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Exploring the Eritrean diaspora in Italy and in the United Kingdom

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**To the one I love,
Thanks for being always by my side.**

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	6
Abstract	7
Introduction.....	13
Chapter One - Diaspora An Overview.....	16
1.0 What Does the Term “Diaspora” Mean in Today’s World.....	17
1.1 Origins and Development of the Term	17
1.2 The Different Types of Diaspora	21
1.3 Diasporas and Transnationalism in the Age of Globalisation	24
1.4 What makes up a Diaspora?.....	27
1.5 The Diaspora and Homeland relationship	28
1.6 The Diaspora and Host Land Relationship	32
1.7 Homeland and Host land Relations	34
1.8 Using the Shuval Paradigm.....	34
Chapter Two - The Case of Eritrea	38
2.0 The Country of Eritrea	39
2.1 History	43
2.1.1 Italian Colonisation.....	45
2.1.2 British Administration	49
2.1.3 The Ethiopian and Eritrean Federation and Annexation	51
2.1.4 The Three Decades of Eritrean War for Independence	54
2.1.5 New Conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998 -2000)	57
2.2 Eritrean Politics.....	60
2.3 International Relations	63
2.3.1 Relations with Sudan	63
2.3.2 Relations with Djibouti	65
2.3.3 Relations with Yemen.....	66
2.3.4 Relations with the United States	66
2.3.5 Relations with the European Union	69
2.3.6 Eritrean Relations with Italy	70

2.3.7 Eritrean Relations with the United Kingdom	72
2.4 Contemporary Issues that Plague Eritrea	74
2.4.1 Human Rights and Freedom of Movement.....	74
2.4.2 National Military Service.....	76
2.4.3 Freedom of Religion	77
2.4.4 Freedom of Press	78
2.4.5 Internet in Eritrea	79
2.4.6 The International Response to Eritrea’s Human Rights Concerns	80
2.5 Eritrea’s Refugee Crisis	81
2.6 The Issue of Human Trafficking.....	83
Chapter Three - The Eritrean Diaspora.....	86
3.0 The Eritrean Diaspora	87
3.1 The Characteristics of the Eritrean Diaspora Group.....	88
3.1.1 Chronological Phases.....	88
3.1.2 Where did the Eritreans go?.....	90
3.2 Relations among the Diaspora Members	91
3.3 The Role the Internet Played in the Eritrean Diaspora	93
3.4 The Diaspora’s Attitude and Feeling Toward its Homeland	94
3.5 Remittances.....	101
3.6 Characteristics of Their Homeland	103
3.7 Characteristics of Their Host Country	109
3.8 Italy	109
3.8.1 Asylum Seeker Rights in Italy	113
3.8.2 Eritreans Living in Italy	113
3.9 The United Kingdom	116
3.9.1 Asylum Seeker Rights in the United Kingdom	119
3.9.2 Eritreans Living in the United Kingdom	119
Chapter Four - Research and Data Collection	124
4.0 Overview.....	125
4.1 Research Objectives.....	125
4.2 Methodology and Data Collection	126

4.2.1 The Questionnaire	126
4.2.2 Interviews.....	128
4.3 Research Analysis	129
4.3.1 Questionnaire answers from Eritrean Participants in Italy	129
4.3.2 Questionnaire answers from Eritrean Participants in the United Kingdom.....	138
4.4 Interviews with Eritreans Living in Italy	146
4.4.1 Interview 1	146
4.4.2 Interview 2	148
4.4.3 Interview 3	149
4.5 Interviews with Eritreans Living in the United Kingdom	151
4.5.1 Interview 1	151
4.5.2 Interview 2	152
4.5.3 Interview 3	153
4.5.4 Interview 4	154
4.5.5 Interview 5	156
4.6 General Interactions with Eritreans during my Research	157
Chapter Five - My Findings and Conclusions	160
5.0 My Findings	161
5.1 Conclusion	165
5.1.1 Eritrea.....	165
5.1.2 The Eritrean Diaspora and its Experiences	167
5.1.3 Final Words.....	168
Appendix 1- Questionnaire for Eritreans in Italy and the United Kingdom.....	169
Appendix 2 - Guiding Model for the Interviews	175
Bibliography	178
Sitography	186

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Abstract

Lo scopo della mia tesi è di analizzare ed esplorare la diaspora eritrea e in modo particolare le comunità di eritrei formatosi in Italia e in Gran Bretagna, due paesi che hanno lasciato un segno nella storia dell'Eritrea, due paesi con un passato e un presente con rilevanti flussi migratori. Nella prima parte della tesi, dopo aver definito brevemente il concetto di diaspora, per poter meglio comprendere le dinamiche che hanno portato la diaspora eritrea a verificarsi, ho cercato di descrivere in modo dettagliato la storia del paese. Nel secondo capitolo infatti mi sono soffermata ad analizzare il passato del paese, ad approfondire i fattori che hanno formato l'Eritrea contemporanea, prendendo in considerazione le relazioni con i paesi vicini e con paesi internazionali come gli Stati Uniti e l'Europa. Nella seconda parte della tesi invece, dopo aver esplorato e descritto la diaspora eritrea, il suo rapporto con la madrepatria e il rapporto con i rispettivi paesi d'accoglienza, ho svolto un lavoro di ricerca sul campo. La ricerca sul campo si è basata sulla consegna di questionari tra i membri della diaspora eritrea e su interviste di eritrei residenti rispettivamente in Italia e in Gran Bretagna. L'obiettivo era di entrare in contatto e comprendere i fattori che hanno costituito il formarsi di queste comunità all'estero, il rapporto esistente tra i membri del gruppo diasporico e infine il rapporto che la diaspora intrattiene con la madrepatria e con i rispettivi paesi d'accoglienza.

La diaspora è un concetto molto antico, anche se la sua apparizione e il suo uso nelle scienze sociali e nel panorama internazionale risale soltanto agli anni Ottanta. Gli studi e l'interesse verso questa disciplina si moltiplicarono quando ci si rese conto che il modello utilizzato precedentemente per l'integrazione e l'assimilazione dei popoli immigrati venne indicato come poco coerente. Si assistette, infatti, ad un nuovo modo di pensare ai gruppi diasporici, non più quindi da assimilare alla cultura del paese d'arrivo ma come gruppi da accettare e valorizzare. Questo nuovo modo di pensare ai gruppi diasporici si diffuse proprio nel periodo in cui concetti come frammentazione dell'identità nazionale, crisi dello Stato nazione, avvento della globalizzazione e del multiculturalismo presero il sopravvento. In realtà questo termine veniva già utilizzato in tempi antichi per riferirsi alla dispersione del popolo ebreo. Con gli anni e con l'evoluzione del concetto, il campo semantico del termine diaspora venne allargato a nuove categorie. Non più ad indicare la sola dispersione del popolo ebreo e le classiche dispersione come quella armena e greca, ma anche a designare nuovi gruppi umani come quelli italiani, cinesi, palestinesi, afro-

americani. La caratteristica etnico nazionale adottata inizialmente venne ampliata, tant'è che oggi si parla addirittura di nuovi gruppi come la diaspora della cultura, la diaspora del jazz, la diaspora islamica. Il concetto è entrato a pieno ritmo a far parte del vocabolario comune tanto da raccogliere numerose critiche in quanto definito poco preciso e ambiguo. L'ambiguità del termine viene accostata all'idea di ibrido che porta con sé il concetto di diaspora. La diaspora si contrappone al concetto di Stato-nazione in quanto omogeneo, ma allo stesso tempo viene vista come portatrice di nazionalismo.

Molti studiosi hanno cercato di concettualizzare e categorizzare questo termine. Alcune caratteristiche sono state adottate ed accettate da molti studiosi, anche se, non sempre riscontrabili in tutte le diaspora e sono le seguenti: la dispersione di un gruppo dalla propria madrepatria, definita homeland, per motivi di razzismo, guerra, espulsione, conflitti interni, ma anche per cercare occupazione. I membri della diaspora trovandosi lontani dalla propria terra, mantengono un profondo senso di identità nazionale e di solidarietà verso la homeland attraverso i continui contatti con i propri cari nel paese natale. Ciò che caratterizza un gruppo diasporico è il forte senso di comunità (occorre un NOI per formare una diaspora) e una propria consapevolezza storica. La speranza ultima un giorno di ritornare al proprio paese nativo è il fattore che differenzia la diaspora dal concetto di migrazione. Una caratteristica che non sempre si rileva nella diaspora, ma che rappresenta la diaspora, è il possibile rapporto conflittuale con il paese d'accoglienza. Infatti spesso il rapporto conflittuale viene trasformato in rapporto di collaborazione e la creatività della diaspora si sviluppa e manifesta. Nella mia tesi ho cercato di esplorare la diaspora eritrea nei rispettivi paesi d'accoglienza: l'Italia e Gran Bretagna prendendo in considerazione questa idea di diaspora e attraverso il paradigma presentato dalla studiosa Judith Shuval dove viene rappresentato il complicato rapporto tra diaspora, madrepatria e paese d'accoglienza.

Prima di passare all'esplorazione della diaspora eritrea, nella tesi mi sono soffermata ad analizzare il passato e il presente dell'Eritrea.

Il 24 Maggio 2012 l'Eritrea ha celebrato il ventunesimo anniversario di indipendenza, ma cosa si sa realmente oggi di questo paese sentito così lontano, ma allo stesso tempo così vicino? L'Eritrea oggi è considerata come una delle peggiori dittature al mondo e ogni discorso al riguardo potrebbe sembrare inflessibile o con il puro scopo di screditare un paese dalle mille difficoltà. Un paese che è sì è sempre sentito ignorato dalle potenze internazionali e che da solo ha dovuto combattere sanguinose battaglie per farsi

riconoscere quel diritto che dai paesi democratici viene riconosciuto come “diritto all'autodeterminazione”.

L'Eritrea più che mai oggi rappresenta un elemento di forte preoccupazione sia a livello mondiale che regionale, tanto da essere continuamente sotto il mirino dell'occhio vigile delle potenze internazionali per questioni come le continue violazioni dei diritti umani, i possibili finanziamenti a gruppi terroristi somali, e a livello regionale per le possibili instabilità con i paesi vicini. I continui appelli da parte di Organizzazioni Non Governative (ONG) e da parte dell'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite (ONU) negli ultimi anni non hanno fermato il governo eritreo nella sua politica, definita dallo stesso Presidente Isaias Afewerki di “self reliance”, anzi, sono stati completamente ignorati dalle autorità eritree.

L'Eritrea si trova in una posizione geopolitica molto interessante: infatti si estende su 125,320 km² con 1,200 km sulla costa del Mar Rosso. E' la regione più giovane formata nel Corno d'Africa ed è un paese caratterizzato da importanti colonizzazioni, estenuanti guerre e continui flussi migratori. I primi colonizzatori furono proprio gli italiani che rimasero nel paese fino al 1941. Furono poi seguiti dall'occupazione inglese che si stabilì nella regione fino al 1952, quando, le Nazioni Unite decisero di federare l'Eritrea al paese vicino l'Etiopia come risultato della “non soluzione sul caso Eritrea” tra le potenze internazionali. Dopo circa dieci anni dalla federazione, l'imperatore etiope Haile Selassie, decise di annettere forzatamente l'Eritrea come quattordicesima provincia al regno etiope, innescando la miccia per lo scontro, l'inizio della più sanguinosa battaglia combattuta dall'Eritrea “la guerra dei 30 anni”. La lunga guerra conclusasi nel 1991 con la richiesta di indipendenza da parte del popolo eritreo venne riconosciuta nel 1993. Il paese, dopo la guerra, era in uno stato di carestia profonda, l'economia e le infrastrutture non esistenti e da non dimenticare le milioni di vite perse sul campo di battaglia, anche in senso metaforico, poiché abbandonarono il paese. L'aspettativa e il sogno di molti era che, dopo l'indipendenza, il paese avrebbe perseguito una strada verso il successo e la crescita, e invece a distanza di anni la situazione è peggiorata.

Nel 1998 una nuova guerra di confine nella città di Badme ha riportato il paese in lotta armata contro l'Etiopia, conclusosi nel 2000 con un accordo di Algeri appoggiato dalle Nazioni Unite. Nonostante l'accordo sottoscritto da entrambi i paesi, oggi nella realtà i due paesi sono ancora in disputa. Ad oggi si può dire che non vi è ancora la parola fine al conflitto. Il problema dell'Eritrea in termini di conflitti non è relegato solo al conosciuto vicino, al nemico di sempre l'Etiopia, ma anche ad altri paesi come il Gibuti, Sudan e lo Yemen.

Il governo, dopo l'indipendenza, invece di occuparsi della ricostruzione del paese, si è occupato a far piazza pulita di tutti i possibili disertori e oppositori del regime. Di regime si parla nei casi in cui un paese come l'Eritrea viene considerato come una delle più disumane e opprimenti dittature al mondo. Lo stesso presidente Isaias Aferwerki, ignorando i moniti internazionali, ha continuato ad attuare una politica di repressione su tutto ciò che veniva considerato dal governo e dal partito "contro la stabilità del paese", per cui su tutto ciò che faceva opposizione. Da molte ONG viene definito proprio "Stato-prigione", a sottolineare l'esistenza di prigionieri sparse nel paese e a descrivere i continui diritti umani violati e i continui abusi perpetuati. Un clamoroso episodio avvenuto l'8 Settembre del 2001 meglio esemplifica la situazione in cui versa il paese oggi. Il presidente Aferwerki ha deciso, con il suo partito People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), di incarcerare tutti coloro che avevano firmato una petizione contro il governo dove si chiedeva di far rispettare la Costituzione del 1997 e dove si chiedeva il rispetto delle libertà umane. In generale le vittime del regime sono e sono sempre state tutte quelle persone che hanno osato sfidare il potere. A farne le spese non sono stati solo i giornalisti, gli studiosi, ma anche le stesse famiglie che per anni non hanno avuto la possibilità di vedere o di parlare con i propri cari perché incarcerati in "incommunicado". Non solo le ONG hanno espresso preoccupazione per i diritti umani violati nel paese, ma recentemente anche il Parlamento Europeo. Tutti i partiti al di fuori del PFDJ, capeggiato dal presidente, sono stati banditi, non esiste la libertà di espressione, né la libertà di religione. La Costituzione del 1997 non è stata più rinnovata e le elezioni del 2001 sono state posticipate a data da definirsi.

Non è la sola situazione politica nel paese a preoccupare, ma è l'economia il settore più a rischio e con esso la popolazione civile. Il Capo di Stato Isaias Aferwerki, sicuro del suo potere, dopo la liberazione del paese ha deciso di militarizzare la società investendo tutto sulla forza bellica, imponendo obblighi di leva militare di lunga durata alla popolazione indistintamente dal sesso e ignorando la crisi economica che stava investendo il paese. Inoltre le autorità eritree hanno gradualmente ridimensionato il livello di apertura al commercio estero, portando l'economia in un baratro senza fine. Ancora oggi quasi l'80% della popolazione vive di agricoltura di sussistenza con un reddito pro capite molto basso. Il prodotto interno lordo è uno dei più bassi nella scala mondiale, con una stima nel 2010 di \$700 pro capite. Il controllo stretto da parte del governo e del partito su ogni sfera del paese non migliora di certo la situazione. Le uniche fonti di entrata sono le rimesse dei cittadini eritrei all'estero e gli aiuti internazionali.

Negli ultimi cinquant'anni si è assistito ad un aumento delle comunità eritree all'estero davvero notevole. Quando si parla di diaspora eritrea si fa riferimento principalmente alle ondate migratorie avvenute agli inizi degli anni Settanta quando la guerra dei 30 anni era all'apice. Tutte le migrazioni avvenute tra il 1950 e 1960 non vengono considerate come parte integrante della diaspora in quanto non numericamente rilevanti e per motivi di istruzione o in cerca di lavoro. Con l'aggravarsi della situazione di violenza e di carestia nel paese nel corso degli anni Settanta si è assistito alla formazione e al consolidamento della diaspora eritrea all'estero. E' stato stimato che circa 750.000 eritrei abbandonarono il paese solo nel corso degli anni Settanta ed Ottanta. Furono proprio questi gruppi migratori a formare le prime comunità all'estero con forte identità nazionale e senso di solidarietà. Gli stessi gruppi diasporici che, attraverso aiuti economici e morali, supportarono il fronte Eritrean's People Liberation Front (EPLF) per raggiungere l'indipendenza dell'Eritrea. La diaspora ha giocato un ruolo importantissimo non solo nel supportare il fronte nella guerra contro il regime etiopico, anche nel progetto di ricostruzione del paese dopo l'indipendenza. Lo ha fatto inviando rimesse, investendo capitali, attraverso azioni di lobbying e promozione dei diritti umani ha fatto in modo che tutto il mondo conoscesse la situazione politica ed economica dell'Eritrea. E' stato più volte riconosciuto dallo stesso fronte come l'indipendenza dell'Eritrea è stata raggiunta in parte grazie al supporto della diaspora.

Dopo l'indipendenza il sogno di molti eritrei nel mondo era quello di rientrare nel paese liberato, ma nel giro di poco le aspettative furono infrante. Il governo attuò politiche che portarono non solo l'Eritrea in ginocchio, ma anche a nuove ondate migratorie. Il paese ha visto negli anni migrazioni non solo nel vicino Sudan e nel Medio Oriente, ma anche in Europa e in America.

Oggi l'Eritrea viene descritta come un paese di repressione, guerra ed esodo. Tutti coloro che lasciano il paese descrivono una situazione di fame, povertà e oppressione. La diaspora, che negli anni scorsi era sempre stata unita e ferma nel sostenere la propria homeland, oggi è sempre più frammentata e divisa. Molti che in passato sostenevano il governo oggi prendono le distanze, chi già in passato si opponeva al governo oggi organizza manifestazioni di protesta e di informazione per fermare la politica attuata dal governo negli anni.

Dopo aver descritto la diaspora eritrea attraverso la letteratura, la mia ricerca sul campo si è concentrata su due paesi d'accoglienza rispettivamente l'Italia e la Gran Bretagna. La ricerca si è basata su due strategie: attraverso la distribuzione di questionari per poter meglio raccogliere informazioni e pareri tra i membri delle comunità eritree, e attraverso le interviste per raccontare storie di vita. Ho cercato di esplorare i motivi che hanno spinto gli eritrei a scegliere questi paesi, le emozioni e le angosce che vivono oggi all'estero, il tipo di relazione che intrattengono con la madrepatria e con i rispettivi paesi d'accoglienza. Ciò che ho riscontrato attraverso le interazioni e dai dati raccolti è un profondo senso di sfiducia e ritrosia da parte di tutti gli eritrei verso tutti coloro che non fanno parte della loro comunità. Questo stesso senso di sfiducia viene diretto anche al governo che ad oggi viene costantemente giudicato sotto i limiti internazionali sia a livello economico che umano. Oltre a questo senso di diffidenza ho rilevato un forte sentimento di identità nazionale e la voglia di molti eritrei di ritornare nel paese liberato ed amato, se non nell'immediata realtà almeno nel "sogno".

Introduction

Eritrea, the youngest nation in Africa, is a country located in the East of Africa, in a region commonly known as the Horn of Africa.¹ A country that has a history filled with years of colonisation and years of war. A previous Italian colony, the country was under the rule of the Italians until 1941, after which Eritrea was then occupied by the British.² In 1952 the United Nations decided to establish the country as an independent entity federated with its neighbour Ethiopia, as a concession between Ethiopian claims for sovereignty and Eritrean ambitions for independence. However, 10 years after the United Nation's decision of federation, the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, decided to seize Eritrea and adopt it as an Ethiopian province, thereby triggering a 30 year war.³ In 1993 Eritrea gained recognised independence after its long and bloody war with its southern neighbour Ethiopia, a war that left the country in a fragile and delicate state, and left its government with the enormous task of rebuilding its infrastructure and of transforming its economy.⁴ In 1998 border disputes in the Eritrean town of Badme culminated into a further 2 year war with Ethiopia. The conflict ended with a United Nations managed peace deal in June 2000.⁵ Although both countries have signed a United Nations peace deal, unresolved border disputes still remain among the two nations.

Together with the events of colonisation and history of war, much of Eritrea's history and present is characterised by the movement of its people. Over the last 50 years, this Eritrean populous in exile has formed communities and a life abroad, and through those years developed into a diaspora that has influenced and played important roles in Eritrea's political and economic history. The Eritrean diaspora is a relatively young diaspora, with the first smaller migration flow occurring during the 1950s and 1960s, for reasons of education and work. But it was during its thirty year war with Ethiopia that we saw the first significant wave of Eritreans leaving the country. On-going violence and poverty in the country created nearly 750,000 during this period.⁶ The first group of Eritrean networks and communities abroad were made up of Eritreans who left before the 30 year

¹ Tesfagiorgis Mussie G., *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, California, ABC CLIO-LLP, (2011), p xix.

² *Ibid.*, p.56.

³ A.G. Armstrong, *History of Eritrea*, Amazon Kindle E-book, (2012), pp. 13-15.

⁴ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, p. 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-91.

⁶ David O'Kane and Tricia Redeker Hepner, *Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, Berghahn Books, (2009), p. 118.

war and those who fled during and after the war. The Eritrean communities overseas worked together with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), to fight against the Ethiopian regime. The diaspora's contributions were critical in supporting the EPLF's war efforts against Ethiopia. The diaspora raised money and aid for the EPLF at the time. The diaspora was also instrumental in raising awareness of the war situation in their country, and raising support from others across the globe. It was thanks in part to the efforts and support of the Eritrean diaspora that Eritrean independence was achieved.⁷

When the war for liberation was over, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the secessionist movement which fought against the Ethiopian regime, renamed its party to the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). This party then formed as the Eritrean government, with Isaias Afewerki as its leader and as Eritrea's president.⁸ During the post-independence years and especially after 1998, the Eritrean government introduced and imposed new policies and strategies that have affected Eritreans the world over. Eritrea's independence promised much for the future of the country, but instead has left many saying it has brought repression, war, and international exile status. The restrictive and repressive policies introduced by the Eritrean government have left many Human Rights organisations criticising their actions. The policies have turned Eritrea and its government into one of the most repressive and authoritarian regimes in the world. Many Eritrean refugees who have fled the country in the last 10 years have described an environment of famine, poverty and oppression.⁹ Since 2000 the Eritrean diaspora has become much more fractured and divided compared to the earlier years. Some diaspora members that once supported their homeland and government are now showing signs of distancing themselves from this regime. Some members have even organised protests against the Eritrean government and are raising awareness to bring a stop to their repressive policies. With these continued oppressive policies which have led to human rights violations, Eritrea has seen many of its people flee to neighbouring countries such as Sudan, and Europe, where from there many have sought refuge in Italy and the United Kingdom.¹⁰ My research will focus on the Eritrean communities that have been created in Italy and the United Kingdom,

⁷ Schmitz-Pranghe Clara. Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea. 07 April 2012. <http://www.diaspeace.org/D12_WP3_Fischer_Final.pdf>. pp. 13-15.

⁸ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), pp. 78-79.

⁹ Eritrea: The Siege State. Africa Report N.163. 07 April 2012. <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/ethiopia-eritrea/163%20Eritrea%20The%20Siege%20State.pdf>>. p. 26.

¹⁰ Schmitz-Pranghe Clara. Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea, p. 5.

and compare the two host countries in terms of diaspora and community feeling and support. The two European countries both have connections to Eritrea's past and both have a rich immigration history. Recent Eritrean settlement trends have shown that many Eritreans are seeking asylum in Italy and the UK, and part of my research will analyse and look into the reasons why they have chosen these particular host countries. With the reports of a repressive and authoritarian regime back home, my research will also look at the diaspora's relationship with their home country. Together with the topics of the Eritrean diaspora, my thesis will also look at the country of Eritrea, its history and past, and its development and evolution through the years. My research will also contain information about the Eritrean government, and its relationship with the outside world. Lastly my thesis contains my own personal field research, which is composed of data obtained from questionnaires and interviews, which in turn provide the views and experiences of Eritreans living in Italy and the United Kingdom and give an insight into the topics I have outlined.

Chapter One

Diaspora – An Overview

1.0 What Does the Term “Diaspora” Mean in Today’s World

The definition of the term diaspora goes back very far in history and was used as early as the fifth century B.C. The modern term of the word started to make an appearance in literature and social studies during the second half of the twentieth century. Most early discussions of the term diaspora cite paradigmatic cases, and before the 1970’s dictionaries defined the term by referencing the Jewish diaspora. Today if we pick up a dictionary the definition of the term diaspora is very much different to how it once was. For example, the Oxford English dictionary defines the term diaspora as:

“the dispersion or spread of any people from their original homeland, and as people who have spread or been dispersed from their homeland.”¹¹

If we were to also look at the definition that Webster’s English dictionary gives of the term diaspora, it defines a diaspora to be:

“the forcing of any people or ethnic population to leave their traditional homelands, the dispersal of such people, and the ensuing developments in their culture.”¹²

In essence the concept of a diaspora has changed and now a basic and broad definition of the term can simply come to mean the movement of a large group of people from their home country to other countries.

1.1 Origins and Development of the Term

The origin of the word Diaspora came from the Greek verb διασπείρω (diaspeirō). The Greek word διασπείρω (diaspeirō) comes from the translation of the Hebrew bible into Greek by the legendary seventy Jewish scholars of Alexandria in the third century B.C. Many believed that the word diaspeirō was the translation of the Jewish word Galut, which meant exile, and which referred to the historic dispersion of the Jews who were taken as captives to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., but this has now been found to be incorrect. Historians have since found that the word διασπείρω (Diaspora) was used in the Jewish bible to describe the threat of dispersion Jews may face if they failed to

¹¹ *Oxford Dictionaries online*. 03 February 2012.
<<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/diaspora?q=diaspora>>.

