing of Awate, mirrors many of its parent organization's objectives. At this point, EHRAG remains, in the words of one of its creators, "mainly a bundle of goals and ambitions" which one day might materialize into an independent human rights watchdog organization inside Eritrea, with a full-time staff and multiple sources of funding. For now, however, it draws on its information networks within Eritrea to document what is happening inside the country regarding human rights issues and abuses; it translates reports

produced by other rights organizations into Arabic and Tigrinya; it attempts to conduct interviews with asylum seekers and others who have experienced human rights abuses and collect and organize their testimonials; and it provides advice and supporting documentation for asylum seekers navigating the US immigration system. EHRAG has also been involved in a controversial Martyrs Album, which has sought to document the names of the deceased from the beginning of the border war in 1998 through the present, recording (when possible) when and how they died. Shifting the language of martyrdom from the exclusive meaning sanctioned by the state to one that includes the legacy of those who died as a result of militarism and rights abuses is not the only clever linguistic twist initiated by EHRAG. The acronym of the organization itself is actually the Arabic word meaning ‘to shame.’ As one of the leaders explained in an interview, “because the persuasion in human rights is a moral one, you must literally shame governments for their abuses.”

EHRAG does not yet maintain a durable position on the Eritrean transnational scene, nor has it developed considerable linkages with non-Eritrean groups. Its orientation still largely reflects the inward-turning character of earlier Eritrean activism. At the moment, it concentrates on the immediate mission of being “the little guy helping the little guy,” as one leader put it. Certainly the desire for broader links is there, and some attempts have been made, especially in terms of outreach within the Eritrean community and some initial meetings with Amnesty International USA activists. EHRAG’s efforts within the local diaspora environment have been thwarted by boycotts and propaganda emerging from within the PFDJ camp, however. Its goal of providing a genuine “third-way” and galvanizing the “unaligned” by deploying universalist human rights discourses to bridge the historic social and political divisions among Eritreans has not met with the initial success its leaders hoped for. And while the Awate team consistently

writes in English and draws heavily from the experience of living in Western democratic environments, and the US in particular, to illuminate and critique Eritrean realities, these intellectual linkages with non-Eritrean sources of knowledge have not led to non-Eritrean organizational ties, nor have they won any goodwill among those still captured by official nationalist discourse. Due to roots within the ELF-EPLF rivalry and other historic socio-political divides, Awate and EHRAG are often dismissed as opposition organizations “polluted” by foreign ideas and agendas, including both Western and Islamist/Arab ones.

Of all the emergent rights-based initiatives, EHRAG seems to remain most constrained by elements that characterize the Eritrean transnational social field prior to the border war and crisis of 2001. However, EHRAG also has the greatest first-hand knowledge of both the armed struggle that gave rise to the current power configuration, as well as the ways in which persistent ELF and EPLF/PFDJ identities have shaped the transnational social field. Their considerable experience in the Eritrean transnational environment, their long-term familiarity with the American political and legal environments, and their intimate knowledge of Eritrean diasporic and homeland political culture, has provided them with a capacity for endurance that many of the new organizations may lack. Speaking of the sharp rise in the number of ‘civic societies’ worldwide, one Awate/EHRAG leader mused, “Yes, well, are they sprint runners or are they marathon runners? The new non-violent approach is like water dripping on a rock, eroding it day by day, dissolving it over time, not attacking it with headbutts. But many people who are drawn to advocacy are impatient. They want change right away, and they get frustrated. EHRAG chips away at the regime, documenting case by case what has happened, so people don’t forget it and don’t forget the chronology of it.” Here, the experience of protracted guerrilla warfare within the

historic armed struggle provides EHRAG with a unique perspective and set of skills, enabling them to pursue their goal over a long period of time, using both overt and highly subtle tactics.

Expanding Transnational Struggle: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Human Rights

In their simultaneous linkages with international human rights values and regimes, national-level asylum and refugee rights policy and concerns, and the articulation of rights vis-a-vis the PFDJ-dominated state, new Eritrean rights-based initiatives resemble what Keck and Sikkink define as ‘transnational advocacy networks’:

Transnational advocacy networks are proliferating, and their goal is to change the behavior of states and of international organizations. Simultaneously principled and strategic actors, they ‘frame’ issues to make them comprehensible to target audiences, to attract attention and encourage action, and to ‘fit’ with favorable institutional venues (Keck and Sikkink 1998:2).

They also form what Sally Merry (2006) has termed “the middle” when examining transnational movements for human rights: the organizations and movements which help connect specific human rights struggles in their national contexts to the discourses and movements happening at the global level.

