

EDITORIAL

Endless Suffering

The misfortune of the peoples of Ethiopia has become the never-ending story of human tragedy of our times. As if the starvation of millions and the death of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians have not caused enough suffering, yet other tragedies of similar magnitude have befallen the peoples of Ethiopia.

That same government whose neglect and misrule became the major cause of famine and death for millions of Ethiopians does not appear to have exhausted its unparelled capacity for cruelty. In 1984, at the peak of the famine, the Ethiopian government undertook its project of resettlement whereby peasants from the famine afflicted north were removed from feeding centers and villages and transported to the south and west of the country at gunpoint.

At the outset the world was told that some parts of northern Ethiopia have become so unproductive that the only lasting solution is resettlement in the south and the west. The international community was also told that the resettlement will be done strictly on a voluntary basis, that families will be kept together and that only those physically fit will be resettled.

The truth, however, turned out to be the exact opposite. Peasants from Wollo and Tigray were forcefully rounded and taken away by government soldiers without being allowed to inform their family members their whereabouts. By December, 1985 close to 600,000 people have been moved to resettlement camps where there was neither adequate food nor medical supplies. Many of the camps were and still are infested with diseases such as malaria, cholera and typhus.

When the French famine relief group known as "Doctors Without Borders" exposed the truth about the outrageous conditions in these camps, the Ethiopian Military government promptly expelled the group from Ethiopia in December 1985. According to "Doctors Without Borders" 50,000 to 100,000 people died in the process of resettlement and that the rate at which people died was higher than the worst period during the famine in 1984. The group also called on the military government to impose an immediate moratorium on the entire resettlement program. Despite shameless denials by the Ethiopian government and its agents, other donor agencies such as USAID have voiced similar concerns and protests not only in regard to the general program but also about the inhuman conditions in these camps.

The living account of those who survived these death camps as reported by the international media such as the Washington Post provide a graphic account of the suffering of the peoples of Ethiopia that the so-called resettlement has entailed.

Me'isone has repeatedly stated that the resettlement project is nothing more than a political ploy to depopulate the northern parts of the country where the struggle against the military dictatorship and USSR intervention is intensified and that the Ethiopian government has no desire to undertake a genuine resettlement project.

Thanks to the protest and exposure of the true character of the so-called resettlement program by "Doctors Without Frontiers" and other donor agencies, the latest word on the situation is that new resettlements have been temporarily halted and that the matter is under review. Me'isone calls upon all donor agencies and the international community to condemn this farce called resettlement and to urge the Ethiopian Military government to dismantle these death-camps altogether.