¹² *Webster’s Online Dictionary*. 03 February 2012.
<<http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definitions/diaspora>>.

obey God's will and not to label the Jewish people who were exiled by the Babylonians. It was only later in Jewish tradition that the term "Diaspora" then came to mean exile and described the scattering and dispersion of the Jewish people.¹³

It is also worth noting that many scholars insist that when the word diaspora is capitalised (Diaspora), it should refer explicitly to the Jewish Diaspora, while when the word is uncapitalised (diaspora) the word can be used to describe populations of other origins and ethnicities that leave their homeland voluntarily or involuntarily, and move to other countries.¹⁴

Although the displacement of people and cultures dates back to as far as when the Jewish people were first exiled from the land of Israel, the term diaspora has only recently been used in social sciences. The reason the adoption of the term diaspora was slow to be realised is explained well by Judith Shuval, she highlights that:

*"before the 1960's, immigrant groups were generally expected to shed their ethnic identity and assimilate to local norms. Groups that were thought unable to do this weren't admitted, eg. Chinese to Canada, non-Whites to Australia"*¹⁵.

During 1980's the concept of diaspora began to grow and expand, thanks partly to John Armstrong, who in 1976 in his article "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas" published in *The American Political Sciences Review* of 1976. He proposed one of the first classifications and theorisations of the term diaspora by describing ethnic groups with a sense of community who had fled their homeland and were now located in a foreign land.¹⁶ John Armstrong's usage of the term diaspora was taken up by various other authors within sociological and political sciences. But on the other hand not all scholars agreed with John Armstrong's use of the term diaspora. Researchers such as Alain Medam and James Clifford expressed their concern in the concept that described the term as "migratory phenomena characterised by the dispersion of populations originating from one national space into several other host countries".¹⁷ James Clifford sustains that:

"We should be able to recognise the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora without making that history a definitive model. Jewish (and Greek and

¹³ Stephane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, California, University of California Press, (2008), p. 5.

¹⁴ *Diasporas Some Conceptual Consideration*. 03 February 2012.
<<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~fredr/diacon.htm>>.

¹⁵ Judith Shuval, "Diaspora Migration: Definitional ambiguities and a theoretical paradigm", in *International Migration*, Vol. 38, Issue 5, (2002), pp. 41–56.

¹⁶ J.A. Armstrong, "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas", in *The American Political Sciences*, Vol. 70, Issue 2, (1976), pp. 393-408.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 393-408.

Amernian) diasporas can be taken as non-normative starting points for a discourse that is travelling or hybridizing in a new global conditions”¹⁸.

The topic of diasporas and their theological meaning brings about a fierce debate among scholars, each having their own views on what qualifies as a diaspora.

It was William Safran in 1991 in his article “Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return” who was one of the first to put together a detailed list of guidelines that would categorise a diaspora. He defined the following characteristics in order to classify a diaspora:

- They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original ‘center’ to two or more foreign regions.
- They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland including location, history, and achievements.
- They believe that they are not and perhaps can never be fully accepted in their host society and so remain partly separate.
- Their ancestral home is idealised and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return.
- They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity.
- They continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship.¹⁹

William Safran’s definition uses the characteristics of the Jewish Diaspora, using the ideas of trauma, exile and nostalgia to help define the characteristics of a diaspora. Safran believes these shared characteristics of the Jewish Diaspora provide ideal and typical aspects of a diaspora. Safran’s list has come under considerable criticism from diaspora study scholars, who have highlighted the exclusionary tendency of the list, and its exclusive use of the Jewish diaspora in helping him define his guidelines²⁰.

Since William Safran’s classification, other scholars have used his guidelines and adapted and added other characteristics to more clearly define a diaspora. Robin Cohen, a scholar

¹⁸ James Clifford, “Diasporas”, in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol 9, Issue 3, (1994), pp. 302–338.

¹⁹ William Safran, *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return*, in *Migration, Diasporas And Transnationalism*, Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (eds), UK, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, (1999), pp. 364-380.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 364-380.

and professor at Oxford University, uses William Safran's definition of a diaspora, but adds other characteristics to better define the term diaspora.

According to Robin Cohen, normally diasporas display several of the following features:

- Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically.
- Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions.
- A collective memory and myth about the homeland.
- An idealisation of the supposed ancestral home.
- A return movement.
- A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time.
- A troubled relationship with host societies.
- A sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries.
- And the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries.²¹

Both William Safran's and Robin Cohen's definitions of a diaspora centre and focus on a real or symbolic homeland, with Cohen's guidelines providing a more inclusive definition of characteristics. Though the two lists help a person to begin thinking about a diaspora, some scholars have continued to argue that the features characterised by Safran and Cohen do not provide a valid guideline for every type of diaspora. For example, James Clifford is just one of many scholars who believe there need not be a construction of collective suffering and the urge to return to a national homeland, in order for there to exist a diaspora, points that William Safran expressly listed.²² If we look at James Clifford's definition, he is of the opinion that a diaspora,

“involves dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from home (and in this it is different from exile, with its frequently individualistic focus)...Diasporist discourses reflect the sense of being part of an on-going transnational network that includes the homeland, not as something simply left behind, but as a place of attachment in a contrapuntal modernity.”²³

²¹ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*, London, UCL Press and Seattle: University of Washington Press, (1997), p. 26.

²² Clifford, “Diasporas”, in *Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 302–338.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 302-338.

The main aspect of James Clifford's definition of a diaspora, which differs from the definition of William Safran and Robin Cohen, is the understanding surrounding the issue of home and return. He says that the homeland does not necessarily have to be seen as a place of return for members of a diaspora, and that a diaspora can exist in a host country, with members of that diaspora having no intention of returning. Instead the homeland is remembered and understood as a common base for diverse communities to connect.²⁴

If we take the opinion of Gabriel Sheffer, another scholar in the studies of Diaspora and Diaspora politics, we can see that he also shares the views of Safran and Cohen when trying to define the term diaspora. According to Sheffer the term diaspora if taken from a broader perspective can be defined as:

*“Diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands”.*²⁵

With the differing definitions of a diaspora and with the differing of opinions among many scholars and academics alike, one thing is certain, and that is that in the last 20 years diaspora studies have evolved greatly, and the word diaspora has evolved and entered in the vocabulary of international and sociological politics the world over. And even with the objections from some academics, the term diaspora has nevertheless been used in the last two decades to describe the displacement of any population that finds itself for reasons of expulsion, slavery, racism, or war, especially nationalist conflict separated from its country, and usually its people have a hope, or at least a desire, to return to their homeland at some point, if the "homeland" still exists in any meaningful sense.

1.2 The Different Types of Diaspora

As has become clear from the definition and evolution of the term diaspora, there is still some ambiguity surrounding the topic of diaspora studies. Together with the characteristics which define the term diaspora, many authors and scholars have tried to define diasporas into different types, to better help clarify the term.

In the chapter “Diaspora and Transnationalism, Concepts, Theories and Methods” Michel Bruneau describes four different types of diaspora:

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 302-338.

²⁵ Gabriel Sheffer, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, New York, Saint Martin Press, (1996), p. 3.

- The Entrepreneurial Diasporas: The main elements in this type of diaspora are centred on commercial and enterprise activities. Examples of this type of diaspora are the Chinese, Indian and Lebanese.
- The Religious Diasporas: In this type of diaspora religion is monotheistic and is associated with a specific language. Their places of prayer, such as church and synagogue are constitutive places for these diaspora communities. Examples of this type of diaspora are the Jewish, Greek and Armenian.
- The Political Diasporas: This type of diaspora is organised around a political focus. The aspiration of the diaspora is to build a nation-state, because their original territory is occupied by a foreign power. An example is the Palestinian diaspora.
- Race and Culture: This type of diaspora centres on a racial and cultural pole. Here the focus is on defining a shared identity. For example the black diaspora.²⁶

Michel Bruneau defines different types of diasporas based on community link and organisational structure. But others such as Gabriel Sheffer have added and distinguished diasporas in a different manner. In Gabriel Sheffer's book "Diaspora Politics, at Home Abroad" he believes that an ethno-national diaspora can be classified by two significant criteria: first by their age, and secondly by the status of their respective homeland. He proposes to operate a distinction between the age of a diaspora, categorising them in the following manner; Historical, Modern and Incipient. The Historical diasporas he explains are those that emerged during the antiquity and middle ages. And he describes the diasporas that formed after the seventeenth century and up to the nineteenth century, as the modern diasporas. Finally the diasporas after World War II and those that are still being formed up to the present day are known as incipient diasporas.²⁷

Sheffer's other criteria regarding the status of their homeland; he suggests that diasporas can be classified as stateless or state-linked.²⁸ He defines a stateless diaspora as a diaspora that doesn't have a connection with any state and/or do not have a national territory that is regarded as their homeland. He goes on to explain that stateless diasporas typically do not desire to leave their past behind and carry on being concerned about the homeland politics,

²⁶ Michel Bruneau, Diasporas, transnational spaces and communities, in *Diaspora and Transnationalism, Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Rainer Bauböck & Thomas Faist (eds), Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, (2010), pp. 35-51.

²⁷ Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, (2003), pp. 73-75.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-160.

and do little to integrate and connect with the host country they find themselves in. Also stateless diasporas demonstrate much higher political activity within their communities as compared to other types of diasporas. An example of a stateless diaspora, is the Kurdish diaspora, probably the largest recognised stateless diaspora in the world. On the other hand, a state-linked diaspora is a diaspora that does have a connection with its state or host country, and is connected to societies of their ethnic origin that constitute a majority in established states. An example of a state-linked diaspora, is the Jewish diaspora, though it has been debated that it has only lately become recognised as a state-linked diaspora.

The members of both stateless and state-linked diasporas can be both proletarian or capitalist, and the organisation of these types can be well organised, badly organised or loosely organised²⁹.

An alternative to Gabriel Sheffer's typology of diasporas, which centred on the territorial and age aspects in particular, is that of Robin Cohen's typology. In his book "Global Diasporas, 1997" he proposes a typology that is set up on realistic observations, and defines the different types of diaspora as:

- Victim Diaspora: In this type of diaspora the members experience a tragic event. An historic example of this type is the Armenian diaspora, where in the 1915-1916 they were massacred by the Ottoman Empire and driven out of their country.
- Labour and imperial diaspora: This can be seen as a transitional type of diaspora. In a labour diaspora members leave their homeland in search of work or to escape the poor conditions they currently find themselves in. While an Imperial diaspora involves members moving and colonising a land for gains, such as the minerals and other riches. An example of a labour type diaspora would be the Indian diaspora. While an example of an imperial diaspora, could be the British diaspora to India.
- Trade diasporas: Trading diaspora can be seen as a lasting and perhaps innovatory model of social organisation that maybe advantageous to the diaspora itself, its homeland and its place of settlement. The Chinese and Lebanese diasporas are the best examples of this type.
- Cultural diaspora: This type of diaspora we can see how most of the members of this group, are intellectuals, writers, very active in the public sphere. The diaspora

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 148-160.

has a high cultural dimension, open especially to the notion of mixed cultures. The Caribbean case is an example of a cultural diaspora.

- Global-deterritorialized diasporas: In this type of diaspora, the use of globalisation has enhanced the practical, economical and effective role of a diaspora. In particular they use globalisation as an aid for socio-organisation and communication.³⁰

1.3 Diasporas and Transnationalism in the Age of Globalisation

Diaspora theory and diaspora studies help to identify and categorise the dynamics of international migration, but there are other elements that make up the migration concept; in particular I am referring to the concepts of transnationalism and globalisation.

Diaspora and transnationalism are widely used concepts in academic as well as political discourses. Although originally referring to quite different phenomena, they increasingly overlap today. Moreoften the theory of diaspora and transnationalism are sometimes used interchangeably, even though the two terms reflect slightly different philosophies. Both concepts are used to help piece together implications that derive from the movement of people and groups, as well as ideas and objects, across the world today; but we mustn't confuse one for the other. To better understand what makes them different, we must first understand the term 'transnationalism' in greater detail. If we take the view of Basch, Faist and Guarnizo, respected scholars in this field we can see that, Basch defines transnationalism as:

*“transnationalism is the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders”.*³¹

Also, Faist argues that:

“Whether we talk of transnational social spaces, transnational social fields, transnationalism or transnational social formations in international migration systems, we

³⁰ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*, 2nd Edition, New York, Routledge Publishing, (2008), p.18.

³¹ Linda Green Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, Cristina Szanton Blanc., *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states*, Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach, (1994), p. 23.

*usually refer to sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders across multiple nation-states, ranging from little to highly institutionalized forms”.*³²

Similarly, Guarnizo considers transnationalism as:

*“the rise of a new class of immigrants, economic entrepreneurs or political activists who conduct cross-border activities on a regular basis that lies at the core of the phenomenon that this field seeks to highlight and investigate”*³³.

Going by the interpretation of Basch, Faist and Guarnizo, it is clear that the key feature of transnationalism is the occurrence of regular and frequent cross border activities, which encompasses not just the movement of people, but of ideas of citizenship, of technology, of forms of multinational governance, of modes of political organization, of differing notions of sovereignty, and of the impulses of markets³⁴. How, then, do we differentiate between diaspora and transnationalism? Some scholars and academics consider diasporas as a subset of transnationalism. As Levitt puts it,

*“transnational communities are building blocks of potential diasporas that may or may not take shape. Diasporas form out of the transnational communities spanning sending and receiving countries and out of the real or imagined connections between migrants from a particular homeland who are scattered throughout the world”.*³⁵

While a diaspora can sometimes be accurately described as transnationalist, it is not necessarily always related with transnationalism. Essentially speaking we can say that a diaspora is a human phenomenon, while transnationalism on the other hand can include the movements of information, goods, products, capital across political borders. Also we know that in order to be transnational a sustained regularity of cross border activities must be kept, therefore not all diaspora communities can be classified as transnational. For example, groups abroad who identify themselves as belonging to a diaspora might be transnational migrants if they share a sense of belonging to a homeland they are not living in, and if they have active transnational activities with their homeland. However, not all

³²Thomas Faist, *Diaspora and transnationalism: What kind of dance partners?*, in *Diaspora and Transnationalism, Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Rainer Bauböck & Thomas Faist (eds), Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, (2010), pp. 9-35.

³³ Luis E. Guarnizo, Alejandro Portes, and William J. Haller, "Assimilation and Transnationalism: Determinants of Transnational Political Action among Contemporary Immigrants", in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.108, (2003), pp. 11-48.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-48.

³⁵ Peggy Levitt, "Transnational Migration: Taking Stock and Future Directions", in *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, Issue 3, (2001), pp. 202-203.

diasporas have continuing transnational relations as some diasporas have ceased to maintain homeland linkages. From this it can therefore be inferred that if a diaspora has lost connection with its homeland, then that diaspora cannot be defined as transnational, but further still if a diaspora has lost its link to its home country it surely cannot be defined as a diaspora either. Another aspect that can be seen as a differentiator between a diaspora and transnationalism are the reasons for the migration. People with transnationalist lives make the move because of financial or advantageous reasons and therefore make the move because they have taken a voluntary decision to migrate, while a diaspora on the other hand can be both voluntary and involuntary.³⁶

In today's contemporary world the process of globalisation is challenging the traditional ways in which migration and ethnic relations have been conceptualised, it has had a large bearing on the way modern diasporas have been able to emerge and exist. But what is globalisation? In its simplest form, globalisation can be defined as the expansion of global relationships, culture, people and economic activity. But one of the more widely used definitions of the term is that of Anthony Giddens, who described globalisation as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa".³⁷ If we delve deeper we can say that globalisation may also be defined as a social process in which the constraints of geography on the social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding.³⁸ International migration and new technological developments have made various global, transnational social relations possible. The connection between Globalisation and diasporas is maybe best explained by Robin Cohen who highlights in his book "Global Diasporas, An Introduction" that there are five elements of Globalisation that have a connection on the studies of diaspora.

- A world economy with quicker and denser transactions between its subsectors due to better communications, cheaper transport, a new international division of labour, the activities of transnational corporations and the effects of liberal trade and capital-flow policies;

³⁶ Cultural Anthropology/Globalization and Migration. 05 February 2012.

<http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Cultural_Anthropology/Globalization_and_Migration>.

³⁷ Anthony Giddens and Will Hutton, *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*, London, Vintage publishing, (2002), p. 64.

³⁸ Waters Malcom, *Globalization (Key ideas)* 2nd edition, London, Routledge publishing, (2001), p. 5.

- Forms of international migration that emphasize contractual relationships, family visits, intermittent stays abroad and sojourning, as opposed to permanent settlement and the exclusive adoption of the citizenship of a destination country.
- The development of “global cities” in response to the intensification of transactions and interactions between the different segments of the world economy and their concentration in certain cities whose significance resides more in their global, rather than in their national roles.
- The creation of cosmopolitan and local cultures promoting or reacting to globalisation.
- And a deterritorialisation of social identity challenging the hegemonising nationstates’ claim to make an exclusive citizenship a defining focus of allegiance and fidelity in favour of overlapping, permeable and multiple forms of identification.³⁹

Global culture and globalisation in the last 20 years has seen the rise of sustained and advanced communication technologies, which have provided a means of accelerated transfer of information across boundaries and cultures. This shift in technological advancement, and the fact that open borders, mobile job markets, international division of labour, and increased accessibility of modern means of transportation, have all helped in keeping on-going communication and contact of immigrants with their countries of origin. With the increase in globalisation and with frontiers more accessible than ever, immigrants are less contained inside the physical and cultural boundaries of their host country.⁴⁰

Each of these aspects of globalisation and because of the rise of technology in global culture has in different ways, opened up new opportunities for diasporas to exist, continue to exist and to keep growing.

1.4 What makes up a Diaspora?

During the examination of diaspora theory it has been apparent that within many of the conceptual views there are three parts that make up the puzzle of a diaspora. These three

³⁹ Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*, p. 157.

⁴⁰ Hossen M. Anwar, “Economic Globalization: An Episode in Cultural Homogenization?” in *Global Media Journal*, Vol. 7, Issue 13, (2008), Canada, Carleton University, pp. 3-10.

pieces are: “The diaspora group itself, the host society and the homeland that may be real or virtual”⁴¹. These three parts are often referred to as the actors of a diaspora. The triangular relationship between these three actors is complex and multifaceted, but if we take a general view we can see the following between the relationships.

1.5 The Diaspora and Homeland relationship

The relationship between the diaspora and its homeland is often uncertain and not clear. There are a number of reasons for diasporas and their members to maintain a relationship with their homeland, but in the same way there are also strong reasons for the homeland to maintain connections with diasporas. There are many ways in which diasporas are able to maintain strong relations with their homeland, for example through tourism, telecommunication, trade (nostalgic), investments, transmission of monetary remittances and interest in homeland policies.⁴² One particular common tie that encourages diaspora participation in homeland political affairs is that of emotional attachment and loyalty to their native land.⁴³ This is particularly true of diasporas that form from civil conflict in their homeland. These diasporas are more inclined to keep their attachments to their homeland and give it a symbolic importance. As Vertovec explains,

“Belonging to diaspora entails a consciousness of, or emotional attachment to, commonly claimed origins and cultural attributes associated with them. Such origins and attributes may emphasize ethno-linguistic, regional, religious, national or other features. Concerns for homeland developments, and the plight of co-diaspora members in other parts of the world flow from this consciousness and emotional attachment”.⁴⁴

On top of this, the diaspora often maintains a desire to return back to their homeland. This desire of returning back to their homeland creates a frequent connection with homeland affairs and interest in homeland policies. Their concerns in the homeland’s policies stems from a longing to create a secure and safe land to which they can return and re-create a life. But, this is not necessarily always true, since some diasporas feel frightened to return

⁴¹ Shuval, “Diaspora Migration: Definitional ambiguities and a theoretical paradigm”, pp. 41-56.

⁴² Ionescu Dina. Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policymakers. 06 February 2012.

<http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/published_docs/serial_publication_s/mrs26%20interior.pdf>. p.23

⁴³ Safran, *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return*, pp. 83-99.

⁴⁴ Steven Vertovec, “The political importance of diasporas”, Issue 13 of COMPAS working papers, University of Oxford, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, Publisher Centre on Migration, Policy & Society, (2005), p. 2.

to their homeland as they see the homeland as the cause of their problems and the cause of their separation from family and friends. Jolle Demmers a scholar in the field of political diasporas explains that this feeling of uncertainty comes from the following,

“the dilemma of wanting to return home and not wanting to give up relatively secure future, which creates a fear for peace among diaspora communities. Peace can take away one’s moral justification to live abroad.”⁴⁵

What is certain from what has been written and studied on a diaspora’s and a homeland’s relationship is that often a diaspora’s interest and priorities may not coincide with the policies of homeland state policy makers. The homeland’s relationship with a diaspora should not be thought as static, but instead very much be considered as dynamic. Many factors such as change in governmental power, changes in global dynamics and changes in homeland and host land relationships, can lead to a homelands perception of the diaspora changing. Jolle Demmers supports this view and argues that,

“diasporas and homeland discourses of war and peace play different roles, and are at times directed at different constituencies, audiences and powers. The different priorities, functions and meanings assigned to the homeland by diaspora versus homeland actors can lead to tensions over war and peace policies.”⁴⁶

Jolle Demmers also argues that the power of balance between a diaspora and a homeland depends on several factors such as monetary flows, the relative strength of parties, political lobbies and resources. In many respects the relationship of power between a diaspora and a homeland can depend on how much the homeland needs a diaspora’s resources. Again it can be argued that the more a homeland needs a diaspora and the more a diaspora is cohesive, then the greater the ability of a diaspora to influence homeland policies.⁴⁷ The dimension of politics plays a heavy role in why diaspora members may seek to revolutionise or enforce different political changes on their homeland. It is often the political system that a diaspora finds in its host country which could lead it to influence the political direction towards homeland politics. The way a diaspora community interacts with its homeland and how it organises its community is sometimes determined by the nature of the host land’s government. It is therefore important how a host land allows a diaspora community to wield influence on itself. If the diaspora is allowed to grow in

⁴⁵ Jolle Demmers, “New wars and diasporas: suggestions for research and policy”, in *Journal of Peace Conflict & Development*, Vol. 11, Issue 11, p. 15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁷ Jolle Demmers, “Diaspora and Conflict: Locality, Long-Distance Nationalism, and Delocalization of Conflict Dynamics”, in *The Public*, Vol. 9, No.1, (2002), pp. 85-96.

terms of worth, it may then be seen as a foreign policy asset by the homeland.⁴⁸ For example “The openness of the American political system to ethnic politics has allowed many newly organized Diasporas to acquire a meaningful voice in the US foreign policy, especially on issues concerning countries of origin or symbolic homelands.”⁴⁹

Another common aspect that re-enforces diaspora and homeland relations is that of collective and individual remittances. Transfers of money, skills, values and concepts made by diaspora members can keep diaspora-homeland relations stronger. For example it’s common for diaspora members to send money to family members still living in the homeland or for members to invest in property in their homeland. As Jana Evans Braziel explains,

*“diasporic workers in the new global economy are unique in that they contribute not only to their personal livelihood, or even to that of their nuclear and extended families, but more expansively to their home towns (its infrastructure and public services: roads, bridges, wells, supplies of drinking water, schools, text books) and even the modernisation or “development” of their native country”.*⁵⁰

There are also many other ways that diaspora members maintain a connection with their homeland, such as supporting artists, musicians and writers from their home country as well as the use of their native language. In table 1.0 I have used a table that was created to highlight the Lebanese diaspora’s ties with its homeland, and adapted the table to reflect all possible ties that any diaspora group can have with its homeland. The table has been divided into five categories Economic, Political, Social, Cultural and Religious.

⁴⁸ Shain & Barth, “Diasporas and International Theory”, in *International Organizations*, Vol.57, No.3, (2003), pp. 449-479.

⁴⁹ Shain Yossi. “Ethnic Diasporas and U.S. Foreign Policy”. 10 February 2012.<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152533>> .pp. 811-841.

⁵⁰ Jana Evans Braziel, *Diaspora An Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, (2008), pp. 37-38.

Table 1.0 - How the diaspora-homeland relations are maintained

Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remittances • Travel • Government bonds • Business ventures • Property investment • Property improvement
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raising groups • Overseas branches of main political parties and movements • Support groups • Human rights organisations • Political media • Funding political candidates or groups • Dual citizenship
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social remittances such as ideas and values • Village associations and organisations • Family associations • Development organisations. • Charitable organisations • Hospital support • Educational support • City/town infrastructure. • City/town websites
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural tourism • Cultural festivals • Musical exchanges • Educational exchanges • Internet websites • Blogs and other internet discussion groups • Printed media • Visual media • Satellite TV • Art exhibits • Theatre • Sports exchanges
Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building religious edifices • Religious pilgrimages • Printed material • Visual material • Satellite TV programs • Religious ceremonies • Religious feasts • Religious websites

Source: Lebanese Diaspora and Homeland Relations, By Guita Hourani⁵¹

⁵¹ Guita Hourani. Lebanese Diaspora and Homeland Relations. 10 February 2012. <<http://www.ndu.edu.lb/lerc/publications/Lebanese%20Diaspora%20and%20Homeland%20Relations.pdf>>.

1.6 The Diaspora and Host Land Relationship

In some cases members of a diaspora do not have any yearning to return back to their homeland. When a homeland is filled with civil war or trauma for example, many members do not have the desire to ever return, and instead see their host land as their future, a place where they can build a life and a family. It is here that we can see that a diaspora may adopt their host land as their homeland, thus building and creating relations and connections that we have also mentioned when describing diaspora-homeland relations. Diaspora members with the help of their host land, create a life that comprising of work and social relations. Their integration in the host country's society comes from the liberty and possibilities that the host country offers them, allowing them to participate in social, political, economic and cultural life. There is no doubt that diasporas have enriched host societies from the perspective of culture and economy and undoubtedly in other ways too.