Comprised of recent or former refugees and asylum seekers, all of whom advance their positions relative to a shared cultural and political background of warfare and violence, EAI, EMDHR, and EHRAG represent genuinely new patterns of activism within an already formulated Eritrean transnational social field. By seeking to develop organizational and discursive links with non-Eritrean groups and modes of thinking and acting, such as conscientious objection and human rights itself, these new initiatives challenge the insularism of Eritrean nationalism and at the same time resist the state’s institutional domination of the transnational social field. Their experience as refugees and asylum seekers in Germany, South Africa, and the US likewise highlight the crisis of rights in Eritrea by articulating the culturally-

specific experiences of persecution, which include forms of transnational state repression like surveillance and threats, within the framework of national laws that respond to international human rights norms.

The specific manner and environments in which Eritrean rights-based initiatives (or transnational advocacy networks, if we follow Keck and Sikkink) unfold, however, suggest a complexity that goes beyond what can be captured in terms like ‘network,’ ‘transnational,’ ‘advocacy,’ ‘law,’ and even ‘human rights.’ For over four decades now, all organized activity among Eritreans either at home or in diaspora, and the systematic dissemination of ideas, values, and experiences, has taken place under conditions of emergency or near emergency. Whether during the 1961-1991 war of independence with Ethiopia, or since the recent border war with Ethiopia that marked the inception of the current rights crisis, the role of nationalism in defining and controlling all acceptable activities and identities has been paramount. Moreover, this nationalist logic and the organized structures that supported, financed, and reproduced it were “transnationalized” from the earliest days of the struggle (Hepner 2007). New Eritrean initiatives therefore emerge within this already-existing arrangement, meaning that their capacity to network, organize, advocate, and even develop new forms of thought and discourse are already compromised by the state’s ideological and institutional influence across borders and within the most intimate spaces of individual and community life.

The first challenge facing these new rights-based initiatives is therefore confronting the considerable power of the Eritrean state to govern its exiles by means of both coercion (e.g. surveillance, threats, disenfranchisement, exclusion, and harm to loved ones ‘back home’) and consent (appealing to the shared nationalist past, themes of belonging, sacrifice, cultural essence and loyalty). That several of them, like EAI and EMDHR in this analysis, have created alliances

and linkages with organizations in Germany and South Africa, is a considerable achievement given the structural and ideological impediments to doing so. That others, like EHRAG, have turned to the universalist discourse of human rights in spite of (or because of) their deeper and longer entanglement with the historic and conflicted transnational social field, is likewise remarkable. All of these new initiatives confront a cultural legacy in which political elites have discouraged or dismantled popular mobilization, civil autonomy, and local customary institutions in order to replace them with state-led nationalist forms (see Tronvoll 1998). With few to no models of non-violent, civil organizing or non-governmental and internationalist activism in recent history or collective memory, contemporary Eritrean actors strive to see beyond a political culture that has reduced virtually all thought and action to a two-dimensional battle between pro-regime and anti-regime. With political parties forbidden from forming in Eritrea, ‘opposition’ parties have proliferated in exile, and virtually all descend from either ELF or EPLF. Any critique of the current government is defined as ‘opposition,’ and opposition necessarily means groups with an anti-regime orientation. With precious little space to create a “third way,” contemporary Eritrean activists are caught between the state and its others. The transnational social field resembles a minefield for these new rights-base initiatives, who not only must navigate the state’s ideological and coercive power across borders, but must first conceptualize, and then fiercely defend, their autonomy from contending political bodies.

Developing linkages with non-Eritrean organizations and discourses is more than a first step in thinking beyond the dualities and zero-sum games that characterize Eritrean politics. It is a decisive act that initiates structural change within the transnational social field. Glick Schiller (2002, 2005) has argued that transnationalism must not be viewed simply as those flows which connect migrants to their homeland, but rather the whole network of individuals and institutions

and discourses that spread out and situate people, communities, and states in a web of cross-border relationships. Through the efforts of groups like EAI, EMDHR, and even EHRAG, this definition may now also apply to Eritrea. The consequences of the broadening of the transnational social field have yet to play out, but inevitably will include the raising of greater international consciousness about Eritrea, and the fostering of values, ideas, and behaviors among Eritreans that run contrary to nationalist doctrine. Among these are concepts like conscientious objectorship, human rights, and civil society itself.