Although I have spoken about the cultural and economic benefits a diaspora may bring to a host land, we must also recognise a diaspora group's interaction with its host land in terms of politics. In recent years we have seen diaspora communities and host land relations increase considerably compared to even a decade or so ago. More and more host countries are consulting and interacting with diaspora communities to help strengthen home and host societies. We have seen host countries consult with diasporas on aid and development matters, to help identify and understand issues that may exist in a diaspora's homeland, which in turn may lead to help being offered. These relations are also helping in bridging and improving transnational relationships between host and homeland countries. Diaspora communities may also approach a host country's government concerning the putting into practice of their homeland's policies and development plans, because they too recognise the benefits of cooperation in resolving homeland matters.⁵² These approaches in diaspora-host and host-diaspora interaction have been encouraged by many governments and groups alike; because of the benefits they bring in helping to resolve conflict, political or humanitarian problems. According to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) "co-development policies aimed at involving migrants as actors of development who strengthen cooperation between home and host societies should be

⁵² Ionescu, *Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policymakers*, pp. 24-26.

actively promoted at the European level”.⁵³ One could also argue that a host country’s reason in using diaspora communities to achieve objectives such as improving social homeland conditions, is not necessarily a way for a host country to return migrants to their homeland, nor is it a way to increase or simplify the migration flows from a migrant’s home country. Instead it can maybe, be seen as a way for the host country to alleviate the migration pressures it may be suffering, by changing the views of potential migrants to look for opportunities in their home country and not abroad. Though it has been highlighted that a host country may liaise and listen to a diaspora, it must also be pointed out that diasporas can be seen as security risks for a host country. There are a number of elements that may lead a host country to consider a diaspora as a security concern; Rex Brynen highlights these elements as being:

- The intensity of the diasporas homeland conflict. Where conflict is high, a host land may believe that it is much more likely that homeland militants will have links with its diaspora community.
- The diasporas demographic characteristics. The size of the diaspora, can indicate the strength and level of influence a diaspora may have on politics and global affairs.
- The proximity and the political and ethnic linkages of the host country to the homeland.
- The degree of integration of the diaspora group within the host society has important implication for potential security challenges. More integrated groups are likely to be less likely to support militant organization which target host institutions, while less integrated and more alienated groups are more likely to do so.
- Political leadership within the diaspora group. This can be of importance in how the community interacts with both the state and with militant groups within its ranks. Security challenges are sharply reduced when community leaders have strong community support, good links with elected officials and law enforcement, and speak out strongly against extremist activities. Conversely, where diaspora leaders are weak (or leadership is divided), relations with host authorities are poor, and militant activities tolerated or supported by community leaders, the security challenges for the host country are exacerbated.⁵⁴

⁵³ Official Report of Debates, 3 October 2005 (25th Sitting), Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, p. 960.

⁵⁴ Brynen Rex, “Diaspora Populations and Security Issues in Host Countries”. 10 February 2012. <<http://international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/brynen.pdf>>. pp. 14-15.

These elements though are by nature conceptual and not necessarily real, and if a diaspora is seen as well integrated into a host lands social mainstream or comes from a homeland that directs its violence towards a host lands foe, then its relationship with its host land may stand to be stronger, and a healthier host land-diaspora cooperation and relations may be seen.

1.7 Homeland and Host land Relations

With international relations between countries playing such a big part in global politics and economic relations, it is not a surprise that we are seeing more and more host lands and homelands cooperating with each other on the matter of diasporas. More and more host lands are collaborating with homelands on co-development policies to help diasporas integrate and settle into host land communities. These collaborations are a way to combine home and host country interests, for example, Italy and Senegal launched the Commodity Aid Programme, a bilateral programme offering credit facilities for small- and medium-sized enterprises and intended to promote the engagement of the Senegalese diasporas in the local private sector development in Italy.⁵⁵

It's worth remembering that it can be in the interest of a homeland that a diaspora integrates itself well in a host country. Diaspora contributions are usually an important source of income for a homeland, and if a homeland can work with a host country to help improve the chance of a diaspora finding work and creating a steady income, then the homeland may reap the benefits in the future.

1.8 Using the Shuval Paradigm

As we have seen it is not easy to comprehensively define the concept of diaspora, and not easy to comprehend the intricate theory of the subject. To help move away from the descriptive nature that surrounds diaspora studies, I am going to refer to Judith Shuval's paradigm, which focuses on the many differences and similarities we can find with

⁵⁵ Ionescu, *Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policymakers*, p. 70.

different diasporas.⁵⁶ I will then use this theory in chapter 3 of my thesis, to better study and analyse the Eritrean diaspora in greater and clearer detail.

Judith Shuval has never thought this paradigm would be the complete and last word on the topic, but it does help to better understand and catalogue the structural components of the diaspora phenomenon. One of the difficulties that make defining a diaspora so challenging is the simple fact that some diasporas share so many different characteristics. There is not a single definition of diaspora that can be useful and exhaustive. It is for this reason above all other reasons, which make the definition of the concept diaspora such an ambiguous and contested term in the social sciences arena. That is why in the previous part of this chapter, we have tried to describe the relationship between diaspora-homeland, diasporas-host country, and homeland-host land.

The following information describes what Judith Shuval has identified as flexible and adaptable factors in analysing a diaspora. In chapter 3 of my thesis, I will use these factors to better analyse the special case of the Eritrean diaspora. Shuval essentially has tried to highlight the important characteristics for each actor in a diaspora, and has divided the research as follow:

- characteristics of the diaspora group
- characteristics of the homeland
- characteristics of the host country

What are the characteristics of the diaspora group?

- Temporal dimensions: Chronology of group, i.e. when did the members or forefathers leave the homeland in mythological past, in far distant past...within memory of living persons...recently.
- Causes of dispersion: traumatic expulsion, persecution, famine, poverty seeking employment, job requirement.
- Differentiation: criteria for definition of sub-groups- earlier and recent arrivals in host society; extent of the support for homeland, its current government, its dissidents, its legitimacy.

⁵⁶Shuval, "Diaspora Migration: Definitional ambiguities and a theoretical paradigm", pp. 41–56.

- Retention of ethnic culture: none...some...active.
- Spatial dimension-physical location of members and relations among them: decentred or concentrated from the geographic point of view.
- Quality of relations among members; lateral connections and/or connections to one origin.
- Attitudes and feeling towards the homeland- if real; if virtual:
 - Level of support- (not) worthy of support, actual desire for return at undefined time, urgent desire for immediate return accompanied by practical preparations.
 - Level of affect - regarding the homeland (cool, rational or passionate).
 - Level of activity - none, indifferent, minimal...active support.
 - Content of activity - financial, moral, political.
 - Extent of ongoing contact with family, friends in homeland.

What are the characteristics of the homeland?

- Level of reality: eschatological...real but inaccessible...real and accessible.
- Legitimacy: acceptable or widely acceptable (by whom?)...not generally accepted (by whom?).
- Attitude of residents of homeland and its government toward return of diasporas communities: rejected by all or some...accepted by all or some...encouraged by residents to return.
- Behaviour toward returnees: accepted on formal or informal levels...not accepted formally or informally...hostility, disdain.
- Behaviour of returnees:
 - Level of integration into homeland (sense of “at homeness”, acceptance of homeland culture, retention of separatism, previous citizenship and perception of host’s attitude)
 - Inversion of diasporas: redefinition of “exile” as “homeland”: encounter difficulties in attitudes of homeland host, disappointment in “at homeness”, perceive the host culture as inferior to culture of “exile” society

- Re-migration after return- to new destination- response to dissatisfaction with homeland

What are the characteristics of the host country?

- Structural features: extent of opportunities for social mobility for all or some members of society and of minority groups, geographical dispersion or concentration of settlement, ghettoisation.
- Cultural- ideological stance toward ethnic groups: norms of assimilation (monolithic, pluralistic, acceptance of expressions of ethnic identity.
- Behaviour of government and subgroups toward ethnic groups: indifferent...disdain...hostile...discriminatory...violent.
- Relevance of homeland to host government and to subgroups in society.

The above typology and the elements and questions contained within the paradigm will help me to examine and analyse the Eritrean diaspora in a much more systematic manner. The theoretical model will allow me to analyse the structure of the Eritrean diaspora and allow me to examine the factors that drive the diaspora in today's present.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 41–56.

Chapter Two

The Case of Eritrea

Before I can begin to analyse and describe the Eritrean diaspora, I will first visit the history and the past, which has affected and paved the way for the development of Eritrea at home and abroad.

2.0 The Country of Eritrea

Eritrea is an African country located in an area of the continent that is known as the Horn of Africa. Precisely speaking the country sits in the northeast of Africa. Eritrea is the youngest of the African countries, after becoming Africa's newest recognised nation in 1993. It shares borders with Sudan in the west, Ethiopia in the south, and Djibouti in the southeast and the northeast and east of the country has a coastline onto the Red Sea. The country has a land area of approximately 125,320 km², with a 1,200 km coastline along the Red Sea.⁵⁸ The capital city of Eritrea is Asmara, and can be found in the centre of the country, about 110 kilometres from the Red sea coast.

Map 2.0



Source: CIA website⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁹ CIA website: Map of Eritrea. 28 February 2012. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>>.

Topographically speaking the country has three main geographical zones. The first region is that of the eastern coastal plains, and this zone is dry, arid and semi-desert like. The second geographical zone is the central Highlands, which is a mountainous region with altitudes between 760 and 1370 metres above sea level. And finally the western lowlands, which are broad plains of land with rich vegetation found near the two rivers in the region, the Barka River and the Setit River.

The Eritrean region is one of the most multicultural countries in Africa. The geographical position along the Red coast and its relations with its neighbors Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Middle East and Italy played a significant role in shaping the culture of Eritrea.⁶⁰ Apart from the geographical position and its relations, the culture of Eritrea has been highly influenced by other factors such as faiths, idioms, and environment and last but not least by the continuous movement of the people in and around the region.⁶¹ The geographical position essentially corresponds with the religion membership and the social organisations of the population. The cultural tradition of the Eritreans is based on the values and customs of each ethno linguistic group. The local languages officially recognised by the Government can be classified in three main linguistic branches: Semitic or Ethio Semitic (converging Tigrinya, Tigre and Rashaida), Cushitic (comprising respectively Saho, Bilen, Afar and Hedareb) and Nilotic (converging Kumana and Nara). All these linguistic groups are related to the Afro Asiatic families. The Government has accepted all the nine ethnic idioms, it has also imposed policies to help protect the multiculturalism in the particular regions, but fundamentally only two administrative languages are used across the country: Tigrinya and Arabic.⁶² In the region inhabited by Muslims Arabic is used and spoken, while in the Tigrinya region which is inhabited predominantly by Christians, Tigrinya is used and spoken.⁶³

The use of Italian as main language flourished only during the 1940s and then disappeared with the end of the Italian colonialism. Though today it is difficult to still find Italian speakers among the general Eritrean population, and those who do speak Italian are people who had a direct contact with the Italian culture during the years of Italian colonialism. On the other hand English unlike Italian was not lost among the Eritrean people and is the language of business and is used in secondary schools and universities across the country. It is interesting to note that most of the ethno linguistic groups speak at least two languages

⁶⁰ Armstrong, *History of Eritrea*, p. 63.

⁶¹ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, pp. 207-208.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

because of the common history and the continuous social, political and cultural interactions experienced through the decades.⁶⁴ In Table 2.0 I have listed and outlined the name, language and percentage of the ethno linguistic groups, to better understand the languages that hold most importance in the country.

Table 2.0 - Eritrean Ethno Linguistic Groups

Ethnic Group	Language	Percentage
Tigrinya	Tigrinya (official)	55%
Tigre	Tigre	30%
Saho	Cushitic	4%
Kunama	Kunama	2%
Rashaida	Arabic	2%
Bilen	Bilen	2%
other (Afar, Beni Amir, Nera)	Afar, Cushitic	5%

Source: CIA website⁶⁵

The country has a population of 6,086,495(July 2012 est.), and is fairly evenly divided between Tigrinya speaking Christians (mainly Orthodox), the traditional inhabitants of the highlands, and the Muslim communities of the western lowlands, northern highlands and east coast; there are also systems of traditional belief adhered to by a small percentage of the population.⁶⁶ The Religion is a main element in the daily life of Eritreans. In fact most of the day to day Eritrean activities are linked to their faith and culture. The two main religions play a significant role in giving Eritreans their common identity, but also help to maintain a sense of peace and harmony between groups. The Christian community is split among the Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Protestant Church. In the capital city of Asmara the majority of the population is predominantly Christian.

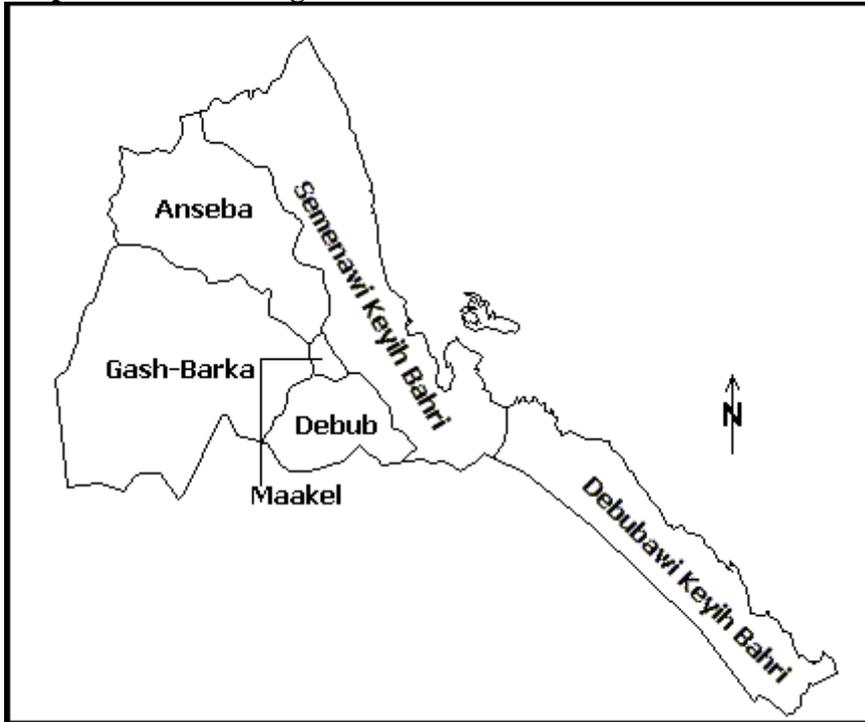
⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 209-211.

⁶⁵ CIA website: Eritrean Ethno Linguistic Groups. 03 March 2012.
<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>>

⁶⁶ TAYLOR and FRANCIS groups London&NY, The Europa World Year Book 2011, 52nd Edition, Volume 1, Routledge Publishing, (2011), p. 1684.

After 1993 the Eritrean government divided the country into six administrative regions. These regions are: Anseba, Debub (South), Debubawi K'eyih Bahri (Southern Red Sea), Gash Barka, Ma'akel (Central), Semenawi Keyih Bahri (Northern Red Sea).⁶⁷ The location of the geographic divided regions can be seen on map 2.1.

Map 2.1 Eritrea - Regions and Provinces



Source: Eritrean website⁶⁸

Eritrea is one of the poorest countries in the world according to the International Monetary Fund and the CIA. Most of the Eritrean population live a survival lifestyle that is supported by aid imports. Almost 80% of the population is involved in the agricultural sector and many are not able to reach the minimum national consumption requirements. It is estimated that agriculture provides only 16% of the national GDP. The main reason is the policies of “self-reliance” actuated by the Government, which limit access to international firms, and maintain a firm grip on the national economy, developing and investing mainly on the military sector and letting the control over the economy to the political party, People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ).⁶⁹

⁶⁷Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 3.

⁶⁸ Eritrea.be website: Eritrea - regions and provinces. 03 March 2012. <<http://www.eritrea.be/old/eritrea-geography.htm>>.

⁶⁹Eritrea.be website: Economy of Eritrea. 03 March 2012. <<http://www.eritrea.be/old/eritrea-geography.htm>>.

The financial system remains very much underdeveloped. All banks are majority-owned by the state, and private-sector involvement in the system remains limited.

The industrial sector provides nearly 53% of Eritrea's entire national GDP. Few private enterprises remain in Eritrea.⁷⁰ Eritrea's economy depends heavily on taxes paid by members of the diaspora and it represents nearly 32% of the national GDP. The Government continues to hope for additional returns thanks to the development of several international mining projects. One of the greater problems that Eritrea's economic future faced after the decades of warfare, was that of social such as illiteracy, unemployment, and low skills, and more importantly, on the government's willingness to support a true market economy.⁷¹

The tourism sector is very weak and unstable because of the instability of the region and the fragile infrastructures offered by the Government.

2.1 History

Most of Eritrea's lengthy history and part of its present is filled with conflict, adversity, and internal struggle over its natural resources. The country has a rich and detailed past dating back many centuries, but without looking back at this history, we cannot fully understand Eritrea's present.

Eritrea can be traced back to the dawn of humankind. In 1995 archaeologists found hominid remains in the Eritrean region of Buya, suggesting that early humans could have inhabited land as far back as 1 million years ago.⁷² Stone tools have also been found on the central East coast of the country, dating back 125,000 years, provide further evidence of human occupation. Many scientists have also identified Eritrea as a very important and significant region in describing the evolution of humans and believe the region may help document the shift of *Homo erectus* up to the evolution of modern humans.⁷³ Although Eritrea's pre-historic history has helped in the research of human evolution, it doesn't tell the story of how different civilisations came to find themselves in the Eritrean region. Eritrea's early history is filled with kingdoms that tried to establish themselves in the state.

⁷⁰ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 98.

⁷¹ Website: Eritrean Economy – overview. 03 March 2012.

<http://www.theodora.com/wfbcurrent/eritrea/eritrea_economy.html>.

⁷² Haile Berhe, The Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of Eritrea (Case Study Qohaito), (2000), p. 3.

⁷³ Paper: A Review of Current Research on Human Evolution. 03 March 2012.

<http://fire.biol.wvu.edu/trent/alles/Human_Evolution.pdf>.

The first empire of great significance and power to emerge in Eritrea and the surrounding regions was that of Aksum. It was during the Aksum reign, that Christianity was introduced into the country and into north east Africa.⁷⁴ Little is known how the Aksum Empire rose to territorial power, and many believe that its fall from power is another mystery. Lacking any detailed recorded history, it is presumed that the Aksum Empire's fall after 300 years of control is probably attributed to the internal and external pressures it suffered, such as; drought, overgrazing, deforestation, plague, a shift in trade routes that reduced the importance of the Red Sea, or a combination of these factors.⁷⁵ After Aksum's authority and control disappeared from the region, its main language Ge'ez also changed, evolving into Tigre and Tigrinya, the two languages most widely spoken today in Eritrea.⁷⁶ After the collapse of the Aksumite Empire, Eritrea began to lose its status as a centre for civilisations, and instead began to evolve into a multicultural boundary for more distant political centres in Sudan, Yemen and Ethiopia. By the end of the 16th century the Eritrean region was controlled by a number of different Empires. The Muslim-Turkish Ottoman Empire controlled the east coast region, while Ethiopia controlled the west lowlands and some of the central areas of the region. The Ottoman Empire controlled the north east coastal area of Eritrea for over 300 years, but in 1846 Egyptian forces took control of this region from the Ottomans.⁷⁷ They also wrestled control of the western lowlands of Eritrea from Sudan, but had to relinquish the region when they attempted to drive further inland. The Egyptian forces maintained colonial rule over Eritrea from 1865 to 1885, until 1888 when the people of Sudan rebelled against the Egyptian forces and toppled their forces in a conflict that was known as the Mahdist uprising.⁷⁸ After the toppling of the Egyptian forces in 1888, Cairo's hold over Eritrea collapsed, paving the way for the ideas of colonisation that some European powers had.

⁷⁴ Eritrea.be website: History of Eritrea. 05 March 2012. <<http://www.eritrea.be/old/eritrea-history.htm>>.

⁷⁵ Encyclopedia.com Website: History. 06 March 2012. <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Eritrea.aspx>>.

⁷⁶ Dan Connell And Tom Killion, Historical Dictionary of Eritrea, 2nd Edition, United Kindom, Scarecrow Press, (2011), p. 5.

⁷⁷ History World Website: History of Eritrea. 06 March 2012. <<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ad18>>.

⁷⁸ R. Hunt Davis, Jr Encyclopedia of african history and culture, Volume IV, The Colonial Era (1850 to 1960), The Learning Source Ltd, (2005), p.59.

2.1.1 Italian Colonisation

The end of the 19th century saw a number of European countries claiming territory in Africa. Among the regions of Africa that interested these European powers, was the region of Eritrea. Much of the Eritrean regions appeal lay in its location, with a Red Sea coastline to the east and its shared borders with other countries such as Ethiopia; it was an area of strategic political and military significance. The British and French in particular were two of the countries that showed interest in the Eritrean region, often intervening in the regions affairs. But it was the Italians who profited from the collapse of the Egyptians and the disorder that engulfed the region at the time. With the support of Britain, Italy took possession of Massawa, an eastern coastal territory, from the Egyptians in 1885.⁷⁹ The Italians had intentions of colonisation long before 1885, with the goal of commercial expansion and maritime trade at the forefront of their objectives. At the time, the Italians already had control of the Eritrean city of Assab in the south east of the country. The manner in which Italy came to control the port of Assab was all very innocuous. In 1869 an Italian shipping company called Rubattino, bought the Assab harbour from a local sultan, to use as a resting post for their commercial ships.⁸⁰ And then in 1882 the Italian government bought the Assab harbour from the Rubattino shipping company, and developed the harbour into a thriving port. With the acquisition of Massawa and Assab, the Italians continued their acquisition of hundreds of miles of coast and soon had full control of the country's coastline.⁸¹ Following their acquisition of Massawa, the Italians expanded their colonisation into the mainland areas of the region and into the highlands. On the 2nd May 1889 Italy signed a treaty with the Ethiopian ruler Menelik, and under the terms of this treaty Menelik recognised Italian sovereignty over Eritrea.⁸² Then on the 1st of January 1890 the Italian king, Victor Emmanuel III, declared the formation of the colony of Eritrea. The Italians named the colony after the ancient Greek word for the Red Sea, "Erythreus", and the country name Eritrea was born. At the beginning of the Italian's colonial reign, the administration had four clear colonial objectives and policies that they wanted to impose on Eritrea.⁸³ The first policy focused on extending their colonial occupation within Eritrea and strengthening their military power over the region. The

⁷⁹ Connell And Killion, Historical Dictionary of Eritrea, p. 192.

⁸⁰ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 36.

⁸¹ Yohannes Okbazgui, Eritrea - a Pawn in World Politic, Florida, University of Florida Press, (1991), p. 47-48.

⁸² Hunt, Jr Encyclopedia of african history and culture , p. 43.

⁸³ Connell And Killion, Historical Dictionary of Eritrea, p. 7.

second colonial policy was that of encouraging Italian settlement in the region and creating opportunities for Italian settlers in the country. The third policy was the creation of a platform, which they would use to aid in the procedure of procuring the natural resources of the region, such as, livestock, agriculture, forestry and minerals. And lastly, a colonial policy aimed at making Eritrea a military centre that would be used as a springboard for further Italian expansion and colonisation of other countries in the Horn of Africa.

The Italian control over Eritrea lasted for 51 years, during which time the Italian administration made a number of political, social and economic structure changes. Throughout the Italian colonial period, Italy shaped its policies to best take advantage of the regions resources. Though the Italians made many changes to Eritrea, they did try to preserve the ethno-linguistic nature and diversity of Eritrea, by allowing the ethno-linguistic groups of the country to administer their own local and customary laws. Unsurprisingly, even though the Italian administration was tolerant towards the ethno-linguistic groups with matters of local village laws and administration, they were by no means selfless. The colonial government's exploitation of Eritrea was profound and vast, using Eritrea as a source of manpower, as a means to improve maritime commerce, and as a source for raw materials for Italian industry. Throughout its tenure in Eritrea, the Italian government recruited more than 60,000 Eritreans for the Italian military service.⁸⁴ They recruited from many of the rural areas, leaving villages with little or no manpower for farming and agriculture. The soldier recruitment campaign left the economic system of rural Eritrea in disarray, with many Eritreans having to abandon their farming and village responsibilities, and become wage labourers on Italian plantations, gardens, and construction projects. Without the Eritrean soldiers the Italians would have found it very difficult to preserve their colonial objectives in the horn of Africa, and contributed to the Italian government's success in Africa. However, when Italian colonialism collapsed in 1941, after the defeat to the Allied forces in World War II, the Eritrean soldiers were left without work, with most returning to their villages feeling disillusioned and angered, leaving the country with a sense and threat of social disorder.⁸⁵

With Italy suffering land shortages and unemployment problems in their own country during the end of the 19th century, the Italian government saw Eritrea as a means to help

⁸⁴ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 42.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

solve these issues. Between 1893 and 1896 400,000 hectares of farming land was confiscated from Eritrean natives and given to Italian settlers who had migrated to Eritrea from Italy.⁸⁶ The Italian settlers were not only given the farming land that was taken forcefully from the Eritrean people, but were also given subsidies for commercial agriculture. This strategy of land expropriation enraged the local Eritreans, and created serious resentment among the local peasantries. In 1894 an Eritrean resistance formed to revolt against the unfair seizure of land and the policies of segregation that were brought in by the Italians. A strong hold of 2000 local Eritreans came together to fight against the Italians in Halai, but were quickly defeated by the Italians.⁸⁷ Though the Eritreans had not won their fight with the Italian forces, they did shock the Italian administration into reconsidering their land policies, and the administration were diverted into implementing plans of reconciliation and forgiveness, to improve the relations with the local people. With the Italian government annulling its early land possession policies, the Italian government then took another approach with regards to confiscating the Eritrean farm land. It took the approach of labelling any arable land as *dominale*, which meant it was state controlled and available to lease only, and under this pretext the administration confiscated almost 500,000 hectares of farm land from the Eritrean people.⁸⁸

The Italians did not only have ideas of land expropriation on their minds. The colonial government were also interested in the country's natural resources, exploring the Eritrean land intensely for mineral resources, and over the years mining the land for gold, nickel, iron and copper. Though the Italian colonial state exploited the colonial land, for its own gains, with its policies of land expropriation and its policy of mining and taking the natural resources of the land, it can't be said that the state did not make investments that ultimately modernised the region and helping to improve the integrity of the region. Italy made notable investments in the development of the country's infrastructure. It built roads, railways, ports, telecommunication lines and administrative posts, which when all put together helped to connect the remote territories with the more developed coastal regions, and created relative stability throughout the colony, something that hadn't been present for

⁸⁶ Patrizia Palumbo, *A Place in the Sun, Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*, California, University of California Press, (2003), pp. 103-104.

⁸⁷ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, p. 41.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

hundreds of years in Eritrea.⁸⁹ The Italian colonisation also brought improvements in areas of medicine and agriculture to the country, and also provided jobs for the local Eritrean people with Italians opening factories in Eritrea. The Italian administration also employed Eritreans in public sector jobs, in particular in the police and hospital departments around the country.⁹⁰

In 1922 the rise in power of Benito Mussolini in Italy brought considerable changes to the colonial government of Eritrea. Mussolini's fascist regime imposed hard and severe political and racial rules over the local Eritrean people. The Italian colonial state demoted Eritrean public workers to unskilled positions, and introduced new educational and social policies to limit the development of Eritrean worker skills.⁹¹ One objective that didn't change under the direction of Benito Mussolini was that of creating an Italian Empire. Mussolini had a clear goal for the Italian colony, and that was for it to expand and grow. Italy soon had identified the neighbouring country Ethiopia as its main target for expansion. Italy had attempted an unsuccessful assault on Eritrea in 1896, at the Battle of Adowa, where the Italian forces suffered a complete defeat to Menelik's Ethiopian army.⁹² But between 1935 and 1936, Italy made preparations for another attempt at colonising Ethiopia, making sure not to be complacent and under prepared as they were in 1896 at the battle of Adowa. This time round the Italians made huge economic and military investments in Eritrea, importing 50,000 skilled Italian workers, and over 300,000 Italian soldiers. They also recruited more than 60,000 Eritrean soldiers to fight alongside Italian troops, and constructed and modified the countries transportation and communication infrastructures further. At the time, the war situation transformed Eritrea into one of the most important industrial and commercial centres in Africa.⁹³

⁸⁹ Website: Italian Administration in Eritrea. 10 March 2012. < <http://www.shabait.com/about-eritrea/history-a-culture/450-italian-administration-in-eritrea>>.

⁹⁰ Website: Italian Administration in Eritrea. 10 March 2012. < <http://www.shabait.com/about-eritrea/history-a-culture/450-italian-administration-in-eritrea>>.

⁹¹ Website: Italian industries in colonial Eritrea. 10 March 2012. <<http://www.dankalia.com/history/04503.htm>>.

⁹² Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 42.

⁹³ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), pp. 50-51

2.1.2 British Administration

In 1941 the British forces defeated the Italian army in Eritrea, collapsing the Italian control of Eritrea. From May 1941 until 1952 Eritrea was under British Military Administration.⁹⁴ Initially the Eritrean people and locals welcomed the arrival and occupation of the British, hoping that they would be free of deprivation and ostracism that they suffered under Italian colonialism. Yet the British military administration brought further frustration and dissatisfaction among most Eritreans.

Once in power, the priority for the British administration was to disband all the fascist and extreme members from the colony, and replacing them with British run Eritrean police, which included some Italian civil police too. Much of the Italian civil service was kept on too, and the administration consisted of an upper level of British officers, a lower level of Italian civil servants, and for the first time in Eritrea's colonial history, a number of Eritreans in the lower and middle level of the administration.⁹⁵ Most of the territorial structure of Eritrea remained as it was under the former Italian administration, with many rural villages and regions still having to follow the Italian laws and restrictions, which all led to the build-up of disappointment and anger among the Eritrean people. After the British administration had disbanded the fascist members from the colony, it began to focus its attentions on Eritrea's natural resources. The British intentions were to use the resources to assist the Allied war effort. 14,000 Eritrean soldiers, who were made available after the British administration had dismantled the Italian war projects, were put to work into the local growing industrial firms. The British invested heavily in Eritrea during this period, creating more than 300 industrial factories in three years, to meet the wartime requirements.⁹⁶ During the first few years of British occupation, Eritrea went through a strong positive period, where it experienced a huge economic boom and again became the strongest industrial power in the region.⁹⁷ The United States also invested in Eritrea during the wartime years, constructing an aircraft-assembly plant and an airport at Gura'e. They also opened workshops and repair bases in Asmara, and constructed a naval base in Massawa. The United States used Eritrea as a depot for military supplies as well as a docking ground for U.S. ships. The economic growth created by the war provided jobs

⁹⁴ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, p. 57.

⁹⁵ Connell And Killion, *Historical Dictionary of Eritrea*, p. 135.

⁹⁶ Okbazgui, *Eritrea - a Pawn in World Politic*, p. 14.

⁹⁷ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, p. 57.

for many formerly unemployed Eritreans, and led to the emergence of strong working class people in the region.⁹⁸ After the war was over, the Eritrean factories became surplus to requirements, and the British administration decided to move many of the industrial factories to other British colonies or sold them off privately. The post war period saw Eritrea suffer severe economic recession, with many Eritreans finding themselves without work, and many locals having to move back into the rural areas where in many cases land that once belonged to them was still in the hands of the Italians.⁹⁹

British administration continued until 1950, until when the British proposed that Eritrea should be divided along religious lines and then annexed into Sudan or Ethiopia accordingly. Yet Ethiopia had other ambitions, and wanted to claim Eritrea completely for itself. The ruler and monarch of Ethiopia at the time, Haile Selassie wrote a letter to the Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Paris Peace conference, and sent a letter to the First Session of the United Nations in 1950, making his claim for the land of Eritrea.¹⁰⁰ The Americans and the British were in favour of ceding Eritrea to Ethiopia, a reward for the support the Ethiopians had shown during World War II. But Eritrea was not in favour of this decision, and demanded that a referendum be carried out to determine the wishes of the Eritrean people. The United Nations sent a commission to Eritrea to settle Eritrea's request for sovereignty and at the end of its findings proposed the establishment of some sort of association between Eritrea and Ethiopia.¹⁰¹ The commission ignored Eritrea's wishes for independence, but did promise that the Eritrean people would have some democratic rights and a level of independence. On September 15th 1952, the United Nations General Assembly drew up details of Eritrea and Ethiopia's association, asking that the two neighbouring countries be linked through a loose federation under the sovereignty of Ethiopia's Emperor, Haile Selassie. The federation with Ethiopia led to many conflicts and much unrest among Eritrean people, and was the start of a long and bloody war.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Okbazgui, Eritrea - a Pawn in World Politic, p. 14.

⁹⁹ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 57.

¹⁰⁰ Armstrong, History of Eritrea, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ L. Heiden, "The Eritrean Struggle for Independence", in *Monthly Review*, Vol 30, Issue 2, (1979), p. 15.

¹⁰² Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 61.

2.1.3 The Ethiopian and Eritrean Federation and Annexation

What has emerged so far is that much of Eritrea's history has been characterised by episodes of colonisation and settlement. In particular it was Italian colonialism between 1882 and 1941, which helped to give rise to the country's identity and presence. Despite the Italians and Eritreans having different socio cultural backgrounds and political interests, the period of colonisation brought the development of infrastructure to the region that made Eritrea one of the most industrialised countries in the horn of Africa.¹⁰³ Italian colonialism was followed by British control and administration between 1941 and 1952, and this saw the rise of socio-politics in the country and the rise of political parties, trade unions, voluntary associations and what is typically recognised as a civil society.¹⁰⁴ But aside the period of Italian colonisation, the event and period which determined and affected the modern history of Eritrea mostly, was the formation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean Federalisation in 1952. After World War II the United Nations with the support of America and Britain agreed that Eritrea and Ethiopia to be linked through a loose federal structure under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Emperor at the time Haile Selassie.¹⁰⁵ It was after these events and after the full annexation of the country by Ethiopia in 1962, that Eritrea began its fight for independence and freedom.

Eritrea's history before and after the years of colonisation, is very much different to the history of many other African countries, because it has never really had full independence. And its fight for independence which lasted many years has been recognised as the longest and bloodiest in the whole history of Africa. And even after such a long struggle for independence many of its international issues are still unresolved, with these matters not being recognised as important by many of the world's powers. It is maybe these internal and external experiences which have driven the Eritrean people to focus their energy and commitment to achieve democracy and independence. Eritrean and Ethiopian relations can be traced back many years, and the history between the two countries has most often been filled with conflict and controversy. But one interesting difference that separates the two countries among all the differences is that Ethiopia has never been colonised and has had

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

¹⁰⁵ Armstrong, History of Eritrea, pp. 13-15.

always the chance to exercise a grade of self-determination in its region.¹⁰⁶ On the contrary Eritrea has been colonised many times, and through this, its citizens have suffered trauma and exile because of it. The central reason for conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia has always been connected to boundary disputes. As we have seen in the first part of the second chapter, Eritrea lies along the Red Sea and shares its borders with a number of notable African countries, Ethiopia being the one of particular interest here. It has also shared its port with its neighbours, including its southern neighbour Ethiopia.¹⁰⁷

After many years of past relations, the incident in history that has most influenced the two countries is the Ethiopian and Eritrean Federation that was born in 1952 after World War II. But why was this Federation created and why was it passed? Indeed after the end of the World War II, Eritrea was still under British Administration, but both the British and Americans had little use for Eritrea after the war. The United Nations appointed a group made up of America, Britain, France and the USSR to find a solution to the Eritrean matter. Each of the nations that made up the UN appointed commission had their own views on what should happen to Eritrea and none of them were views that they all shared. The US proposed that Eritrea should unify with Ethiopia, as a reward for Ethiopia's aid and help during the Korean War in 1952. Britain proposed to split the western part of Eritrea for Sudan and the highland and coastal regions to Ethiopia. The French proposed that Eritrea be put into Italian trusteeship and finally the USSR recommended that the country should be placed in the trusteeship of an international body or group.¹⁰⁸ All the suggested proposals and initiatives were seen as unviable and thus were unsuccessful, because they were seen as not trying to apply the principles of the Atlantic Charter but instead was seen as proposals that applied self-personal interests. Unable to reach a unanimous decision they decided to leave the decision of the Eritrean case to the UN General Assembly (UNGA).¹⁰⁹ The UN proposed a new Commission of five countries (Pakistan, Guatemala, Burma, South Africa and Norway) who presented a plan named "Bevin-Sforza Plan". According to this plan Eritrea was to be divided between Ethiopia and Sudan but this decision too was then rejected by the UN General Assembly.¹¹⁰ The UNGA couldn't come to a common decision until the end of 1950; and on the 2nd of December 1950 surprisingly passed a solution, called "The Federal Act", whereby Eritrea

¹⁰⁶ Encyclopedia.com Website: History. 10 March 2012.

<<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Eritrea.aspx>>.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 10 March 2012. <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Eritrea.aspx>>.

¹⁰⁸ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

became an autonomous region of Ethiopia.¹¹¹ The formal Eritrean- Ethiopian Federation was set up on September 1952. The Federal Constitution draft permitted Eritrea to exercise complete autonomy over internal issues such as taxation, education, health, agriculture and commerce. Yet Ethiopia was in control of foreign affairs such as international finance and defence issues. In fact this Constitution divided the spheres of intervention of the two countries.¹¹² A few years into the Federation it became clear that Ethiopia's aim was to conquer and incorporate Eritrea as part of the Ethiopia regime. Soon after the Federation began, the Ethiopian regime started to interfere and impose its own domestic policies and laws: Eritrean political parties were banned and abolished, freedom of the press was banned, and teaching in indigenous languages was forbidden and replaced with the Amharic language of Ethiopia.¹¹³ The prime objective of these policies and measures imposed by Ethiopia were to weaken the Eritrean economy and bring the country to its knees. Ethiopia also placed many of its politicians in Eritrean government posts, thus reducing the power of the Eritrean executive and legislative government bodies and handing most of the control to Ethiopian controlled representatives.¹¹⁴ The Eritrean Assembly complained repeatedly to the UN about the actions and measures taken by the Ethiopian government but it was all to no avail. Though Ethiopia was violating the principles of the Federal Act, it was also justify its measures of oppression and tyranny in the eyes of the United Nations, arguing that Eritrea belongs with Ethiopia because the two countries come from the same region and share the same culture, languages and identity. Yet Eritreans had a completely different view to that of the Ethiopians, sustaining that they felt the Federation with Ethiopia as new period of colonialism.¹¹⁵ While if most Ethiopians were asked what they thought on the matter, they would say that they saw the Federation as a benevolent arrangement, and not like an example of colonialism. Many Ethiopians shared this view that Eritrea should belong to Ethiopia, for example, an Ethiopian cab driver who had immigrated to Washington D.C. was interviewed and said: "They are our brothers, they are family. They should be part of Ethiopia and not a separate country".¹¹⁶ But the result of the April 1993 referendum for independence however indicated that

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 61.

¹¹² Connell And Killion, Historical Dictionary of Eritrea, pp. 10-11.

¹¹³ Website: Meeting Point International. "Eritrea: A New County of Enormous Opportunities and Promising Future". <http://www.dehai.org/demarcation-watch/articles/Meeting_Point_International_Eritrea.html>.

¹¹⁴ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), pp. 61-62.

¹¹⁵ Website: Meeting Point International. "Eritrea: A New County of Enormous Opportunities and Promising Future". <http://www.dehai.org/demarcation-watch/articles/Meeting_Point_International_Eritrea.html>.

¹¹⁶ Website: ICE Case Studies Number 199, December, 2006. <<http://www1.american.edu/ted/ice/eritrea-ethiopia.htm>>.

99.8% of Eritreans felt that they are a separate country and a separate race of people who have a right to govern themselves.¹¹⁷

After Eritrean protests and embargos, Eritrea could not avoid being annexed as the 14th province of Ethiopia. It was the federal structures that allowed Ethiopia to reduce the status of Eritrea and turn the country into an Ethiopian province by 1962.¹¹⁸ One of the more significant consequences after the Federation was the widespread growth of activism among Eritreans in particular teachers, students and workers, those who lived in the country and those from abroad, which in turn was what gave rise to the birth of nationalism in Eritrea.

2.1.4 The Three Decades of Eritrean War for Independence

The origins of the nationalist movement for independence started among Muslim students and workers. The first formal pro-independence association was formed in Sudan in 1958 and was called Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM).¹¹⁹ It became popular and clandestine in several cities around Eritrea. Despite all its members being Muslim, they also achieved great support from Christians (among them this party became known as “The Association of Seven”). It voiced its intentions and affirmed its aim to build a popular and a secular nationalist movement in fractured Eritrea to stand against the Ethiopian regime.¹²⁰ But its armed resistance lacked any power, and subsequently it lost many members to other movements.¹²¹ After that, a new Guerrilla movement called the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) formed and began an armed struggle against the Ethiopian regime and set out its other objective of becoming the only political party in the region. At the beginning the party was also in favour of the pan Arabic ideology, sustaining they came from the Arabic region and not from Africa. In the space of a decade the ELF grew rapidly, but because of religious and ethnic sectarianism and internal rivalries’ and not least because of the pressures from the Ethiopian regime, the party became weak and failed to bridge the multiple identities and backgrounds formed inside the movement.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Website: Meeting Point International. "Eritrea: A New County of Enormous Opportunities and Promising Future". <http://www.dehai.org/demarcation-watch/articles/Meeting_Point_International_Eritrea.html>.

¹¹⁸ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 63.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

¹²⁰ Tricia Redeker Hepner, Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors, and Exiles: Political Conflict in Eritrea and the Diaspora, Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania Press, (2009), pp. 19-20.

¹²¹ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), pp. 63-64.

¹²² Hepner, Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors, and Exiles: Political Conflict in Eritrea and the Diaspora, pp. 19-21.

Fundamentally the party lacked a well-defined organisational structure. Nationalist movements were forming and rising everywhere, from North America to Europe, and Eritrean nationalism was being found and seen at not only at home but also abroad, and in exile. (As we will see in chapter 3 of the Eritrean Diaspora, it was this strong common identity that helped the country to be Independent). In the meantime Ethiopia carried on attacking, massacring and burning rural villages, leading to thousands of Eritreans escaping to Sudan. As this was all happening around, a strong resentment began to rise within the ELF. The discontent within the ELF imploded in a series of events, with the most important being in the mid-1970's, when a reformist group split from the ELF and formed a new movement named initially the Popular Liberation Forces and then renamed Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1977.¹²³ A new conflict existed, a fight not only with Ethiopia but also one between the ELF and the EPLF parties, and this conflict contributed to many future nationalistic disputes inside and outside the country. Moving forward the EPLF party presented itself as the new secular, African, anticolonial, class-based movement with rural roots against the supremacy of the US. Their primary goal and policies were based around having a more rigorous military structure compared to the ELF.¹²⁴ And it can be argued that the party's continuity and success is linked to its structure and nationalist ideologies. Inevitably from the split and conflict between the ELF and the EPLF came the civil war of 1972-1974.¹²⁵ As this internal conflict between the parties went on, both the ELF and EPLF were still tangled in a war against Ethiopia. The EPLF led by Marxist ideas and Maoist tactics of guerrilla warfare in China decided to reorganise its policy and stimulated a greater support in the rural areas of the country.¹²⁶ The EPLF encouraged women to take part in their war efforts too, and used them to help fight and launch assaults on Ethiopian troops across the country, which helped to put a stop to the Ethiopian regime's growth in power. Fortunately for Ethiopia, the Soviet forces intervened and helped them through these conflicts, and their support was used to prevent even larger territorial losses. On the contrary the Eritrean front was still without a real and united military front. The EPLF also tried to establish new relations with the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and later with the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to take advantage of their shared conflicts against the Ethiopian empire and join

¹²³ Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol 2, John Middleton (edt). Macnillan Library Reference USA (2011), p. 1684.

¹²⁴ Hepner, Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors, and Exiles: Political Conflict in Eritrea and the Diaspora, pp. 33-38.

¹²⁵ Website: Meeting Point International. "Eritrea: A New County of Enormous Opportunities and Promising Future". <http://www.dehai.org/demarcation-watch/articles/Meeting_Point_International_Eritrea.html>.

¹²⁶ Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol 2, p. 1684.

together to fight their common enemy.¹²⁷ The new strategies actuated by the ELPF played a significant and pivotal role in defending the Eritrean army. Ethiopian forces, numerically and also materially superior, carried on launching offensives against the Eritrean groups, but regardless of their strengths could not find a way to penetrate the Eritrean borders.¹²⁸ The ELPF defended against the attacks bravely and courageously, and tens of thousands of people died and thousands fled to Sudan and Middle East. The relationship between ELF and ELPF went from bad to worse when both the parties tried to keep secret negotiations with the Derg regime regarding the end of the war and the future supremacy of the party in the Independent Eritrea.¹²⁹ During the 1980s the ELPF counter attacked and drove back the Ethiopians forces on all fronts. Then In 1981 another civil war between ELF and ELPF broke out, and the ELPF forces defeated the ELF. In 1988 the ELPF won significant battles against the Ethiopians, such as the Battle of Afabet/Nadow, using the country's climatic conditions to help realise victory against the Ethiopian soldiers, who suffered from fatigue in the hot arid Eritrean land.¹³⁰ By 1989 the ELPF forces took the north and west parts of the country taking arms, weapons, ammunition and equipment. In February 1990 the ELPF surprised the Ethiopian forces, capturing the port of Massawa.¹³¹ Due to the waning of the Soviet communist regime, the aid to Ethiopia evaporated as the Soviet bloc disintegrated. Eritrean forces quickly took advantage of the declining Soviet support and gradually reoccupied strategic cities and regions of Eritrea. The final battle between the ELPF and Ethiopia took place in 1991 when Ethiopia's dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam fled to Zimbabwe and the ELPF entered in Asmara and declared an interim administration.¹³² The Ethiopian government surrendered to the Ethiopian People's revolutionary's Democratic Force (EPRDF) an anti-government movement protected by the ELPF. After the liberation of Asmara by the ELPF, the two parties respectively ELPF and EPRDF decided to convey in a Conference that took place in London where they agreed to declare the three-decade liberation war against Ethiopia to a formal end.¹³³ Thanks to the international situations such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the new relation built between the US and the EPRDF, the UN accepted the new Provisional

¹²⁷ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, p. 66.

¹²⁸ Website: Meeting Point International. "Eritrea: A New County of Enormous Opportunities and Promising Future". <http://www.dehai.org/demarcation-watch/articles/Meeting_Point_International_Eritrea.html>.

¹²⁹ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, pp. 66-67.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

¹³¹ *Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara*, vol 2, p. 1684.

¹³² BBC Website: Profile: Mengistu Haile Mariam. 13 March 2012.

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6171927.stm>>.

¹³³ *Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara*, Vol 2, pp. 1684.

Government of Eritrea led by the ELPF party. The US and the Ethiopian government supported the Provisional Government of Eritrea led by the ELPF who agreed to hold a referendum in 1993.¹³⁴ The Provisional Government had set out objectives to rebuild and consolidate the political and social fields of the country that were destroyed by war. The long war between Ethiopia and Eritrea had taken a high price on lives, health and infrastructure. It is estimated that Eritrea suffered about 60,000 deaths, 60,000 disabled and approximately 50,000 abandoned children during this conflict.¹³⁵ The agricultural sector was disrupted by the war and the population were left depending exclusively on food aid, and the urban economy was almost non-existent.¹³⁶ Finally in April 1993, 99.8% of the population at home and abroad voted for the National Independence of Eritrea, which was proclaimed on the 24th of May 1993 as Independence Day and on the 28th May 1993 Eritrea obtained international recognition.¹³⁷ In June of the same year Eritrea was admitted to take part in the Organisation Africa Union (OAU), now African Union (AU).¹³⁸

2.1.5 New Conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998 -2000)

After the liberation and following Independence, Eritrea developed new international and local relations. But in the late 1990s not long after attaining independence, Eritrea once again found itself in another border conflict with Ethiopia.

Since 1991 the two governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia had established new and friendly relations, at least in public. The two heads of State also shared views on many policies and were involved in the start-up of new co-operatives in their countries social, economic and security fields.¹³⁹ After the declaration of Eritrean Independence, the two ministerial commissions of the countries met for the first time in Asmara and signed an agreement defined “Friendship and Cooperation” in which the two countries agreed to implement several measures such as free movement of the people between Eritrea and Ethiopia and

¹³⁴ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), pp. 76-77.

¹³⁵ Website: Meeting Point International."Eritrea: A New County of Enormous Opportunities and Promising Future". < http://www.dehai.org/demarcation-watch/articles/Meeting_Point_International_Eritrea.html>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 25.

¹³⁸ Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol 2, pp. 1684.

¹³⁹ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 87.

free flows of commercial goods and capital.¹⁴⁰ In addition to this, Ethiopians were permitted to have free access to the sea but had to pay port services to Eritrea. This cooperation was seen by the entire continent of Africa as a great achievement also for the future relations in the Horn of Africa, which had been in the last decades characterised by conflicts and sufferings. But these good relations didn't last long, with tensions in 1997 increasing again between the two countries over new border disagreements. In fact this new war was a complete surprise especially among Eritreans who couldn't immediately understand the real reasons behind the conflict.¹⁴¹ At the beginning the reasons were not clear. Although in 1998 it was publicised that the two heads of State had exchanged letters in regards to matters concerning the borders and that tensions over the boundaries had been simmering as early as 1997.¹⁴² It also emerged that the cross border differences may not have been the only cause for disputes, with some officials suggesting that relations deteriorated after Eritrea adopted the new currency "Nafka" instead of the Ethiopian "Birr". The situation worsened in May 1998 when Eritrea and Ethiopia accused each other of occupying territories that belonged to them, and the region of greatest dispute was the area of Badme (a village located near the borders and claimed by both countries).¹⁴³ Soon these tensions changed into warfare. Ethiopia launched raids and bombed the Eritrean International Airport in Asmara; Eritrea in turn bombed Mekele, the capital of Tigray in the province of Ethiopia.¹⁴⁴ The difference in governmental behaviour between Eritrea and Ethiopia was that Eritrea didn't talk or promote the war until Ethiopia bombed Asmara, while Ethiopia carried out war propaganda through television and radio. The Eritrean Government has been much more closed on these matters of war, while the Ethiopian government has been open and clear with its public on the reasons behind the conflict.¹⁴⁵ Eritrea's purpose for their closed and guarded nature could be down to an economic reason and to reasons of fatigue and tiredness among its population. Eritrea was not in a position to be able to finance another war against Ethiopia and its population were certainly not ready for another war with their neighbours, not after going through more than 30 years of suffering and struggle. Between 1998 and 2000 both countries again lost many thousands of people during this war and during these two years also missed important diplomatic initiatives to reach an agreement of peace. One of these opportunities was the US- Rwanda

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁴³ Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol 2, p. 1686.

¹⁴⁴ Armstrong, History of Eritrea, p. 39.