Expanding the structure of transnationalism to include linkages with non-Eritrean and international organizations and discourses is a political challenge to the state. As noted earlier, narratives of isolation and preoccupations with sovereignty have played important roles in underpinning nationalist consciousness and the ethic of self-reliance. They have also served the interests of power in Eritrea by allowing the state and military apparatus to grow increasingly coercive with few sanctions from an international community that lacks both knowledge and pressure points in the country. The development of ties to international and foreign NGOs by exiles, especially on the basis of human rights claims like asylum and refugee status, simultaneously exposes the state's repressive character and subjects it to critique in the international arena. However, these ties, and the experience of seeking asylum or refugee status abroad within the context of relatively clear legal frameworks, also raises consciousness among Eritreans themselves, who begin to imagine different possibilities for Eritrea. The issue of the unimplemented Eritrean Constitution as the basis for civil, political, and human rights has thus become important for many people as they reflect on the national and international rights environments to which they are exposed as refugees and asylum seekers.

The issue of ‘rights’ itself is an enormously thorny topic among Eritreans, and especially as codified in much international human rights discourse and law, where popular (and misguided) views have tended to prioritize “first generation” civil and political rights as the basis for inalienability. The rejection of the individualist bias in these aspects of human rights is not uncommon among oppressed peoples who have had to struggle for the *collective* right to exist vis-à-vis a larger ruling entity (Adejumobi 2001; Pries 1996). Although the Eritrean government has been signatory to many international human rights instruments, in practice it has become extremely hostile to rights as constructed on the basis of the individual, arguing instead that “second generation” economic, social and cultural rights should take priority (Hepner and Fredriksson 2007). In Eritrea today, however, rights in fact do not exist. Ratified in 1997, the Constitution has never been implemented, meaning that citizens are denied even the most basic guarantees by the state within the national environment. On an international level, the notion of ‘human rights’ is also strongly rejected by the regime, which views these as not only based on Western, neo-liberal assumptions about individuals, but as culturally inappropriate for a country whose focus must always remain on the national community and national survival. That Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers are now developing conceptions of rights that emerge simultaneously from the Eritrean Constitution and the experience of crafting legal arguments in places like Germany, South Africa, and the US, is highly problematic for the regime.

Redeploying the nationalist logic that has heretofore been highly effective for achieving and consolidating power, the government has defined this new language of rights as emerging from either ‘foreign’ or ‘opposition’ influences. This position helps explain why rights abuses seem to escalate in Eritrea in proportion to the growth of rights-based activism abroad. But it also highlights the stark contradiction between a transnational nation-state that seeks to control

and police its own cultural and political boundaries while moving seamlessly across those of the countries in which Eritreans reside.

The emergence of Eritrean rights-based initiatives therefore demands a comprehensive and nuanced analytical framework than conjoins, but goes beyond, existing concepts like network, transnational, advocacy, law, and human rights. It requires a framework that takes into account the ethnographic realities of legal pluralism, which Merry (1995:7) defined as “the shifting importance of local, national, and global legal systems. . . in which the critical questions are how these systems intersect with and exert power over one another.” Moreover, it demands that we acknowledge how policy and law provide both sites of resistance through the ways they are culturally appropriated by Eritreans, and help constitute new forms of consciousness about resistance itself. This initial assessment of emergent transnational rights-based initiatives among Eritreans in diaspora suggests that their efficacy probably lies not so much in the way they can capture power directly from the state, as much as how they might expand the transnational social field, tap into the power of legal pluralism with respect to human rights, and expand culturally-specific understandings of universal rights (Cowan et al 2001).

References

Adejumobi, Said. 2001. “Citizenship, Rights, and the Problem of Conflicts and Civil Wars in Africa.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 23: 148-170.

al-Ali, Nadjie, *et al.* 2001a “The limits to ‘transnationalism’: Bosnian and Eritrean refugees in Europe as emerging transnational communities,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24: 4: 578–600

_____. 2001b ‘Refugees and transnationalism: the experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe,’ *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27: 4: 615-634

Bernal, Victoria. 2005. “Eritrea On-Line: Diaspora, Cyberspace, and the Public Sphere.” *American Ethnologist* 32:4:660-675.

Bosswick, Wolfgang. 2000. “Development of Asylum Policy in Germany.” *Journal of Refugee Studies*. 13: 1: 43-60.

Conrad, Bettina. 2003. "Eritreans in Germany: Heading from Exile to Diaspora." In E. Bruchhaus, ed. *Hotspot Horn of Africa: Between Integration and Disintegration*. Münster: LIT Verlag.