¹⁴⁵ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 90.

solution in early June 1998; which defined new redistribution of the troops before the tensions and the delineation of the borders according to the colonial treaties and agreements.¹⁴⁶ Both the countries didn't accept the solution and later on another initiative was proposed by the African Union named "Framework, Modalities and Technical Arrangements" which declared an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of troops from the conflict areas, deployment of the peacekeeping forces on the borders and the demarcation of the borders as they were during the colonial era.¹⁴⁷ Eritrea accepted this initiative in 1999, while Ethiopia after asking for more clarification decided not to sign the agreement and carried on with its military plans. Eritrea accused Ethiopia of secretly preparing a new offensive.¹⁴⁸ In May 2000 Ethiopia launched new attacks toward Eritrea and Eritrea-Ethiopia borders; in turn Eritrea launched attacks towards Ethiopia.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile some Algerian mediators tried to find a permanent solution over the conflict and proposed the establishment of a Temporary Security Zone (TZS); establishment of a neutral commission for the delimitation of the Eritrean-Ethiopian borders according the colonial treaties and applying international laws; the establishment of a Eritrean-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) and the distribution of peacekeeping forces United Nations Peacekeeping Mission Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) on the TZS.¹⁵⁰ Both countries signed the agreement known as the Algeria Peace Agreement in 2001. In 2002 The EEBC in collaboration with the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague decided that Badme (the cause of the conflicts) belonged to Eritrea.¹⁵¹ Initially both sides agreed with the verdict, but later Ethiopia decided not to accept the conditions reporting that they felt unfairly treated. It wasn't until 2004 that Ethiopia accepted the agreement "in principle".¹⁵² In 2007 the UN decided to withdraw their troops from Eritrea, citing that Eritrea was behaving illegally over the Badme border disputes with Ethiopia. Also important Eritrean members were expelled by the UNMEE.

It is difficult to say how many victims, deaths, security and human problems this war has brought about.¹⁵³ But what is known for certain is that hundreds of thousands of Eritreans

¹⁴⁶Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol 2, p. 1686.

¹⁴⁷ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 90.

¹⁴⁸ Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol 2, p. 1686.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 1686.

¹⁵⁰ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 90.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 91.

were displaced due to insurgent movements in Ethiopia and many suffered and died. Some have estimated that over 100,000 Ethiopians and approximately 30,000 Eritreans died during this conflict.¹⁵⁴ Despite signing a peace treaty, tensions between the two countries have remained high ever since 2000. In March 2012 Ethiopia carried out a new attack on Eritrea, the first attack on Eritrean land since the war ended. According to Ethiopia, their motive behind the attacks was in retaliation to reports of Eritrea allegedly training subversive groups for a new attack in Ethiopia, an accusation Eritrea strongly denies. From these reports we can see that relations are still very much strained and that the conflict is still very much on-going and very much still alive.¹⁵⁵

2.2 Eritrean Politics

Eritrea's history of politics has been shaped by different forms of government during its time. The Italian colonialism paved the way to the first form of modern State in the country, introducing a sense of independence and separation from Ethiopia. During the Italian period Eritrea saw a significant development in the economic and political sectors with the improvement of the industrial and agricultural systems, the introduction of the infrastructures as well as the developments in the social services. Thanks to all this, for the first time the Eritrean population had access to sanitary and hospital services, at least in urban areas.¹⁵⁶ Though the Italian colonial party introduced a political state structure, their intentions were predominately selfish, planning to protect more the rights and the privileges of the Italian governors and people, rather than the Eritrean people. This was especially evident with Eritreans being used and employed low level public positions and jobs.

The Italian colonialism was then followed by the British Administration which didn't bring many more benefits for the Eritreans. The British did introduce changes and improvements to the educational system in the country and introduced a democratic political system which brought the birth of political parties and associations too.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Website: GlobalSecurity.org."Ethiopia/Eritrea War. 15 March 2012.

<<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/eritrea.html>>.

¹⁵⁵ BBC Website: Ethiopia 'launches military attack inside Eritrea', 15 March 2012.

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17386161>>.

¹⁵⁶ Gian Luca Podestà, "L'emigrazione italiana in Africa orientale". <<http://www.ilcornodafrica.it/rds-01emigrazione.pdf>>. p.8.

¹⁵⁷ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 59.

A liberal government system was in place during the Federation period between Eritrean and Ethiopia, where the rights and voices of Eritrean people were heard for the first time. But this period of relative freedom didn't last long, as it was followed by Ethiopian interference and intrusion, with the annexation of Eritrea as 14th province of Ethiopia in 1962. This brought the country back to a state of anarchy.

The period from 1961 until 1991 was filled with warfare and chaos; where the Eritreans were without rights or freedom. The worst moment was when the Dergue dictatorship violated all Eritrean rights. It was only at the end of the three decades of war in 1991 that finally Eritrea could feel liberated and free from control. After the liberation in 1991 the ELPF installed a Provisional Government with the difficult job of rebuilding the economy and with the task of creating a Democratic Constitution in a country destroyed by decades of war.¹⁵⁸ During this period many changes were promoted and pursued, for instance there was the introduction of a de facto sovereign state with three organs of government: executive, legislative and judiciary. Together with this, new codes were promoted and various laws were implemented. One of the most important was the division of the territory into different administrations which in turn were linked to the central government; this underlined the position and the strength of the central power.

The ELPF established itself into a strong centralised governmental power and made it difficult to for other institutions and organisations in the country to share and put forward their views.¹⁵⁹ Thanks to this strong structure Mr. Isaias Afewerki, the leader of the ELPF, was made the chairman of the new governmental council of State, the head of the Central Committee of the organisation and finally also the head of State. The Provisional Government lasted for 2 years where it tried to establish the rule of law, draft a Constitution, reconstruct the country and implement civic education. They introduced a new law over citizenship: all citizens born from an Eritrean mother or father were granted Eritrean citizenship and those who did not have an Eritrean parent from birth could only claim citizenship if he or she had been living in Eritrea for more than ten years "by naturalization" (this new law is critical to members of the Eritrean diaspora). This Provisional Government was faced with people who had a new desire of freedom and independence, after years of colonial suffering, years of war and was also faced with a population who had a low skill set. Among the Eritrean population the expectation for

¹⁵⁸ Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol.2, p. 1687.

¹⁵⁹ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), pp. 311-312.

peace and prosperity was high, so much so that parents encouraged their children to attend the National Military Services (introduced by the government) and sent materials and money to the government from inside and outside the country.¹⁶⁰ The government received significant income from abroad from members of the Eritrean diaspora. In 1993 with the introduction of a Referendum for the first time (apart from the federation period), Eritreans were able to participate in the country's politics, and in doing so voted for the independence of the country. After the Referendum the Eritrean Provisional Government institutionally transformed itself into a Transitional Government. It then called itself the Transitional Government of Eritrea and remained so for the four following years, promising its people that it would elect a democratic government as soon as possible, hold future elections, develop a pluralistic political system and introduce a freedom of press. All these promises were not kept by the government, and a democratic government has never been elected, elections have never been held, a pluralistic political system has never existed and there has never been freedom of press. The Constitution was ratified on 23 May 1997 and until now it has not been implemented yet. The transformation from Provisional Government to Transitional Government of Eritrea didn't bring many changes in the political arena and did not introduce any notable benefits for the Eritrean people; the main change was the reformation of the ELPF into a single political party with the name of People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) in February 1994. The PFDJ announced their political views for the future of Eritrea, drafting six main goals and six principles in the "National Charter for Eritrea" in 1994.¹⁶¹ Since the Independence of Eritrea the Government has been based on a one single party system where the President and Head of State play the most important roles, no other parties are allowed and all democratic organisations have been banned. The country lives in a continuous sentiment of insecurity because of the actions taken by the government towards International Organizations as well as towards individuals that express ideas against the oppressive measures taken by the government.¹⁶² Although the press has been banned and the local sources are few, there are many reports that highlight the reality of a population suffering under the rule of a repressive government. The government has also been accused of repeatedly violating human rights and international laws. In 2004 many parties emerged and worked together to bring an end to the authoritarian power of the President Isaias Afewerki, but he blocked

¹⁶⁰ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, pp. 317-318.

¹⁶¹ Tesfagiorgis, *Eritrea (Africa in Focus)*, p. 79.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 314-316.

the implementation of a democratic framework with a multi-party competition, and declared that a Western phenomenon was unfamiliar to the Eritrean culture. Today Eritrea still doesn't have a constitutional government.

2.3 International Relations

It is not easy to understand the policies, the relations and the developments of a country and this is particularly true for a country such as Eritrea. In describing the history of the country we have already described some of the intricate relations that have tied this country with Italy, Britain and Ethiopia. But since those years of colonial rule and since its long war for independence with Ethiopia much has changed including its international relations with the outside world.¹⁶³ Today, Eritrea is one of the most closed and isolated countries in Africa. Its repressive government runs an undemocratic power structure, and Eritrea has been recognised as a country that violates a number of human rights and international laws; it has also in the past disregarded any international opinion and pressure to change its authoritarian policies. Through its history it has also been involved in wars with its neighbours, including a particularly long and devastating conflict with Ethiopia which still remains unresolved. It shares poor foreign relations with many international countries, and in recent years has adopted a hostile and tense stance towards the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the United States in particular.¹⁶⁴

2.3.1 Relations with Sudan

Eritrea's relationship with its north and west neighbour Sudan has seen some ups and downs over the years. Historically, the people of Sudan and Eritrea have shared many similar aspects of social, cultural and economic life together. In the past Sudan has also shown political support to Eritrea, in particular during Eritrea's fight for independence and liberation with Ethiopia, and initially had also built positive relations with post-independent Eritrea.¹⁶⁵ The cordial relations that existed between the two countries rapidly deteriorate soon after Eritrea gained independence, and their relationship thereafter was

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 323.

¹⁶⁴ Sally Healy, *Eritrea's Regional Role and Foreign Policy: Past, Present and Future Perspectives*, London, Chatham House, (2007), p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ M. Venkataraman, "Eritrea's relations with the Sudan since 1991". In *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, (2005), pp. 51-76.

characterised by political tension and problems. The reason that relations turned sour between Sudan and Eritrea in late 1993 was linked to Sudan's support and facilitation of Islamist action in Africa. Eritrea accused Sudan of aiding and helping extreme Islamist activity in Eritrea and identified Sudan as the source of several Islamic insurgents in Eritrea. Sudan too directed accusations towards Eritrea, condemning the country of supporting Sudanese rebel groups. At the time Eritrea also held strong diplomatic relations with the United States and Israel, and this too did not sit well with Sudan and its Islamic government and added to the tension and conflict.¹⁶⁶ The years that followed were filled with strain and tension but there were attempts by the governments to bring reconciliation to the situation, in May 1999 both countries signed the "inter aria" agreement, with the aim of restoring diplomatic and positive relations between the nations.¹⁶⁷ When the Eritrean and Ethiopian border war worsened in 2000, thousands of Eritreans fled to Sudan to escape the carnage that the war created and to also escape the tyranny of the Eritrean government. In 2001 Sudan and Eritrea signed a new accord on the borders security act and on the safe flows of goods and people between the countries.¹⁶⁸ The cordial relations between the two governments lasted until 2003, when Sudan accused Eritrea of training terrorists in the region of Darfur in Sudan and destabilising the region. Again political unrest and tension ensued between the countries and it wasn't until 2006 that diplomatic relations were restored once again, though relations were still unsure because of the resentment that lay in both countries. It was in March 2010 that a stride was made between Eritrea and Sudan. A meeting was held in Tripoli between the two countries, where positive results like the desire to improve the security in Africa, a bilateral agreement on trade and economic fields and the promise not to support their regular opposition groups was agreed.¹⁶⁹ Relations have remained good between the two countries with reports of Eritrean and Sudanese leaders working together in recent times to strengthen their bilateral relations, and co-operating on matters of security and stability in the region.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Armstrong, *History of Eritrea*, p. 29.

¹⁶⁷ *Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara*, Vol. 2, p. 1685.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1685.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1686.

¹⁷⁰ Sudan Tribune Website: Sudanese, Eritrean leaders review bilateral relations. 20 March 2012. <<http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudanese-Eritrean-leaders-review,40495>>.

2.3.2 Relations with Djibouti

Eritrea and Djibouti share a border of 113 km along the Red Sea region.¹⁷¹ Eritrea's relations with Djibouti has been mainly characterised by border disputes over the years. Though after Eritrea gained Independence in 1993 relations between the two countries were good and amicable. However as with Sudan the relations between Eritrea and Djibouti became much more unstable in the years that followed Eritrea's independence with the topic of borders concerning the minds of both governments. In 1996 Djibouti accused Eritrea of attacking and bombing the region of Ras Doumeira, a region near the borders of the two countries and a region that Djibouti considered its own territory.¹⁷² Eritrea refused the allegations put forward by Djibouti citing that they had no knowledge of bombings in the region and were not responsible. The countries relations after this episode remained neutral and conflict free for a little while. However in 1998 relations between the two countries deteriorated once again, again the cause being the subject of borders.¹⁷³ This time Eritrea accused Djibouti of deploying its military forces along its borders with Eritrea. They also had issue with Djibouti making available its ports to Ethiopia during the Eritrean and Ethiopian conflict of 1998-2000, this all led to tensions further escalating between the two nations.¹⁷⁴ Tensions remained high and relations were strained for a few years, until 2000 when both countries restored their political relations. During 2001 the two presidents also visited both countries and together agreed to establish a cooperative program.¹⁷⁵ In 2004 they established this cooperative program, signing an agreement on political, social and economic issues.¹⁷⁶ But once again the countries cordial relations were destroyed, when in 2008 Djibouti accused Eritrea of sending its military forces into its territory of Ras Doumeira.¹⁷⁷ Eritrea's President Isaias Afewerki strongly denied the accusations, but Djibouti responded by sending its own troops to the border region and calling its policemen to occupy the territories. Djibouti appealed to the United Nations to place pressure on Eritrea to withdraw all its troops from the contested region

¹⁷¹ CIAWebsite: The CIA World Fact Book. 20 March 2012. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>>.

¹⁷² M. Tadesse, The Djibouti-Eritrea Conflict, (2008). <http://www.ssrnetwork.net/uploaded_files/4402.pdf>. p.3.

¹⁷³ Armstrong, History of Eritrea. p. 26.

¹⁷⁴ Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol. 2, p. 1687.

¹⁷⁵ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p 92.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁷⁷ BBC Website: Eritrea army 'entered Djibouti. 21 March 2012. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7385690.stm>>.

and bring an end to the bloodshed and conflict.¹⁷⁸ In 2009 the United Nations took a resolution ordering Eritrea to withdraw all its troops from the Djibouti border region. Once again Eritrea did not accept the demands put forward and declared that they were not destabilising the region. In 2009 and 2010, the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union all placed sanctions and restrictions on Eritrea. During the same year Eritrea and Djibouti signed an agreement on the borders conflict between the countries with the aim to restore diplomatic relations and establish a common method to demarcate the borders.¹⁷⁹

2.3.3 Relations with Yemen

As with many of their neighbours Eritrea's relations with Yemen were volatile. Much of their confrontation surrounded the group of Islands in the Red Sea called the Hanish Islands. These Islands interested both parties because of their strategic positioning for trade through the Suez Canal and for the remote possibility of oil reserves.¹⁸⁰ A brief war broke out between Eritrea and Yemen on the 15th December 1995 and the Eritrean forces shortly after defeated the Yemeni army. The Yemeni continued to carry out attacks against Eritrea in the Hanish Island regions and conflict continued until 1996. On the 26th May 1996 both Countries agreed to settle the dispute peacefully, and let the Permanent Court of Arbitration at Hague decide the sovereignty of the islands.¹⁸¹ On June 1996 the Court unanimously decided to recognise the sovereignty of the larger island to Yemen, the island known as Hanish Zugar archipelago. They also ruled that the sovereignty of the smaller islands belonged to Eritrea. Furthermore the agreement gave the he fishermen of both countries the freedom of access around all Hanish Islands.¹⁸²

2.3.4 Relations with the United States

As we have seen already in the history section of this chapter, relations between Eritrea and the United States go back to the early 1940s when the country was under British Administration and when the United States setup a military base in the region. The United

¹⁷⁸ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p 92.

¹⁷⁹ Encyclopedia of Africa, South of Sahara, Vol. 2, p. 1687.

¹⁸⁰ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 87.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁸² Armstrong, History of Eritrea. p. 30.

States saw Eritrea and Ethiopia as strategic assets in the Horn of Africa, but Eritrea was always seen as a lesser asset in comparison to its neighbour. When the British Administration withdrew from Eritrea after World War II, it was the United States who showed support for the eventual Eritrea and Ethiopia federation a decision that did not please Eritrea.¹⁸³ When Ethiopia dismantled the federation and pursued the with the annexation of Eritrea into Ethiopia, and with the dissolving of the Eritrean parliament, the United States stood by and did not intervene to put a stop to the actions of Ethiopia. During the early years of war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the Americans discretely provided military and financial aid to Ethiopia, actions that when came to light infuriated the Eritreans, who were the direct sufferers from the injection of aid and capital the Americans had offered the Ethiopians.¹⁸⁴ By the 1970's the United States lost interest in both Eritrea and Ethiopia. As Eritrea's conflict with Ethiopia worsened, and as its people suffered under the pressures of war that was going badly, the Eritreans appealed for help to the US. The US though declined to support the Eritreans, owing to an apparent distrust of the left-leaning nationalist movement that was led by the breakaway Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).¹⁸⁵

After Eritrea's war with Ethiopia was over and after they gained independence and sovereignty, it was the United States who was one of the first countries to recognise Eritrea's sovereignty after the referendum of 1993. Moreover during the 1990's bilateral relations between the two countries grew stronger as America provided support, development aid and military training to Eritrea. During the 1990s America showed concern over some of Eritrea's use of military action over disputes with Sudan, Yemen and Djibouti. And when the United States officials raised questions over Eritrea's reactions towards these disputes, they were often publicly rejected and insulted.¹⁸⁶ This and Eritrea's instable and unpredictable nature led to relations cooling between the countries. During 1998 and 2000 when Eritrea and Ethiopia were again at war with each other over border conflicts, relations between the United States and Eritrea took a turn for the worst and soured. As the conflict worsened, the United States made efforts to facilitate and find a

¹⁸³ Dan Connell, Eritrea and the United States: towards a new US policy. In *The War on Terror and the Horn of Africa*, (2009), chapter 6, pp. 132-133.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Diamond and David Fouquei, "American Military Aid to Ethiopia – And Eritrea" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 25, Issue 3, (1987), pp. 472-473.

¹⁸⁵ Connell, Eritrea and the United States: towards a new US policy, p. 134.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

solution and bring an end to the border struggle between Eritrea and Ethiopia.¹⁸⁷ The Eritrean government saw this as an unnecessary intervention and criticised the US of favouring and supporting Ethiopia. In addition to Eritrea's public condemnation of the US, President Isaias Afewerki also introduced repressive policies that he said were necessary to protect the Eritrean people and protect the country from the war it was involved in. These matters in particular contributed to the United States taking the decision to distance itself from Eritrea and its government.

The years that followed didn't bring any improvements to Eritrean and American relations. And although the start of the George W. Bush administration saw America taking a more practical, yet limited engagement approach with Eritrea, particularly after Eritrea's show of support towards the war on terror after the 9/11 attacks, relations soon deteriorated further.¹⁸⁸ The cause behind the weakening of relations was connected to Eritrea's violation of human rights. Its repressive nature was drawing concerns by international human rights associations and by outside countries. Because of these concerns and relations were now characterised by America taking an approach of isolation and containment towards Eritrea. America used and called for a range of sanctions to be imposed against Eritrea, to limit the country's capacity to influence damage in the Horn of Africa region.¹⁸⁹

Eritrea's continuing conflict with Ethiopia doesn't show any sign of dying down, this and Eritrea's human rights violations are reasons why relations between the US and Eritrea have remained strained. Reports of Eritrea being involved with and supporting Islamic terrorist groups have also been an issue of concern for the Americans.¹⁹⁰ Current relations show no sign of improving soon, and with the Eritrean government's volatile nature and refusal to change to international pressure, it is safe to assume that relations will remain strained for some years to come.

¹⁸⁷ GlobalSecurity.org Website: Ethiopia / Eritrea War. 22 March 2012.
<<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/eritrea.htm>>.

¹⁸⁸ Connell, Eritrea and the United States: towards a new US policy, pp. 137-138.

¹⁸⁹ UN Dispatch Global News and Views, Mark Leon Goldberg, "Sanctions Against Eritrea?". 23 March 2012. <www.undispatch.com/sanctions-eritrea>.

¹⁹⁰ United Department of State Website: Background Note Eritrea. 23 March 2012.
<<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2854.htm>>.

2.3.5 Relations with the European Union

As with so many international parties and countries, Eritrea's relation with the European Union has been a complicated affair. After 1993 when Eritrea's independence struggle came to an end, the European Union has been a constant contributor of financial aid, social and humanitarian support, and has formed partnerships with Eritrea, in the forms of reconstructive programs and strategies. In 2000 the European Union created a partnership agreement with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific region, called the Cotonou agreement. After Eritrea's war for independence and after its border conflicts with Ethiopia in 1998 to 2000, the European Union formed a partnership with Eritrea under the guidelines of their Cotonou agreement.¹⁹¹ The agreement focused on addressing the difficulties of reconstruction following the devastation of the war. In 2009 the European Union put together another strategy in the form of the National Indicative Programme, a program that aimed at moving away from the post-conflict rehabilitation strategies that were in place from 2000, and move towards a more development orientated program. The agreement meant that the European Union would invest 122 million euros implementing economic and social development programs to help reduce poverty and famine in Eritrea. The agreement was designed to last until 2013 and though the European Union has shown concerns surrounding violations of human rights in Eritrea, they have continued to give financial and social support to Eritrea. The European Union has sustained that in order to address concerns over human rights with Eritrea they must maintain a political dialogue with the country. And though many associations have criticised the EUs decision to continue offering aid via the National Indicative Programme, the EU has continued to repeat that withdrawing aid from the country will only cause significant suffering to the Eritrean people.¹⁹² On the 15th November 2011 the Eritrean Government sent the European Union a letter explaining that Eritrea intended to close all on-going development fund programmes. According to the letter the Eritrean Government said its reasons stemmed from a need to review the country's five-year National Development Plan before cooperating with the EU within the framework of the next European Development Fund cycle starting in 2013.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Online Document: The Cotonou Agreement. 23 March 2012.

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/overview/cotonou-agreement/index_en.htm>.

¹⁹² Online Document: Q&A on EU – Eritrea Relations. 25 March 2012.

<http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/files/europa_only/EU_relations_eritrea_faq_201006_en.pdf>.

¹⁹³ Website: Eritrea closes EU programmes. 25 March 2012.

<http://www.mfa.gov.et/Press_Section/Week_Horn_Africa_December_09_2011.htm#3>

2.3.6 Eritrean Relations with Italy

The history that Eritrea and Italy share goes back more than one hundred years, and yet when the Italian colonialism fell in 1941, Italy's involvement with Eritrea both on a political and economic scale has been minimal. It was not until 1993, that relations between the two countries started up again and improved, and when Eritrea's fight for liberation with Ethiopia came to an end, it was Italy that was one of the first countries to recognise the birth of the independent state of Eritrea. Through these post-independent years saw Italy's relations especially in the trade and investment sector grow considerably. The Eritrean and Italian trade relations are so strong that nearly 60% of Eritrean exports to Europe are to Italy.¹⁹⁴ In 2010 it was reported that Italy was Eritrea's largest export partner, with 30.5% of Eritrea's total annual exports going to Italy.¹⁹⁵ Eritrea too imports a large share of goods from Italy, with 14% of the 38% of all products it imports from Europe coming from Italy.¹⁹⁶ These strong trade relations have seen Italy become one of Eritrea's main European partners.

During these Eritrean post-independent years, Italy has established a number of agreements and treaties with Eritrea. Italy and Eritrea share more Investment and trade agreements than any other European country, an indication of the amicable bilateral relations shared between the two. Table 2.2 lists the agreements that the Eritrean and Italian governments have formed since 1995.

Though relations have been amicable throughout the last two decades, there have also been moments of tension between Eritrea and Italy. In 2001 the Eritrean government expelled the Italian Ambassador from Eritrea, after the Italian Ambassador had delivered a letter of reproach from the European Union to the Eritrean government. The letter from the EU at the time criticised Eritrea for its human rights violations, following the detention of journalists and 11 dissidents. After the expulsion of the Italian Ambassador, Eritrea released a statement citing that the expulsion was not connected to the letter of reproach handed to them and that their amicable relations with Italy were not affected.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ R. Ravinder, "Eritrean Trade with Italy in Post-Independence Period – An Analytical Study", <<http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/12661>>.

¹⁹⁵ CIA Website: The CIA World Fact Book. 25 March 2012 <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>>.

¹⁹⁶ Ravinder, "Eritrean Trade with Italy in Post-Independence Period – An Analytical Study". 25 March 2012. <<http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/12661>>.

¹⁹⁷ BBC Website: Eritrea plays down diplomatic row. 26 March 2012. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1574910.stm>>.

After the issue of 2001 relations between Italy and Eritrea remained stable. Furthermore through the years Italian officials made numerous visits to Eritrea, as did the Eritrean president Isaias, who made political and business visits to Italy. Table 2.3 lists the high profile visits that have been made between Italian and Eritrean officials. Ever since Eritrea's 1998-2000 border conflict with Ethiopia, it's not surprising to see that Italy has been a key international figure that has actively tried to help the two countries find peace and bring an end to the on-going disputes. In February 2012 Italy publicly released a statement asking Eritrea and Ethiopia to resolve their border dispute and also condemned Ethiopia for its military attack inside Eritrea in January 2012. Italy in unison with other European Union members expressed the hope that Eritrea and Ethiopia would adopt the Algiers agreement and improve their bilateral relations.¹⁹⁸

Bilateral relation between Italy and Eritrea have remained constant and the two governments still share investment and trading ties, and these ties have remained stable even through the issues of human rights violations by Eritrea, that a number of international organisations and states have highlighted in the last few years.

Table 2.2 - Eritrean and Italian Agreements in place since Eritrean independent

Year	Name of Agreement	Description of Agreement
1995	Agreement of economic cooperation	Signed the 14th March 1995. This agreement was still in force after 2000.
1996	Agreement for the promotion and protection of investment	Signed on the 6th February 1996. This agreement has predominantly been in force since 2003, but has not seen any actions really come from it.
1996	Treaty of cooperation and friendship	Signed on the 9th February 1996.
1998	Technical Agreement	Signed on the 22nd October 1998, in Asmara. An agreement to establish the official presence of the Italian Embassy in Asmara and to recognise the status of the Italian staff in office there.
2000	Technical Agreement	Signed the 12th December 2000, in Asmara. An agreement to recognise the status and presence of Italian school sand their staff in Asmara.

Source: Italian Embassy in Asmara website¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Europe Online Magazine Website: Italy condemns Ethiopian attack on Eritrea. 26 March 2012. <http://en.europeonline-magazine.eu/italy-condemns-ethiopian-attack-on-eritrea_197213.html>.

¹⁹⁹ Embassy of Italy in Asmara Website: Accordi. 27 March 2012. <http://www.ambasmara.esteri.it/Ambasciata_Asmara/Menu/I_rapporti_bilateral/Cooperazione_politica/Accordi>.

Table 2.2 - Eritrean and Italian Visits

Year	Description of visit
2002	In October 2002, the Italian President of Commission for the Defence of Chambers of Deputies, Mr Luigi Ramponi visited Eritrea.
2003	In February 2003, the Italian minister for Foreign affairs, Mr Alfredo Mantica visited Eritrea.
2003	In August 2003, the minister for Italians in the world, made a visit to Eritrea.
2005	In March 2003, the Italian senator, Fiorello Provera visited Eritrea.
2005	In April 2005, the Vice president of productive Activities in Italy visited Eritrea.
2005	In December 2005, the Italian Foreign Affairs minister, Alfredo Mantica visited Eritrea.
2006	In November 2006, the Eritrean president, Isais, visited Italy and met with the Italian Prime Minister at the time, Romano Prodi.

Source: Italian Embassy in Asmara website²⁰⁰

2.3.7 Eritrean Relations with the United Kingdom

A little like Eritrea's relations with Italy, the United Kingdom's involvement in Eritrean affairs stretches back many years. But after the period of British Administration after World War II and after their support for Eritrea to be federated to Ethiopia in 1952, the United Kingdom's bilateral relations with Eritrea since that period has been non-existent. Unlike with Italy, Eritrea's trade relations are much weaker with the United Kingdom. Of Eritrea's \$383.5 million of exports in 2011, only 5.7% of those exports went to the United Kingdom.²⁰¹ In terms of imports, in 2010 less than 2% of Eritrea's total imports came from the United Kingdom, a considerably low figure when compared to other European partners such as Italy (7.2%) and Germany (7.2%).²⁰² Although in February 2012, the English Foreign Office Minister Henry Bellingham met with the Eritrean Delegation to discuss the United Kingdom and Eritrea's bilateral relations. The topic of Eritrean regional security and stability, as well as discussions centring on potential investment opportunities were covered during this meeting. This was the first time an Eritrean minister had made a visit to the UK.²⁰³ Though these discussions indicate the potential for stronger bilateral relations in the future, relations have not always been so amicable in recent years. In April 2011, the

²⁰⁰ Embassy of Italy in Asmara Website: Incontri. 27 March 2012.

<http://www.ambasmara.esteri.it/Ambasciata_Asmara/Menu/I_rapporti_bilaterali/Cooperazione_politica/Incontri/>.

²⁰¹ CIA Website: The CIA World Fact Book. 27 March 2012. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>>.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ TesfaNews Webiste: Policy shift observed as UK invite Eritrea for bilateral talks and investment. 27 March 2012. <<http://www.tesfanews.net/archives/6477>>.

United Kingdom warned Eritrea over the detention of four British ex-Royal Marines. Their warnings came after the United Kingdom had made a request for consular access to the detained men, but Eritrea refused to give information about the four Britons and denied access the English government requested.²⁰⁴ Following Eritrea's refusal to consular access to the British detainees, the English Foreign Office imposed sanctions on Eritrean diplomats in the UK. The English Foreign Secretary William Hague also advised the UK embassy in Eritrea that the English government would be immediately suspending activities surrounding the collection of a tax levied by the Eritrean government on Eritreans living in the UK and Australia.²⁰⁵ After the sanctions and suspension of the Eritrean tax activities, the detained Britons were released and the United Kingdom lifted the sanctions and the tax suspensions it had imposed in reaction to the Eritrean government's unwillingness to cooperate.²⁰⁶

In these recent years the United Kingdom together with other international associations and parties has also raised concerns surrounding Eritrea's human rights violations. In 2010 the British government released a report and statement saying that they recognised Eritrea's concerns on national security, but that this was no excuse to not adhere to the international human rights standards and does not justify the repressive policies the government has in place. The United Kingdom has been an active participant in trying to resolve the issues of human rights in Eritrea, it has engaged with the Eritrean government both bilaterally and through the European Union council on the matter, and has put pressure on the Eritrean government to make changes. The United Kingdom though has also offered support and encouraged Eritrea to find a solution with Ethiopia over the border dispute.²⁰⁷

Although there have been a number of incidents that have soured relations in recent years between the United Kingdom and Eritrea, it is also notable that the United Kingdom as recently made strides in seeking to improve bilateral relations with Eritrea. Issues

²⁰⁴ BBC Website: Eritrea denies UK consular access to detained Britons. 27 March 2012. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12691664>>.

²⁰⁵ BBC Website: Britons held as spies in Eritrea have been released. 27 March 2012. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13742725>>.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ CDRiE Website: UK Government's annual report on Eritrea's human rights record. 28 March 2012. <http://cdrie.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=183:uk-governmer-annual-report-on-eritreas-human-rights-record&catid=34:english-articles&Itemid=53>

surrounding Eritrea's human rights violations have also certainly concerned the United Kingdom and we have seen that they are working with the European Union on encouraging Eritrea to change its recent repressive ways, but we have also seen that there is the potential for improved bilateral relations between the two countries too.

2.4 Contemporary Issues that Plague Eritrea

After Eritrea gained independence in 1991, the revolution movement and then the government promised the Eritrean people a life of peace and stability, the establishment of a democratic state. But for many Eritreans, the promises made did not come to fruition, and the achievement of political, social and economic transformation and security was never reached. This and many other contemporary issues are just some of the reasons why a great number of Eritrean youth have moved to the Middle East and Europe over the last few decades especially.

The more significant pressing issues which plague Eritrea are those of political freedom, human rights, food security and the threat of disease. The political situation in the country, its internal instability and absence of any real constitutional structure has left many Eritreans feeling dissatisfied and discontent. Yet in addition to the political instability present in the country, it is probably the government's suppression of freedom of speech, its denial of religious rights and freedom of movement, and the abuse of human rights that are most concerning and which have led many Eritreans to flee the country.²⁰⁸

2.4.1 Human Rights and Freedom of Movement

Eritrea has been described as having one of the most repressive governments in the world. With its government imposing policies of mass detention, torture and prolonged military conscription, restrictions on freedom of speech and movement, the country is recognised as having one of the lowest standards of human rights in the world. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), state repression has forced many Eritrean citizens to flee their country, making Eritrea one of the highest producers of refugees in the world, with those

²⁰⁸ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 319.

fleeing risking death or collective punishment against their families.²⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch compiled a full investigation into the situation in Eritrea in the 21st century and their report highlighted many areas of concern in regards to human rights and concluding that Eritrea is one of the most repressive countries in Africa and the World. The following quote from that report conducted in 2011 summarises well the issue in the country.

"There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of movement, no freedom of worship, and much of the adult male and female population is conscripted into indefinite national service where they receive a token wage. Dissent is not tolerated. Any criticism or questioning of government policy is ruthlessly punished. Detention, torture and forced labour await anyone who disagrees with the government, anyone who attempts to avoid military service or flee the country without permission, and anyone found practising or suspected of practising faiths the government does not sanction."²¹⁰

One of the issues of particular concern and distress is that of free movement in Eritrea. Aware of the discontent that resides among the Eritrean people, the government have put restrictions in place to control people's travel inside and outside of the country. They have made exit visas and passports virtually impossible to obtain, leading many Eritreans to attempt fleeing the country illegally, often risking their lives, with the government running a shoot to kill policy if any Eritreans are found illegally crossing their borders to Ethiopia or Sudan. The government also punishes the families of those who escape or desert from national service with exorbitant fines or imprisonment.²¹¹ Refugees having escaped Eritrea and who are involuntarily sent back to the country are imprisoned and tortured and some are even killed. In 2008 two Eritreans expelled to Eritrea from Germany were immediately imprisoned by their Eritrean government. The two Eritreans were able to again flee the country and return to Europe, where Amnesty International interviewed both men, who described the conditions they were placed in as inhumane conditions, conditions that included disease, insanity and death among fellow detainees.²¹²

Moreover Eritrea's methods to contain control does not stop here, they also require that all members of the Eritrean National Service are to have permission papers called "menquesaqesi wereqet" to travel within the country. Women too are restricted, with

²⁰⁹ The Guardian Website: Eritrea like a giant prison, claims human rights group. 28 March 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/16/eritrea-africa-human-rights-refugees>>.

²¹⁰ HRW Website: World Report 2012: Eritrea. 28 March 2012. <<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/world-report-2012-eritrea>>.

²¹¹ HRW Website: Eritrea: Repression Creating Human Rights Crisis. 28 March 2012. <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/04/16/eritrea-repression-creating-human-rights-crisis>>.

²¹² Amnesty International, Annual Report 2011: The state of the world's human rights, 2011.29 March 2012. <<http://amnesty.org/en/region/eritrea/report-2011>>. p.7.

women younger than 47 not permitted to travel outside the country. The government also do not permit children older than 14 to travel outside Eritrea. These measures of restrictions have been a contributing factor and add to the many other reasons why the country has so many refugees.

2.4.2 National Military Service

Eritrea is one of the largest spenders on national military service. According to the CIA World fact book Eritrea in 2009 spent around 6.8% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on its military and defence programs, and in 2001 had a military expenditure as high as 25% of its GDP.²¹³ From its population of 5 million people, 300,000 are in active military service and many others in Eritrea's military reserve program.²¹⁴ Eritrea runs a forced conscription program, whereby high school children in there last year of education are forcibly enrolled into military service and are trained in specially designed camps used to brainwash and encourage the government's policies. The duration of military service is officially 18 months, but nearly all that are called for military service are forced to stay on for prolonged periods and many have been kept on indefinitely. While those who are conscripted into the national service carry out military duties, many are also forced to work on the People's Front for Development and Justice (PFDJ) government and private development projects.²¹⁵ Conscripts are also forced to work on military official's private farms and businesses and are used to provide a range of personal services for lower commanders.²¹⁶ Aside the forced labour duties that military recruits are exposed to, another issue is that of national service pay. National service pay is very low, barely sufficient enough for recruits to live on. If conscripts object to the forced labour duties and national service pay, they are often jailed and tortured.²¹⁷ Furthermore to the issues already mentioned, women too in national service are treated very badly. Women are subjected to degrading treatment, continuous sexual violence, rape and sexual enslavement

²¹³ CIA Website: Military Expenditures. 29 March 2012.

<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2034rank.html>>.

²¹⁴ A. Mehreteab, "Renewed Demobilization in Eritrea", Bonn International Centre for Conversion. 29 March 2012. <<http://www.bicc.de/uploads/pdf/publications/bulletin/bulletin21.pdf>>.

²¹⁵ Gaim Kibreab, "Forced Labour in Eritrea", in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 47, Issue 1, p. 52.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²¹⁷ HRW Website: Service for Life. 29 March 2012. <<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2009/04/16/service-life-0>>.

by military officers. And if women refuse to submit to these acts of sexual exploitation, they are punished by detention and torture.²¹⁸

The uncertainties surrounding the length of military service and the harsh conditions those enrolled are subjected to, are all significant reasons why so many young Eritreans attempt to escape the regime and what has spurred a massive exodus of young Eritreans from the country.

2.4.3 Freedom of Religion

Since 2002 the Eritrean government has not permitted the practice of any religions other than those administered by, the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran church, and Islam²¹⁹ Though the Eritrean government profess that they have an official legitimate mechanism for other religions to register to be recognised and practice in Eritrea, but despite reports of religions making applications, not ne has been approved by the Eritrean government since 2002.²²⁰ Those who practice an unregistered religion such as Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians face harassment, imprisonment and torture unless they renounce their faith. And some Christian organisations outside the country claim that 2,000 to 3,000 Christians are currently jailed for their religious beliefs.²²¹

Jehova Witnesses are singled out in particularly by the government's freedom of religion policies; with the Eritrean president Isaias in 1996 having personally ordered government agencies to deny them citizenship rights and ordering his military and police services to be particularly ruthless and merciless if they catch them practicing the religion. The Jehovah's Witnesses website currently reports that there are forty eight Jehovah's

²¹⁸ CM. Bailliet, "Examining Sexual Violence in the Military Within the Context of Eritrean Asylum Claims Presented in Norway", in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol 19, Issue 3, pp. 471-510.

²¹⁹ Amnesty International Website: Eritrea. 30 March 2012.
<<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/eritrea/report-2011>>.

²²⁰ HRW Report, "Ten long Years, A Briefing on Eritrea's Missing Political Prisoners". 30 March 2012.
<<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/eritrea0911WebForUpload.pdf>>.

²²¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Manfred Nowak, Addendum, "Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of March 2006 Entitled 'Human Rights Council'".
<<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=4bbee9072>>.

Witnesses imprisoned in Eritrea as of the 31st January 2012.²²² Many organisations have recognised Eritrea's violation of human rights in this area of freedom of religion, with the United States Department of State in 2011 designating Eritrea as a "Country of Particular Concern" because of its multiple violations.²²³

2.4.4 Freedom of Press

The public press first emerged during the Italian Colonialism period between 1890 and 1940, but was strictly controlled by the colonial Italian party. It wasn't until the 1940's during the period of British Military Administration control, that the public press and people were allowed to express their political, economic and cultural views through media.²²⁴ Eritreans used newspapers which were printed in Tigrinya and Arabic to express their views and also to unite communities. The freedom of press that Eritreans experienced under British Administration was soon to come to an end. During the period of Ethiopian occupation between 1961 to 1991, newspapers and media were discouraged and freedom of press was suppressed by the Dergue regime.²²⁵ After Eritrea gained independence in 1991, the Eritrean government encouraged private and public media agencies to work towards the development of press media in Eritrea. The Government used the press media policy as a sign of political transformation, and even tolerated the use of the private press by Eritreans to voice their criticisms and views. The many private newspapers that emerged became vital sources for information on issues related to war and internal affairs within the country. However, in September 2001, the Eritrean government put a stop to private newspapers and journalists.²²⁶ They arrested a great number of journalists and closed all private newspaper operations in Eritrea, alleging and citing that these media organisations and journalists were a great risk to national security. Today in Eritrea, there are no private media agencies or companies. The only source of media in the country is a government owned newspaper called Haddas Ertra, and a government run national television channel

²²² Jehovah's Witnesses Website: Forty-eight Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned in Eritrea. 30 March 2012. <<http://www.jw-media.org/eri/20120131rpt.htm>>.

²²³ UNHCR Website: USCIRF Annual Report 2011 – Countries of Particular Concern: Eritrea. 30 March 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4dbe90c36e.html>>.

²²⁴ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 314.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 314.

²²⁶ HRW Report, Ten long Years, A Briefing on Eritrea's Missing Political Prisoners. 30 March 2012. <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/eritrea0911WebForUpload.pdf>>

called ERI-TV and ERI-TV2.²²⁷ Nonetheless the government does allow satellite dishes, and also allow subscriptions to international media. Those who could afford to purchase a satellite dish have access to uncensored international news including the BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera.²²⁸ However it is estimated that for every 1000 Eritreans only 53 of them have a television and even fewer have a satellite dish.²²⁹ There are internet Cafes in the country, but they too are controlled by strict government imposed restrictions on information. According to Reporters By Borders (2008), Eritrea is listed as having one of the lowest freedom of press in the world.

2.4.5 Internet in Eritrea

Formally there are no official restrictions on the use of the Internet in Eritrea. However, the government monitors all Internet browsing and communication, including email, all without legal warrants. The state also forces Eritreans to use one of three Internet service providers owned by the government either directly or through high-ranking PFDJ party members. Those who want a larger bandwidth, such as some international mining corporations, pay exorbitant prices far beyond the reach of the local population for DSL speed Internet connections.²³⁰

The government also discourages citizens from viewing Web sites known to be Anti-government by continuously labelling the sites and their developers as saboteurs of the government. Many citizens expressed fear of arrest if the government caught them viewing such sites. Despite the requirement for journalists to receive written permission to take photographs, gatherings are regularly photographed by government officials for intimidation and as possible grounds for future detention. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics for 2009, approximately 4% of the country's inhabitants used the Internet. While monitored Internet cafes with extremely limited bandwidth are available in Asmara and other major cities, the vast majority of Eritreans do not have access to the Internet.²³¹

²²⁷ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 314.

²²⁸ U.S. Department of State Website: 2010 Human Rights Report: Eritrea. 31 March 2012. <<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154345.htm>>.

²²⁹ Encyclopedia.com Website: Eritrean Media. 31 March 2012. <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Eritrea.aspx>>.

²³⁰ U.S. Department of State Website: 2010 Human Rights Report: Eritrea. 31 March 2012. <<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154345.htm>>.

²³¹ Ibid.

2.4.6 The International Response to Eritrea's Human Rights Concerns

With Eritrea's gross and continuing human rights violations many countries and international associations have placed pressure on Eritrea to make changes to its repressive policies and improve its human rights. For example the United Nations Human Rights council and many countries have called on Eritrea to respect the time limit with national service, to recognise a right to objection, to stop using conscripts for forced labour, and to end under-age recruitment.²³² Human Rights associations have also asked Eritrea to release prisoners who have been detained without trial and the United Nations Human Rights council in particular has asked the Eritrean government to investigate the claims of torture and violence within its military service.²³³ Concerns surrounding Eritrea's policy of freedom of religion and concerns surrounding the treatment of involuntarily returned asylum seekers to the country have been raised with the Eritrean government.

Eritrea's response to all these questions is not surprising. The government claim that until the threat to National security is dealt with and removed, they have no choice but to enforce and continue with their restrictive and repressive policies. Though Eritrea's Badme border conflict with Ethiopia ended in May 2000, many consider Eritrea have used the unsettled status of this war with Ethiopia as justification for not allowing democratic elections, open and fair trials, freedom of press, and the practice of other rights. They also use the national threat from the Ethiopian conflict as a reason for not complying with its own national service time limit. In regards to the human rights violations that countries and associations have accused them of, the Eritrean government has denied them all, citing that it meets all international and internal human rights commitments.²³⁴

Notwithstanding the pressure that international communities have placed on Eritrea to address its human rights violations, the Eritrean government has shown little sign of making any changes to its regime and to follow the recommendations coming from these international councils. And though external pressure in the form of sanctions has caused the Isaias government to change its conduct in international affairs to a degree, there seems to be little hope that the government will bring a stop to its repressive and fascist policies.

²³² UNHCR Report: Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review on Eritrea. 31 March 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,UNHRC,,ERI,,4bde8f8d2,0.html>>. p.16.

²³³ Ibid., p. 20.

²³⁴ HRW Report, Ten long Years, A Briefing on Eritrea's Missing Political Prisoners. 31 March 2012.<<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/eritrea0911WebForUpload.pdf>>.

2.5 Eritrea's Refugee Crisis

In 2011 Eritrea celebrated 20 years of independence, and though it should have been a moment of great merriment, maybe it was more a moment to stand up and recognise that its citizens are some of the most victimised people on this planet, with a country that has one of the world's most repressive governments. As I outlined in Chapter 2 the issues of human rights and economic, political and social violations are the contributing factors that have made Eritrea one of the largest refugee producing countries in the world. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) between 2000 and 2010 Eritrea produced 236,059 refugees.²³⁵

The crisis of refugees in Eritrea traces its root to the thirty year war of independence fought between Eritrea and Ethiopia. During this war it is estimated that over 1 million Eritreans became refugees and fled the country. After the war, there were six conflict free years that soon became a distant memory as troubles recommenced again in 1998 with Ethiopia. The Eritrean government brought in strict and repressive policies to aid its war efforts and to control a population who were not ready for another war with Ethiopia. Though the war ended in September 2000 after the two countries signed a comprehensive peace agreement in Algiers, the Eritrean government continued with its authoritarian policies and repressive methods, which it had said were imposed to defend against Ethiopia during the war.²³⁶ All through the thirty year war the Eritreans were fleeing because of war, famine and poverty, they are now fleeing for those reasons and other too. Since 2000 to the present day, many Eritreans have been leaving their country due to the repressive regime of Isaias Afwerki and his government. In 2008, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) carried out a report on the refugee global trend. The report showed that in 2008, despite Eritrea being one of the smallest countries with one of the smallest populations in the world, that its people registered the second highest number of claims for asylum worldwide.²³⁷ In a similar report from 2009 and 2010, the UNHCR reported that Eritrea was still one of top ten highest refugee producing countries in the world (Table 3.1). It also reported that Eritrea had the third highest number of new asylum seeker claims for this

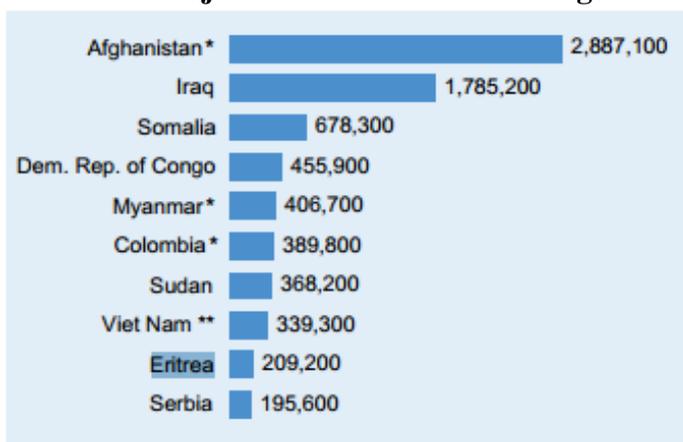
²³⁵ UNHCR Report: UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2010. 01 April 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/4ef9c7269.html>>.

²³⁶ Report of the European Parliamentary Hearing: Eritrea: Refugees, Child Soldiers and European Policy. 01 April 2012. <<http://www.eepa.be/wcm/documents/conferencemeeting-reports.html>>.

²³⁷ UNHCR Report: 2008 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/4a375c426.html>>.

period, at a figure of 43,300. Unsurprisingly the main countries of asylum for Eritrean refugees are Sudan and Ethiopia, but outside of Africa the statistics indicate that the United Kingdom and Italy are both countries with a high Eritrean refugee population. If we look at Table 3.2, it is interesting to note that Eritrean refugee numbers in Sudan and Ethiopia since 1996 have steadily decreased to the point that in 2005 the number of refugees were a third of the number present in 1996. The fall in refugee numbers is primarily down to the fact that in recent years both Sudan and Ethiopia have expelled a considerable number of Eritreans. Their actions are related to the strained and tense relations they share with Eritrea's government, and since 2002 there have been a number of examples of the Sudanese and Ethiopian governments demonstrating that they have issues with Eritrea's behaviour.²³⁸

Table 3.1 - Major source countries of refugees in 2009



Source: UNHCR 2009 Global Trends²³⁹

²³⁸ UNHCR Website: Ethiopia: Information on the possible arrest and deportation of Ethiopian-citizen spouses and dependants of "ethnic Eritreans. 02 April 2012.

<<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCIS,,ETH,,3dee061d4,0.html>>.

²³⁹ UNHCR Report: 2009 Global Trends Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/4c11f0be9.pdf>>.

Table 3.2 - Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Eritrea – Main Countries of Asylum

1. Refugee population, end of year--main countries of asylum (main countries in 2005)										
Asylum country*	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Sudan	328,307	315,030	342,295	342,129	367,735	324,546	305,294	108,251	110,927	116,746
Ethiopia	-	-	-	-	3,276	4,212	5,126	6,754	8,719	10,700
United Kingdom	-	-	-	-	-	-	975	1,748	2,404	3,617
Germany	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,553	2,754	2,974	2,746
Italy	-	1	1	3	16	40	94	177	785	2,705
Other	3,918	4,046	4,485	5,006	5,824	4,431	4,134	4,437	5,322	7,552
Total	332,225	319,077	346,781	347,138	376,851	333,229	318,176	124,121	131,131	144,066

* UNHCR estimates for most industrialized countries.

2. Asylum applicants during the year--main asylum countries (main countries in 2005)										
Asylum country	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Sudan	-	-	4	-	121	-	26,851	1,063	6,706	6,350
Ethiopia	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,066	1,580	2,187	2,966
United Kingdom	-	-	-	-	-	620	1,180	1,070	1,265	1,900
Italy	-	-	-	13	33	276	927	1,230	831	1,313
Sweden	33	21	27	73	127	151	266	641	395	425
Other	577	727	1,358	2,308	2,394	1,978	1,990	2,066	2,388	2,956
Total	610	748	1,389	2,394	2,675	3,025	32,280	7,650	13,772	15,910

Source: 2005 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook²⁴⁰

The refugees of the thirty year war with Ethiopia who fled to escape a war that was destroying lives and futures, who now form part of the diaspora decades ago and who form part of today's Eritrean diaspora too. These members fought with their government during its thirty year war, and shared a common goal with its government, an objective of independence. Later on the refugees who have fled Eritrea since the 1998-2000 conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and those who have fled after this, share a different attitude towards the Eritrean leadership. Essentially their reasons for leaving stem from conditions of repression and human rights violations, created not from outside parties or influences but from their own government. Subsequently, these refugees who join their diaspora are critics of their home country's government, and use the diaspora to criticise, protest and bring change to a repressive Eritrean regime.