_____. 2005. "'We are the prisoners of our dreams': Exit, Voice, and Loyalty in the Eritrean Diaspora in Germany." *Eritrean Studies Review* 4:2: 211-261

_____. 2006. "'We are the Warsay of Eritrea in Diaspora': Contested Identities and Social Divisions in Cyberspace and in Real Life." In Leif Manger and Munzoul A.M. Assal, eds. *Diasporas Within and Without Africa: Dynamism, Heterogeneity, Variation*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Cowan, Jane, Marie-Benedicte Dembour, and Richard A. Wilson, eds. 2001. *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crush, Jonathan and David A. McDonald. 2000. "Transnationalism, African Immigration, and New Migrant Spaces in South Africa: An Introduction." *CJAS/RCEA* 34:1 : 1-19.

_____. 2001. "Introduction to the Special Issue: Evaluating South African Immigration Policy After Apartheid." *Africa Today: Special Issue: Evaluating South African Immigration Policy After Apartheid*. 48: 3: 1-13.

EAI/C.e.V. 2004, 2005. "Eritrea: Conscientious Objection and Desertion. A Documentation by Connection e.V., Germany; War Resisters International; and the Eritrean Anti-Militarism Initiative." [English and German versions].

EMDHR. 2004. 'The constitution of Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights.'

Glick Schiller, Nina et al. 2002. [insert details]. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Annual Report 2002.

_____. 2005 "Transnational social fields and imperialism," *Anthropological Theory* vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 439-461

Handmaker, Jeff, Lee Anne de la Hunt, and Jonathan Klaaren, eds. 2007. *Advancing Refugee Protection in South Africa*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books (not yet published).

Handmaker, Jeff. 2001. "No Easy Walk: Advancing Refugee Protection in South Africa." *Africa Today: Special Issue: Evaluating South African Immigration Policy After Apartheid*. 48: 3: 91-113.

Hayman, Rachel. 2003. "Reconciling ownership of development and external assistance: aid and nation-building in Eritrea," *Occasional Papers, University of Edinburgh Centre for African Studies*, No. 95

Hepner, Tricia Redeker. 2003. "Religion, nationalism, and transnational civil society in the Eritrean diaspora," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 10: 269-293.

_____. 2005. "Transnational Tegadelti: Eritreans for Liberation in North America and the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front." *Eritrean Studies Review* 4:2: 37-84.

_____. 2007. "Transnationalism and the Centralization of State Power in Eritrea and Exile." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Advanced published August 2007 by iFirst at <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=g780570317~db=all>

_____. Forthcoming. *Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors and Exiles: Trans/National Political Struggle in Eritrea and the Diaspora*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hepner, Tricia R. and Bettina Conrad. 2005. "Eritrea abroad: an introduction," *Eritrean Studies Review* vol. 4, no. 2, pp. v-xvii.

Hepner, Tricia R. and Lynn Fredriksson. 2007. "Regional Politics, Human Rights, and U.S. Policy in the Horn of Africa." *Africa Policy Journal*, vol. 3. http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/kssgorg/apj/issues/spring_2007_issue/main.htm

Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Klaaren, Jonathan and Jaya Ramji. 2001. "Inside Illegality: Migration Policing in South Africa after Apartheid." *Africa Today: Special Issue: Evaluating South African Immigration Policy After Apartheid*. 48: 3: 35-47.

Landau, Loren. 2004. "The Laws of (In)Hospitality: Black Africans in South Africa." Forced Migration Working Paper Series #7. Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand.

Mekonnen, Daniel and Samuel Abraha. 2004. 'The Plight of Eritrean Students in South Africa,' Unpublished Paper.

Merry, Sally Engle. 1995. "Resistance and the Cultural Power of Law." *Law and Society Review* 29:1: 11-26.

_____. 2006. "Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle." *American Anthropologist*. 108: 1: 38-51.

Nyamnjoh, Francis B. 2006. *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa*. London: Zed Books.

Peberdy, Sally. 2001. "Imagining Immigration: Inclusive Identities and Exclusive Policies in Post-1994 South Africa." *Africa Today: Special Issue: Evaluating South African Immigration Policy After Apartheid*. 48: 3: 15-32.

Pries, Ann-Belinda S. 1996. "Human Rights as Cultural Practice: An Anthropological Critique." *Human Rights Quarterly* 18:2: 286-315.

Tronvoll, Kjetil. 1998. "The process of nation-building in post-war Eritrea: created from below or directed from above?" *Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 36: 461-483

Wimmer, Andreas and Glick Schiller, Nina 2002. "Methodological nationalism and beyond: Nation-state building, migration, and the social sciences," *Global Networks* vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 301-334

Woldemikael 2005 "Bridging the Divide: Muslim and Christian Eritreans in Orange County, California," *Eritrean Studies Review* 4: 2: 143-164.