2.6 The Issue of Human Trafficking

As we have seen Eritrea is one of the largest refugee producing countries in the world. Many Eritreans flee Eritrea and its repressive environment crossing into Sudan and Egypt in search of refuge. Many of those who flee are children or women, all who are vulnerable and subsequently become victims of human trafficking. Eritrean refugees thanks to their vulnerability and fear are easy targets for human traffickers. In January 2012 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Antonio Guterres, gave an interview

²⁴⁰ UNHCR Report: UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2005. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/4641837911.html>>.

after a tour of the Shagarab refugee camp in Sudan.²⁴¹ The commissioner warned of the on-going problem of trafficking of Eritrean refugees, and spoke of a known criminal network of traffickers who were exploiting Eritrean refugees. He also highlighted that the criminal network was very much active in Eritrea, Sudan and Egypt, and described of the reports of kidnapped Eritrean refugees being put up for ransom. He also spoke of how many of these refugees were also being killed for the trafficking of organs, and how some women and young girls were being forced into prostitution, and to a lesser extent how Eritreans were being used for forced labour.²⁴² In the last few years the issue of human trafficking of Eritrean refugees seems to have worsened. There have been many examples of cases where Eritrean refugees trying to get to Israel have been kidnapped by trafficking gangs and a ransom has been asked from their relatives in Eritrea or even their relatives abroad.²⁴³ In Egypt for example it is believed that there are still hundreds of detained Eritrean refugees many of whom have been threatened with death and organ extraction unless the trafficker's ransom demands are paid. Though this issue has been somewhat ignored in the past, many authorities and international organisations are now recognising the issues of human trafficking that Eritrean refugees are subjected to. For example the UNHCR is trying to raise \$2 million of funds to work with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Sudanese authorities to bring down the network of human traffickers and put a stop to these criminal organisations.²⁴⁴ Although international organisations such as the UNHCR are making efforts to eradicate the problems of human trafficking for Eritrean refugees, many believe that the Eritrean government is doing little to help put a stop to this problem. In 2009 the US State Department released a report in which they said, "The Government of the State of Eritrea does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so".²⁴⁵ The report also said that the Eritrean government did not prosecute any persons of trafficking crimes over the reporting period and that they provided no

²⁴¹ UNHCR Website: UNHCR chief ends Sudan visit with relief for 'old' refugees, risks for new ones. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/4f1005e99.html>>.

²⁴² International Refugee Trust Website: Eritrean refugees easy targets for human traffickers. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.irt.org.uk/irt-blog/2012/1/26/eritrean-refugees-easy-targets-for-human-traffickers.html>>.

²⁴³ The guardian Newspaper Website: Egyptian authorities look the other way as Bedouin kidnap refugees. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/14/egypt-bedouin-kidnap-refugees-israel?INTCMP=SRCH>>.

²⁴⁴ International Refugee Trust Website: Eritrean refugees' easy targets for human traffickers. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.irt.org.uk/irt-blog/2012/1/26/eritrean-refugees-easy-targets-for-human-traffickers.html>>.

²⁴⁵ US State Department Report: Trafficking in Persons Report 2009. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/123357.pdf>>. p.130.

significant assistance or aid to victims of trafficking crimes in Eritrea.²⁴⁶ This report was entirely rejected by the Eritrean government, citing that the report was subjective and inaccurate. The government released a public statement announcing the following:

*“The Government of Eritrea considers human trafficking to be a serious national security issue and as such, has taken multiple measures to address the problem, but as with any transnational crimes, it will need the concerted effort of all concerned parties, especially the governments in the destination or transit countries”.*²⁴⁷

Whether the Eritrean government is taking measures to help put a stop to human trafficking is uncertain, but what is certain is that hundreds of Eritrean refugees are victims of human trafficking, targeted by criminal networks and being subjected to inhuman situations. With the efforts and collaboration of organisations such as the UNHCR and other authorities, many changes have been introduced, such as improvements to refugee camp security and victim support as well as the arrests of some criminal gangs and networks. Nevertheless the issue of human trafficking for Eritrean refugees continues to go on, with many still suffering imprisonment and torture under the capture of these human traffickers. What is clear is that lots still has to be done in order to eradicate it completely and help Eritreans and other refugees who have left their country seeking asylum, but find that they have stepped into another nightmare.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p.130.

²⁴⁷ East Africa Forum Website: Eritrea Rejects US Country Report on Human Trafficking. 02 April 2012. <<http://www.eastafricaforum.net/2009/06/19/eritrea-rejects-us-country-report-on-human-trafficking/>>.

Chapter Three

The Eritrean Diaspora

3.0 The Eritrean Diaspora

The Eritrean diaspora through the years has been shaped hugely by the tribulations and conflicts that its country has had to face. In particular the liberation war with Ethiopia meant that early ties between the diaspora and the Eritrean state were close as they shared the common goal of independence. Through the years these ties have not remained so cordial or amicable and issues of internal repression from its home land government has seen the Eritrean diaspora abroad fight for independence again, but not against an outside enemy, but from an enemy within.

To understand the Eritrean diaspora is not an easy task. Much of the information even about the country of Eritrea has largely been inaccessible to researches and outside associations. The Eritrean government has tried to build a picture of a country that has been victim to war and abuse from outside and inside powers.²⁴⁸ Moreover, most of the information available to the public surrounds the topic of Eritrea's liberation war with Ethiopia, and most of today's information focuses on the issues of human rights and repression within Eritrea. Therefore logically to understand a diaspora, you need to understand the history, political and social dynamics of a diaspora's homeland, and this is why the Eritrean diaspora is such a complex subject to comprehend.

Using Judith Shuval's paradigm on identifying the characteristics of a diaspora, will help to recognise the elements of the Eritrean diaspora group and in turn help to better understand the relations the diaspora shares with its home land and host country. In chapter 1 we saw that Judith Shuval uses the following characteristics to analyse a diaspora: The characteristics of a diaspora group, the characteristics of a diaspora's homeland, and the characteristics of the host country.

²⁴⁸ Hepner, *Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors, and Exiles: Political Conflict in Eritrea and the Diaspora*, pp. 15-17.

3.1 The Characteristics of the Eritrean Diaspora Group

3.1.1 Chronological Phases

The first element of the Eritrean diaspora we will look at is the chronological phases of when Eritreans left their country, and the reasons behind why they left.

As with so much that surrounds Eritrea, it is not an easy task to gain an accurate picture of how many Eritreans there are outside of Eritrea. Approximately speaking it is estimated that 1 million of Eritreans live outside Eritrea. There is however no official census, and even more difficult is the fact that before 1993 most Eritreans who left Eritrea were registered as Ethiopians rather than Eritreans.²⁴⁹ But if we base our estimates on Eritrea's 1993 independence referendum, the Eritrean government at the time claimed that there were 530,000 Eritreans living abroad. Taking this figure and taking estimates of recent Eritreans who have left, and also counting the Eritreans who are born abroad into account too, it is clear why many estimate that there are over 1 million Eritrean's living outside of Eritrea today.²⁵⁰

Discounting the low number of Eritreans who had migrated from Eritrea before the 1960s because of labour and intellectual reason, the real first wave of Eritreans to leave Eritrea happened between 1961 and 1991. During this period, when Eritrea was at war with Ethiopia, more than 750,000 Eritreans fled their country, and it was one of the largest exoduses of people in the history of the Horn of Africa. This population of refugees and exiles spread themselves mainly across northern Africa, the Middles East, Europe and North America.²⁵¹ It was this group of people that forged the foundations for nationalism and shaped Eritrea's national identity abroad. The war was the principle reason behind the mass exodus of people, but was not the only reason. After World War II Eritrea went through a period of economic recession, and many Eritreans found themselves without work. The liberation war did not do anything to help economic matters with any resources or moneys spent on the war effort and not on economic regeneration. The war left Eritrea on its knees, all basic services were virtually destroyed and non-existent. Most of Eritrea's

²⁴⁹ Tricia Redeker Hepner and Bettina Conrad, "Eritrea abroad: an introduction," in *Eritrean Studies Review*, Vol. 4, Issue 2,(2005), pp. v-xvii.

²⁵⁰ The World Bank Website: The Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011. 07 April 2012. < <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/Factbook2011-Ebook.pdf>>.

²⁵¹ David O'Kane and Tricia Redeker Hepner, *Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 118.

towns were without services such as electricity, water, and transportation for much of the war years. Industrial sectors were also wiped out and the ports were ruined.²⁵²

After Eritrea gained independence some Eritreans from Sudan and other neighbouring countries returned to Eritrea with the hope of creating a new life in a newly liberated Eritrea. But this hope soon faded, and a few years later many again returned to the host country they came from. Surprisingly though and contrary to expectations only a few Eritreans returned back to their home land permanently.²⁵³ The second wave of migration was seen in 1998 to 2000, when hostilities with Ethiopia broke out again. Compared to the first phase of migration of Eritreans during the Liberation war, the number who left Eritrea was far fewer. Again it is estimated that at the end of the 1998-2000 conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, Eritrea had produced some 80 to 100 thousand refugees. Many of these refugees crossed over into Sudan, and Ethiopia, with a small number also migrating to Europe, in particular to Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany.²⁵⁴ The war again was the cause behind the migration flows during this period, and its effect on the economy landscape was costly. The Eritrean government spent the majority of its country budget on its military service, leaving its population in crisis, both in terms of the humanitarian outlook and in terms of the people's morale.

Since the 1998-2000 conflict with Ethiopia, the migration flow out of Eritrea has continued. The aftermath of Eritrea's conflict with Ethiopia, brought about strict and repressive policies from the Eritrean government. The government thereafter declared Eritrea in a state of emergency, citing that the country's national security was at risk from foreign states and organisations, in particular Ethiopia. Its reaction to this was to impose a continuous forced conscription and military service policy, whereby Eritreans were expected to serve the military service for an unspecified period of time. This policy contributed to a feeling of unrest and frustration amongst the Eritrean public at large, which soon culminated in a feeling of mistrust towards the government of Eritrea.²⁵⁵ Moreover the Eritrean government which was now exhibiting a more totalitarian

²⁵² Encyclopedia of Nations Website. Eritrea. 07 April 2012.

<<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Eritrea-HISTORY.html#b>>.

²⁵³ Schmitz-Pranghe Clara. Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea, pp. 13-15.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

²⁵⁵ Tsehaye Meressa. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) of States: Lessons from Ethiopia's immigrant Security Policy Packages for Eritrean Refugees. 09 April 2012.

<http://www.aigaforum.com/articles/The_Responsibility_to_Protect.pdf>.

leadership began to introduce other repressive measures. Together with the forced military conscription policy, the government imposed policies that restricted freedom of speech, restricted freedom of movement and policies that stopped the practice of freedom of religion. The government's authoritarian regime has reportedly tortured and imprisoned those who have not followed and accepted the policies. In response to the human rights issues and the repressive political climate that haunts Eritrea, has seen many Eritreans search for a way out of the country. It is not surprising then that according to the UN Refugee Agency figures, in 2008, 180,000 refugees originated from Eritrea and in 2008 62,700 new asylum claims worldwide were filed by individuals originating from Eritrea.²⁵⁶

3.1.2 Where did the Eritreans go?

It is estimated that over one million Eritreans are living abroad, and with an estimated population of about five million, it is quite extraordinary to think that one in six of all Eritreans in the world live outside the country. Identifying where Eritreans have migrated to is almost as difficult as identifying the number of Eritreans that live abroad. But what is known is that the Eritrean diaspora is largely made up of the following Eritreans:

- Those who fled the Liberation war with Ethiopia over 30 years ago.
- Political members who were outcast during the country's formative years.
- Eritreans who fled the recurrence of the border war conflict of 1998 and 2000.
- And finally refugees from the present who are trying to escape the grips of a repressive government and increasing poverty and famine levels in Eritrea.

It is estimated that the great majority of Eritreans migrated to North America and Europe, in particular Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and Sweden.²⁵⁷ As we saw in Chapter Two of this thesis, on the subject of refugees from Eritrea, we saw that over the years a large number of Eritrean refugees fled to Sudan, Ethiopia, Libya, Egypt and Israel, and outside Africa many also fled into Europe.

²⁵⁶ UNHCR Report: 2008 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons. 09 April 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/4a375c426.html>>.

²⁵⁷ Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea (Africa in Focus), p. 132.

3.2 Relations among the Diaspora Members

The Eritrean diaspora first formed from the Eritreans who left their country as students who went to study abroad and who decided to remain in exile. After this group came the refugees who fled a country that was embroiled in a war for independence with Ethiopia. The war gave these Eritreans abroad a communal and collective goal and overall a shared objective. From this collectiveness and with a shared goal to free Eritrea from the clutches of federation, a nationalist movement was born, with cells of Eritreans in a number of countries all coming together to fight for the cause of independence. The Eritrean People Liberation front (EPLF), the political movement in Eritrea at the time, connected the Eritreans in diaspora to the disputes and struggles in Eritrea.²⁵⁸ It used the Eritreans diaspora in both a financial and political sense to fight the war for independence. The individuals in diaspora joined together to organise political support and demonstrations, and liaised with their host states publicising the Eritrean cause at the time.²⁵⁹ This involvement brought the Eritrean diasporas together, and while it is true that the diaspora networks were scattered across the world, this fight and common cause meant that the networks were unified, working towards a better future for their homeland, and subsequently through these events they formed and maintained close social links with each other abroad.²⁶⁰ Their experiences of forced migration and exile also served as forces to bring the Eritreans in diaspora together, and they used their experiences of displacement and isolation to maintain their identification as Eritreans. The shared personal histories and stories of loved ones killed and families missing because of war meant that they had a bond that brought the Eritreans abroad closer. These transnational links, even those that existed before the war of independence helped build a community among the Eritreans in diaspora.²⁶¹

Although we have seen how united on the whole many of the diaspora networks and members of those networks were, there was some divide between some members. During the liberation war with Ethiopia, the initial liberation movement that had formed to fight against the Ethiopian regime divided into two fronts. These two fronts the Eritrean

²⁵⁸ Tricia Redeker Hepner, "Transnational Tegeltri: Eritreans for Liberation in North America and the EPLF", in *Eritrean Studies Review*, Vol 4, Issue 2,(2005), pp. 37-84.

²⁵⁹ Victoria Bernal, "The Eritrean Diaspora Online", in *Diasporas in the New Media Age: Identity, Politics, and Community*, Reno, Nevada, University of Nevada Press, (2010), p. 123.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

²⁶¹ Tricia Redeker Hepner, "Religion, nationalism, and transnational civil society in the Eritrean Diaspora", in *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol 10, Issue 3, (2003), pp. 269-193.

Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPFL) were two opposing competing fronts, each with the intention of having sole control of proceedings in Eritrea. When the liberation movement divided into two independent fronts it not only affected the movement and its policies and structures, but also affected the diaspora. In Diaspora most of those who had fled or moved to the Middle East showed support for the ELF, while those who emigrated to America and Europe supported the ELPF and their policies.²⁶² This division within the liberation movement caused divisions and conflicts within the diaspora networks too. With relations between supporters of the ELF and supporters of the ELPF turning sour and conflicted. In 1981 the EPFL defeated the ELF, taking full control of the liberation movement. This event had a detrimental effect on members who had been supporting the ELF front. Those diaspora members, who had supported the ELF, had then felt marginalised and left out, not only by the ELPF leadership but also by the diaspora members that supported the ELPF. In reaction to the treatment they felt they had received and in protestation of the EPFL, these diaspora members refused to visit Eritrea and refused to make any contributions to help with the liberation war or contributions to help with the reconstruction projects post-independence. Some members also refused to take part in the referendum of 1993, and abstained from paying the 2% diaspora tax that was imposed by the subsequent government.²⁶³ The diaspora is not as united as it is made to seem, and even in today's community abroad there lies some division and conflict among diaspora members, with the roots of this conflict linked to the divisions that existed between the ELF and EPFL fronts.

Although there is some division between a small number of Eritreans in diaspora, many of the communities have remained connected through the organisation of annual festivals and through the methods of residential bunching, telephone contact, and later through the Internet. It is now the internet and through the development of the internet that most Eritreans are able to maintain close social links and form a close knit community in today's society.²⁶⁴ It is the dawn of the internet which has brought about and seen the greatest break down in geographical barriers. Eritreans have used the internet over the years to share news and information amongst themselves and have created and used websites to maintain social links and maintain dialogue amongst Eritreans across the globe. In recent

²⁶² Redie Bereketeab, *The Eritrean Diaspora: Myth and Reality*, in *The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democracy and Development in the Horn of Africa*, Ulf Johansson Dahre (ed.), Publisher and Distribution Media-Tryck Sociologen Lunds universitet, (2007), p.79.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁶⁴ Victoria Bernal, "Eritrea Goes Global: Reflections on Nationalism in a Transnational Era", in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol 19, Issue 1, (2004), pp. 10-11.

years through the use of community websites and social media websites, Eritreans in diaspora have continued to maintain social links.

3.3 The Role the Internet Played in the Eritrean Diaspora

In the 1990's the emergence of the internet gave the Eritrean diaspora a new means for organisation and a new method to influence the political scene in Eritrea. Initially the Eritrean diaspora used the internet as a way to expand and create debate around topics of history culture and politics in Eritrea.²⁶⁵ The Eritreans in diaspora then began to use forums and websites to voice their opinions on matters surrounding Eritrea and began using the internet as a tool to organise demonstrations against the war in Eritrea and collect funds for the on-going conflict it had with Ethiopia. For the first time the internet offered the diaspora a means to influence laws and policies in Eritrea. It offered the diaspora a means to participate in the formation and moulding of Eritrea's political culture, even though they were outside the boundaries of the country. During the 1998-2000 border disputes with Ethiopia, some sites raised funds for political activities in Eritrea, and took advantage of the fact they could reach out to more Eritreans abroad globally.²⁶⁶

The first Eritrean website to bring together Eritreans around the world was <http://www.dehai.org/>. This was a simple forum style website developed by Eritrean professionals and Eritrean students living in Washington, D.C. in 1992. The website was used to create an online Eritrean community. It enabled the Eritrean networks scattered across the world to maintain a relationship and link, uniting diaspora networks living in different countries.²⁶⁷ The dehai website allowed anybody with access to the internet to subscribe and give their opinion on a topic or matter that concerned Eritrea. Although the website was an independent website, it was nonetheless an outspokenly nationalist website which rarely offered any critical views on the subject of the Eritrean government or the Eritrean president. It was the emergence of other websites such as www.awate.com and www.asmarino.com that offered not only information and news, but also freedom of debate, which included criticism of the Eritrean government and president.²⁶⁸ Some

²⁶⁵ Bernal, "The Eritrean Diaspora Online", p. 161.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 162.

²⁶⁷ M. Sanchez and S. Ganapati, "The Use of Internet by Diasporic Communities for Political Mobilization", in *Electronic Governance and Cross-Boundary Collaboration: Innovations and Advancing Tools*, Hershey, Pennsylvania (USA), IGI Global, (2011), p. 287.

²⁶⁸ Bernal, "The Eritrean Diaspora Online", p. 127.

members of the Eritrean diaspora have used the internet to voice their criticism of the Eritrean government, and have used websites such as awate.com and asmarino.com to paint a truer picture of Eritrea. With this freedom, many Eritreans have reported of a repressive government and issues of human rights violations have emerged. In a country where access to information and where researchers are banned, it is because of the internet that the testimonials of true Eritreans and their experiences can reach others in diaspora and others across the world.

The Eritrean diaspora has also used websites and the internet to organise and voice protests against other international bodies and organisations. In particular in recent years some Eritrean websites have been used to rally support against UN sanctions on their country.²⁶⁹ Although it is true that the Eritrean government has acted to include the diaspora in Eritrean political and social affairs and policies, it has also been suggested that they have used and manipulated the diaspora for their own gains. Some have argued that the Internet in particular has helped the Eritrean government orchestrate manoeuvres among the diaspora. It is believed that political members from the Eritrean government and the president Isaias Afewerki himself have participated on diaspora forums online under false names, with the intention of planting false information or with the intentions of defending the government political party on the accusations of human rights issues.²⁷⁰

For most Eritreans in diaspora the internet has taken down boundaries and constraints, and has allowed many Eritreans from different religious, social and less affluent backgrounds to participate in political debates, giving voice to people from any walks of life.²⁷¹

3.4 The Diaspora's Attitude and Feeling Toward its Homeland

When you read about the role of the Eritrean diaspora towards the homeland most of the time it is documented as constructive and positive, and in some cases this is undeniably true, but there are exceptions to this rule. In some examples a diaspora can have a double role towards its homeland: from one perspective, positive with the aim of peace building and yet from another it can be negative, for example contributing to the widening of sociocultural divisions in the homeland. To begin with the diaspora and homeland relations were good, both sharing similar goals and objectives, yet in the last few years, particularly

²⁶⁹ BBC Website: Eritreans rally against UN sanctions. 16 April 2012. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8528007.stm>>.

²⁷⁰ Bernal, "The Eritrean Diaspora Online", p. 130.

²⁷¹ Bernal, "The Eritrean Diaspora Online", pp. 128-129.

after 2001 the Eritrean diaspora has shown signs of discontent and rebellion towards its homeland government, with matters of human rights and oppression in Eritrea the cause of most of the current dissatisfaction. The role of the Eritrean diaspora today is much different to the diaspora's role before the 1960's and in the 1970's. If we compare the two eras we can see that there is a fundamental difference between the interactions and actions of the diaspora before the 1960s and the role and actions of the diaspora after the 1970s. While the first waves of migration were principally motivated by nationalist movements and by the interests in employment opportunities elsewhere, the major waves of migration in 1970s and thereafter, were essentially motivated by the political resistance against Ethiopia's regime during the years of Federation, and the struggle for Independence that all Eritreans craved during those years.²⁷² During the war of independence, many Eritreans sought refuge in neighbouring Sudan. Yet, when the war of liberation was over, many of those refugees in Sudan did not return to Eritrea, and the reason they were not returning was down to the Eritrean government's repressive policies and the issues of human rights that overwhelmed the country.²⁷³

The internet but in particular social websites and forums, is now considered a powerful and essential tool for Eritrean diaspora members. Over the years diaspora members have used the internet to show the world the reality of the problems that face them back in their homeland. They are using the internet as a platform to discuss and share their experiences with the outside world, and are engaging with their host countries and seeking help from International powers, in the hope that they can apply pressure on the Eritrean Government to change their ways. Not only this, but fundamentally the internet is allowing the sharing of information among Eritreans and bridging the distances between diaspora networks, bringing them together and uniting the global Eritrean diaspora communities. It is not farfetched to say that the Eritrean Independence has been achieved thanks in part to the support from the Eritreans living abroad and thanks to the use of the internet, a vital and facilitating tool.²⁷⁴ During the three decades of war the Eritrean diaspora has been an important source of support both financially and politically. The period that followed the thirty year war, the Eritrean diaspora again has heavily supported the Eritrean Government in its post reconstruction projects. Part of the reason for so much support from the diaspora

²⁷² Bereketeab, *The Eritrean Diaspora: Myth and Reality*, p. 98.

²⁷³ *Idib.*, p. 99.

²⁷⁴ Schmitz-Pranghe, *Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea*, p. 25.

during these years is down to the good relations that the diaspora and the government shared through its years of conflict and war with Ethiopia, but since then that stable relationship has shown some cracks, especially after 2000.

It is well documented that the Eritrean diaspora has offered great support to its homeland government, but what is less documented is the fact that not all the members in the diaspora were united in their support for the liberation party that formed to fight Ethiopia during the thirty year war. The support of diaspora members varied, depending on which party you were in support and favour of: the EPFL or the ELF.²⁷⁵ Consequently depending on which party you supported at the time, could have meant if you were included or excluded in the fight for independence and in the post-war reconstruction projects in some Eritrean diaspora networks. The civic conflict between the EPFL and the ELF fronts was at its highest during the 1970's and 1980's, both in Eritrea and abroad amongst the diaspora networks. Contributions from the people in diaspora were of great importance to the parties, and allowed them to sustain their fight against the Ethiopian regime. Yet an interesting observation to note is the fact that the contributions provided by the members of ELF were less generous than those of the EPFL. Part of the reason for this difference lies behind the structure of the two parties; the EPFL had more supporters abroad and a stronger affiliated structure with many mass organisations than the ELF. This structure and organisation meant that they could help the EPLF supporters in diaspora to raise and save more money. Many diaspora members of the EPFL would live in tiny flats, just so they could save money and send that money the EPLF party, there are also many other examples of the measures the EPLF supporters would go through in order to collect as much money for their party and homeland.²⁷⁶ There were hundreds of Eritrean household immigrants workers for example in Italy who contributed significant amounts of their incomes to the EPLF and examples of Eritrean women selling their jewellerys was also common at the time. Most Eritrean workers throughout Europe contributed between 10% and 20% of their annual incomes. Not only workers contributed, students too contributed what they could, and would donate 10% of their loans, grants or scholarships to the cause. Eritrean students in Sweden, on top of the regular annual contributions, were also giving their salaries they had earned during their summer holidays. Workers also made one

²⁷⁵ Idib., pp. 14-16.

²⁷⁶ Tricia Redeker Hepner and Bettina Conrad, "Eritrea Abroad: Critical Perspectives on the Global Diaspora", in *Eritrean Studies Review*, Vol. 5, Issue. 1., (2005), p.57.

month's additional contribution per annum.²⁷⁷ Furthermore the EPFL together with the diaspora networks and communities in Europe organised festivals and meetings to raise funds and collect money for the party. One of the festivals was held in Bologna, Italy, to collect money and celebrate the united Eritrean identity. Every year during these meetings and seminars in Bologna, the Eritreans were raising vast amounts of money and sending them to the front in Eritrea.²⁷⁸ The festivals played a significant role in shaping the national identity of the Eritrean people abroad, and it also played a large part in the mobilisation for the struggle for independence. It was also a place for the Eritreans living abroad to mix and socialise. But away from the social aspects of these festivals, in practise these festivals and events were a way to raise funds for the EPFL party. During the festivals Eritreans could learn of news and share information between each other on the events occurring in their home country, and they would meet officials from the EPFL front and all this helped to bring them closer to their home back in Eritrea.²⁷⁹ Although there are no accurate studies or reports that document the amount of funds and contributions raised and provided by the members of the diaspora for the war of independence, there is no doubt that the financial and manpower help they provided, as well as the political mobilisation of the transnational communities were pivotal elements that determined the ending of the war of independence.

The social, political and economic situation in Eritrea and the policies the Eritrean government imposed shaped the attitudes of the diaspora abroad. Scholars such as Al Ali and others explained the above concept in this manner: “the political environment within Eritrea is more significant for Eritrean transnational activities than the political situations of the country of residence”.²⁸⁰ As we saw earlier the diaspora supported the government's causes in many different ways, but undoubtedly the most significant and most important form of support provided was that of financial contributions. The financial contributions were imperative to Eritrea's fight for independence. After the war, Eritreans continued to inject money into Eritrea, and the Eritrean government received an enormous amount of financial support from those living abroad. It is estimated that during the 1990s Eritrea

²⁷⁷ Bereketeab, *The Eritrean Diaspora: Myth and Reality*, p. 102.

²⁷⁸ Tabacco Agostino e Nicoletta Poidimani, *Bologna Testimonianze di lotta degli eritrei esuli in Europa*, Edizioni Punto Rosso, (2001), pp. 232-235.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-235.

²⁸⁰ Nadjé Al-Ali, Richard Black and Khalid Koser, “The Limits to Transnationalism: Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities”, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol 24, Issue 4, (2001).

received US\$400 million of remittances.²⁸¹ Moving away from the monetary contributions that Eritreans abroad made during and after the Liberation war, another way the diaspora has invested in its homelands was through the buying of property and through the starting of a business or company in the country. Although material and monetary contributions were of great importance to the Eritrean economy and to the development of post-independence projects, some diaspora members contributed in other ways. Some skilled workers from the Eritrean diaspora returned to Eritrea to serve their newly born state offering their services and work for free. For example Germany was one of the European countries that embarked on an ambitious and costly return programme in which Eritrean experts residing in Germany were provided with handsome incentives to return home to contribute to the reconstruction projects in Eritrea.²⁸² However the EPLF was fearful of outside influence and instead of embracing the help offered by those who came from abroad, they acted by stifling the enthusiasm shown by these professionals and put up barriers and walls instead. Most were left disappointed and disillusioned, and were left with no choice but to return from where they came from. Part of the reason for this reaction from the EPLF could be linked to the EPLF officials' fear of competition from those volunteering their services. Another reason could be one of resentment felt towards those in diaspora. Some EPLF officials may have felt that these diaspora professional had fled when the country needed them the most, so why should they be entitled to help in the rebuilding process. Whatever the reasons, many returned from where they came from, and those who remained conformed to the regimes structure and had little power to invoke any change. Professionals and skilled workers were not the only Eritreans from abroad to face obstacles and issues when they returned. Many entrepreneurs from the diaspora who returned with the intention to invest in their newly independent country were met with hostility and suspicion too. Many of the investment projects started by those in diaspora were deliberately undermined by the Eritrean government. Subsequently like the professionals who had come to volunteer their skills to help rebuild Eritrea, many of these businessmen and Entrepreneurs left Eritrea, and returned back to their host countries, many having lost all their life savings.²⁸³ Regardless of what has happened since Eritrea

²⁸¹ EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit) (2002), "Country Profile 2002", Economist Intelligence Unit, The Economist, London.

²⁸² Gaim Kibreab, *The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation*, in *The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democracy and Development in the Horn of Africa*, Ulf Johansson Dahre (ed.), Publisher and Distribution Media-Tryck Sociologen Lunds universitet, (2007), Part 2, p. 108.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.109.

gained independence we can see that the diaspora for the last four decades has contributed and supported its homeland in a number of manners, from a cultural and social aspect, to political, and let us not forget financially. Moreover the diaspora has lobbied for change on a political and international stage fighting for independence during the thirty year war, and now it is lobbying for independence again, but independence from an oppressive home government.²⁸⁴

During the post-independent and immediately after Eritrea gained independence, there was a relatively high amount of political mobilisation among diaspora members. It is estimated that 98% of diaspora members across the world voted in the 1993 referendum for independence, an astonishing figure and a clear indication just how supportive the diaspora was for independence.²⁸⁵ In 1997 the Eritrean diaspora was also involved in the drafting of the Eritrean constitution. The Eritrean government worked closely with the diaspora at each stage of the drafting, and the diaspora was also present at the Assembly of the Constitutional Committee.²⁸⁶

In 1998 Eritrea again found itself in a dispute with its neighbours Ethiopia over borders, and another war broke out between the two countries. This border conflict saw the introduction of new political policies and laws brought in by Eritrean government. This again saw the rise of new economic and political hardships for the Eritrean people, with the Eritrean government seen as the cause and the instigator of these problems for the Eritrean people.²⁸⁷ The Eritrean government brought in new repressive policies, policies which violated the human rights of the people, and governed the country in an authoritarian manner, with Eritreans fearing for their life if they oppose the regime. Consequently Eritrea, contrary to the wishes and aspirations of the Eritrean people and contrary to the wishes of most of the diaspora, is being ruled by an undemocratic regime.²⁸⁸ Because of this autocratic government the Eritrean diaspora's priorities and ideas have changed, there no longer exists a majority support for the government or its policies. The

²⁸⁴ Report: Kisanet Tezare et al, *The role of the Eritrean Diaspora in Peacebuilding and development: Challenges and Opportunities*, Toronto, Canada, (2006), p. 6.

²⁸⁵ K. Koser, "African diasporas and post-conflict reconstruction: An Eritrean case study", in *Diasporas in Conflict: Peacemakers or Peace Wreckers?*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, (2007), p. 246.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.246-247.

²⁸⁷ Hepner, *Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors, and Exiles*, p. 13.

²⁸⁸ Tronvoll, Kjetil, "The Lasting Struggle for Freedom in Eritrea. Human Rights and Political Development, 1991-2009". Oslo: The Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights., (2009), p. 14.

diaspora no longer shares a common objective and goal as they once did pre-independence, and many diaspora members are against the policies and ideology that the Eritrean government has imposed on their country. There now exists a much less cohesive relationship between the diaspora and the homeland government and this can be seen with many Eritrean communities abroad now separating themselves from the Eritrean government and minimising and in some cases removing direct engagement. The diaspora communities abroad are now focusing on new objectives to tackle the oppressive government back in their homelands; they are trying to raise awareness of the issues with their host states and other international authorities, but remain conscious that they still need to offer support for the Eritrean people still living in Eritrea.²⁸⁹ Though a large number of diaspora members are against the Eritrean government and its repressive policies, there are some in diaspora who are collaborators and supporters of the dictatorship in Eritrea. There is a worry that the collaborators are guiding and instigating some diaspora communities and networks abroad. There is also concern that the opponents of the regime have not got the same strength or capacity as the collaborators in the diaspora network, and that those fighting against the regime are weaker and much less unified compared to the supporters of the regime within the diaspora.²⁹⁰ Although this may be the case in some diaspora networks, there is evidence that many of the diaspora members are frustrated and disappointed by the human rights crisis that infects their country. Many of the Eritrean diaspora communities are trying to raise awareness and seek help in putting a stop to the human rights issue in Eritrea. For example in 2009 a coalition of Eritrean diaspora communities across the world from Australia, Europe and America produced a report describing the atrocities going on in Eritrea, and presented the report and the finding to the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Eritrean government has declared these diaspora-based Eritrean human rights organisations as enemies of the state, and have dismissed their accusations.²⁹¹

As we have seen from the discussion above, the Eritrean diaspora played a significant role during the war of independence, and also during the early post-independence years that followed, and that the remittances and contributions that the Eritrean government receive

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p.24.

²⁹⁰ Ulf Johansson Dahre, "The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democracy and Development in the Horn of Africa", 22 April 2012. <<http://www.sirclund.se/conference%20report%202006.pdf>>. p. 111.

²⁹¹ Human Rights House Networks Website: Stop human rights violations in Eritrea. 22 April 2012. <<http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/12803.html>>.

from Eritreans abroad represent the largest source of foreign income for the country. The Eritrean government are systematically dependant on the income they receive from the diaspora and Eritreans abroad.²⁹² For this reason alone you would expect that the Eritrean diaspora would have the power and ability to influence not only the policies of the government but also the nature of governance in place, but since the emergence of the 1998-2000 border conflict with Ethiopia this has not been the case. After the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia, the Eritrean government has become oppressive in its governance of Eritrea. Eritrea is now recognised as having one of the lowest levels of human rights in the world. This has left many Eritreans in diaspora feeling frustrated and let down by a party they once supported. Nevertheless in recent years the diaspora has sought to try and stand up to the Eritrean government, with some diaspora communities working with Human Rights organisations and other international organisations to bring an end to the violation of human rights in Eritrea. What seems to be true is that the Eritrean diaspora does not have the same political influence it had before Eritrea gained independence, and that the Eritrean government has been using the diaspora as a source of income and nothing more. What this shows over anything else, is that although it is true that transnational groupings are able to exercise positive or negative influence on the politics of their homelands, the extent of their influence is nevertheless determined by the nature of the government in place in their homeland.²⁹³

3.5 Remittances

As we have touched upon already, one of the most important influences a diaspora can have on its homeland, is through the remittances they send. During Eritrea's history, both pre-independence and post-independence, remittances have played a significant role in terms of a homelands economic and political survival. During Eritrea's 30 year liberation war, it was the financial and social contributions that came from abroad that helped to finance much of the EPFL's war with Ethiopia.²⁹⁴ Although contributions and remittances played an important role in helping to fight the war against Ethiopia, it is maybe the post-independence remittances that have had even greater significance. After Eritrea gained independence in 1991, the Eritrean diaspora contributed massively to the reconstruction of

²⁹² Kibreab, *The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation*, p. 111.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

²⁹⁴ Schmitz-Pranghe, *Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea*, p.8.

their homeland country through regular payments to family members and friends, through remittances sent to the Eritrean government, and also through investments made.

Many Eritreans abroad send home remittances on a regular basis, mostly in the form of cash, but also in the form of clothes and other gifts.²⁹⁵ Yet the remittance that has the greatest political and social effect on Eritrea is that of the 2% diaspora tax. Since 1991 all Eritreans living abroad were asked to pay 2% of their monthly income directly to the Eritrean government, a tax the Eritrean government called “diaspora tax”. The Eritrean government after introducing the 2% diaspora tax stressed that the tax is a voluntary contribution and that no Eritrean living abroad was duty bound to pay it. Yet many Eritreans abroad have intimated that the tax is an obligation and failure to pay the tax could lead to issues with buying land, property or sending private remittances to family members.²⁹⁶ It is not particularly easy to get a clear and accurate estimate of the level of remittances Eritrea has received over the years, because many diaspora members do not use official channels to send their money. According to a report carried out by Berhane Tewolde in 2005, it revealed that 66.7% of remittances to Eritrea were transferred informally.²⁹⁷ The period between 1990 to 2001 Eritrea was classified as the 10th top remittance-receiving country in Africa.²⁹⁸ From 2003 to 2007, the sum of remittances increased considerably, reaching figures of US \$1.37 billion in 2007. However in that period foreign direct investment has decreased from US \$20 million in 2002 to US \$3 million in 2007 and official development assistance and official aid has also decreased from US \$230 million in 2002 to only US \$155 million in 2007.²⁹⁹ Regardless of the decrease in aid and support, the fact remains that the Eritrean government is hugely reliant on remittances, and according to the International Monetary Fund, in 2003 remittances to Eritrea comprised 30.1% of the country’s GDP.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁵ Al-Ali, Black and Koser, “The Limits to Transnationalism: Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities”, p. 592.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p.593.

²⁹⁷ Tewolde, B., “Remittances as a tool for development and reconstruction in Eritrea: An economic analysis”, in *Journal of Middle Eastern Geopolitics*, Vol. 1, Issue2, (2005), pp. 21-32.

²⁹⁸ EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit) (2002), “Country Profile 2002”, Economist Intelligence Unit, The Economist, London.

²⁹⁹ World Bank Website: Country Data: Eritrea. 20 April 2012.

<<http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html>>.

³⁰⁰ IMF (International Monetary Fund) (2003), “Eritrea: 2003 Article IV Consultation Staff Report; Public Information Notice on the Executive Director for Eritrea, IMF Country Report No. 03/165 (online), <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2003/cr03165.pdf>.

3.6 Characteristics of Their Homeland

The Eritrean diaspora is a perfect example in demonstrating how the attitudes of a diaspora's members can be shaped by the political, social and economic environment imposed by a government back in their homeland.

Most Eritreans feel a sense of disappointment and disillusionment, and overall frustrated by a homeland government who has let them down and betrayed its own people. The actions of the Eritrean government may seem strange; after all it was with the help from the Eritrean diaspora and the Eritrean people that they won the war for independence. After Eritrea's years of struggle and fight against Ethiopia, and at the beginning of Eritrea's birth as an independent state, the United Nation General Assembly and many other Super Powers showed little support in helping the country with its reconstruction projects. The country felt marginalised and left out in the cold to fend for itself. And because of this act of marginalisation, the Government decided to organise its population at home creating a strong military front to defend against any future attacks. And abroad it used the diaspora networks found in a number of major cities to establish and imprint ideas of unity and independence among its members, and strengthen the importance of the country's national identity and its struggle for Independence.³⁰¹

During Eritrea's struggle for liberation the diaspora very much thought of its homeland and the efforts and actions of the EPFL as an example of heroism, a father that takes care of their children. After achieving independence in 1991 and after the outbreak of the border war against Ethiopia in 1998-2000, the relationship between the Government and the diaspora changed significantly. At home the population were powerless to the changes and new policies being imposed by its new state and government. The government brought in new policies: political authority centralised in the hand of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice and in the hands of the President Aferwerki, national elections postponed permanently, militarisation in the economy and in the education sector, the absence of human rights, no freedom of press, and no freedom of expression.³⁰² These policies have brought about a number of violations against human rights, and the issue of human rights has been well defined by many over the years, including the human rights scholar Kjetil Tronvoll who defined Eritrea as a country of human right violations and a

³⁰¹ Bereketgab, *The Eritrean Diaspora: Myth and Reality*, p. 82.

³⁰² Schmitz-Pranghe, *Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea*, p.8.

widespread detention policy.³⁰³ Together with the issues of governmental politics and policies that constrain the country, another issue which plagues Eritrea is that of civil society. It is almost impossible to find a non-governmental organisation or a private run organisation in the country, thanks to the strict control the government maintains over the start-up of civil society organisations. The existence of civil society organisations are restricted to governmental labour unions, organisations that have developed from the EPFL party and those organisations that show full support of the state and its policies.³⁰⁴ In Eritrea the Eritrean government prohibit the start-up of any associations or groups that do not support the activities of the government. Luckily the situation is a bit different in exile where it is possible to participate in debates and take part in initiatives against the governmental policies even though there have been examples of some organised debates and initiatives managed under the control of the political party. The severe policies and the contained development of a civil society in Eritrea have had a heavy impact lately on the diaspora engagement towards the homeland.

Over the years the government has always played a pivotal role in strengthening and decreasing the relations with the diaspora. The following four phases describe when relations between the Eritrean government and the diaspora were at their highest and most frequent:

- Mobilisation during the struggle for independence in 1961-1991.
- De-mobilisation of the diaspora after the independence.
- The re-mobilisation and institutionalism of the diaspora groups during the new border war with Ethiopia in 1998-2000.
- And in the end the alienation of the diaspora communities from the Eritrean Government since the beginning of the new era.³⁰⁵

During the struggle for Independence the ELF and EPFL fronts mobilised the diaspora networks across the world through the establishment of a system of mass organisation and with campaigns of mobilisation and support by Eritreans in their host countries. The mass

³⁰³ Kjetil Tronvoll, The lasting struggle for freedom in Eritrea. Human rights and Political Development, 1991-2009. 23 April 2012. < http://www.jus.uio.no/smr/forskning/publikasjoner/boker/2009/docs/Eritrea-the-lasting-struggle-for-freedom_2009.pdf>. p.14.

³⁰⁴ Schmitz-Pranghe, Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea, p.9.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p.12.

organisations abroad had a great responsibility in collecting and raising funds and then sending those funds to their homeland, funds which were then used by the two fronts to continue their fight for independence. On top of the collection of money, the Eritrean people abroad were also strengthening the country's national identity and sentiment, and most of all created propaganda for the Eritrean cause. In the United States, the Eritrean for Liberation in North America (ELNA) association provided decisive support and mobilisation for the EPFL, while in Europe the Eritrean for Liberation for Europe (EFLE) provided the same level of support for the EPFL front. Associations such as the General Union of Eritrean Students (GUES) and General Union of Eritrean Women (GUEW) which were both affiliated to the EFL front operated in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, both offering the same level of support as the associations affiliated with the EPFL in America and Europe.³⁰⁶ These are just few associations that contributed in supporting the liberation struggle in Eritrea. It is documented that they contributed not only in mobilisation but also in division and multiplication of the members of the diaspora communities. When the ELF collapsed in 1981, the EPFL consolidated its power implementing its strategy and creating new spaces for the members of the diaspora in order to maintain their culture and traditions abroad. Most of the Eritreans never felt at home being abroad.³⁰⁷ In 1989, just a few years before Eritrea gained independence, the EPFL decided to abolish the mass organisations in order to create new form of association. The EPFL named this new association as a non-political local community, and in doing so tried to unify the fragmented diaspora. The fight for independence had brought a form of unity among Eritreans abroad, and although in the public eye the diaspora seemed united, behind the scenes there still resided some division between the members.³⁰⁸

The division that existed between members in diaspora was not so clear and evident, even though the economic and political support that came from the diaspora seemed to come from all diaspora members. Post-independence the relationship between the Eritrean government and the diaspora developed in two ways: political and financial. The government gave the diaspora the power to involve itself in Eritrean politics and in 1993 the diaspora also took part in the country's referendum, where 98% voted for

³⁰⁶ Bereketeab, *The Eritrean Diaspora: Myth and Reality*, p. 81.

³⁰⁷ Tricia Redeker Hepner, "Transnational Political and Legal Dimensions of Emergent Eritrean Human Rights Movements", in *Migration Studies Working paper Series*, Issue 36,(2007), p. 7.

³⁰⁸ David O'Kane and Tricia Redeker Hepner, *Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 72-91.

Independence. The diaspora members were also involved in the drafting and in the ratification of the Constitution in 1997, and were even formally represented in the Assembly of the Constitutional Committee with six members out of fifty.³⁰⁹ In 1992 the Government declared “the Citizenship Proclamation” which stated that any person born from one Eritrean parent anywhere in the world could be recognised as an Eritrean citizen with respective rights and duties.³¹⁰ The EPFL replaced by the new PFDJ party introduced new institutions such as embassies and consulates.

As we have seen already, Eritrean remittances are some of the highest in the world, and an important injection to the high remittance figures is the 2% diaspora tax. In 1991 the Eritrean government asked all Eritreans living abroad to pay 2% of their monthly income directly to the Eritrean government. The government said the tax would pay for services necessary to Eritrea and for services that would then be available to the diaspora, and the services were:

- Obtain an Eritrean passport.
- Renew an expired Eritrean passport because no foreign passport could guarantee a safe journey in Eritrea.
- Obtain an Eritrean ID card.
- Request documents (marriage, birth and death certificates).
- Buy, sell, inherit and transfer movable and immovable properties throughout Eritrea.
- Obtain land for building a property in the village of origin.
- Send goods and money to your families.
- Claim one’s unaccompanied luggage on arrival (it is cheaper for the diaspora members to send excess luggage unaccompanied than to bring with you).
- Travel to Eritrea with a US passport, after 1990s all Eritreans with a US passport were not allowed to travel and visit Eritrea. They could only travel with an Eritrean ID card.³¹¹

³⁰⁹ Al-Ali, Black and Koser, “The Limits to Transnationalism: Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities”, p. 588.

³¹⁰ Tricia Redeker Hepner, “Transnational Governance and the Centralisation of State Power in Eritrea and Exile”, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol 31, Issue 3, (2008), p. 483.

³¹¹ Kibreab, *The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation*, p. 107.

Although the Eritrean government stresses that this tax is not compulsory, many Eritreans abroad feel duty bound, and obligated by the Eritrean state to continue to pay. Pressure from the government on Eritreans in diaspora to pay this tax has increased over the years. There are suggestions among diaspora members that refusal to pay might result in imprisonment if they return to Eritrea, or family members and friends still in the country may be victimised and attacked by the state in their place. Those Eritreans who have no ties or family on Eritrea have refused to pay, while others carry on paying even though they don't agree with it. Together with the diaspora tax, the Eritrean state launched other initiatives to increase the financial support it received from diaspora communities. In 1999 a Division of Community Affairs was formed in the office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to facilitate the smooth process of economic transactions from Eritreans abroad to Eritrea.³¹² The government also arranged so that remittances could be paid in any global currency, and were not taxed and were exchanged at the best rates. The donations, another important source of income for the Eritrean government, were collected by government members during festivals, door-to-door and through media appeals. Remittances have always been one of the largest incomes for the Eritrean government, but investments too played a significant role in economic income for the country. The government brought in policies whereby investments were permitted without duties, excluded from income tax and where the best rates for foreign currency exchange were offered.³¹³ But even with the introduction of these investment policies, foreign investments have steadily decreased in Eritrea over the years. The reason behind this fall in investment can be attributed to the difficult economic situation that surrounds the country, coupled with an interfering government and poor property rights all discouraged members of the diaspora from investing in Eritrea.³¹⁴ In 1999 the government initiated another strategy to raise income. For the first time in its history it offered bonds. The bonds could be exchanged into US dollars or into the Eritrean currency Nafka, transferred between individuals and used in Eritrea as credit notes for investment. In the same year the Eritrean Economic Advisor estimated Eritrea had raised \$70 million, with \$ 30 million in the United States, \$20 million in Europe and \$15-20 million in the Middle East.³¹⁵

³¹² Schmitz-Pranghe, *Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea*, p.13.

³¹³ Al-Ali, Black and Koser, "The Limits to Transnationalism: Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities", p. 589.

³¹⁴ Schmitz-Pranghe, *Modes and Potential of Diaspora Engagement in Eritrea*, p.20.

³¹⁵ Koser, "African diasporas and post-conflict reconstruction: An Eritrean case study", p. 247.

The government also raises money through land and construction from Eritreans communities abroad. All the land in Eritrea is owned by the Eritrean government and Eritreans can only possess the life right of usufruct over cultivable lands. Therefore any Eritrean at home or abroad wishing to buy property or land will have to pay or contribute something to the government.³¹⁶ The government has also begun auctioning off housing plots in Asmara and outside regions of Asmara. In the last few years the government has built several housing estates in Asmara and many of these houses and apartments have been bought by the members of the diaspora with intentions of using them as holiday houses and not for a permanent future return.³¹⁷ This is a significant initiative, and one that outlines a change and outlook from the Eritrean government. Selling property to private buyers and giving them sole ownership is something that the Government has shied away from in years gone by, but with the inevitable need for more money, one can understand the government's initiative and change in policy.³¹⁸ The government still maintains a level of control and even high level of dictatorship, for example in 2006 the Government decided to suspend all licenses to contractors, civil engineers and architects, leaving only the firms owned by their party with the possibility to take on a construction project or business.³¹⁹

The government continues to impose oppressive policies and measures over its people, those both at home and those both abroad. Many Eritreans in diaspora still dream to return to their homeland, but certainly have no intention of returning while their homeland is being run by a dictatorial regime. Although the Eritrean state continues to receive remittances and investment from abroad and from its diaspora members, over the last few years both remittances and investments have decreased. Across the diaspora networks there sits a feeling of disappointment, frustration and fear with its members, and this has led to a state of hybridity, where they do not trust their homeland government and still do not feel at home abroad.

³¹⁶ Kibreab, *The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation*, p. 108.

³¹⁷ Khalid Koser, *New African Diasporas*, New York, Routledge Publishers, (2003), pp. 114-115.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

³¹⁹ Kibreab, *The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation*, p. 108.

3.7 Characteristics of Their Host Country

Although a large proportion of the Eritrean population lives outside the Eritrean borders, coming by accurate statistics on where Eritreans now find themselves is a difficult and somewhat impossible task. As a result, most of the data that is available is purely indicative rather than conclusive. Some governments have released sources and reports on the number of Eritrean refugees, but even sources coming from the host governments are not completely accurate, and are estimates rather than conclusive statistics.

Since this thesis is centred on the Eritrean diaspora communities living in the UK and Italy, I will solely and specifically analyse these two host countries and region only.

3.8 Italy

Italy is one of Europe's most popular migratory destinations especially for refugees and immigrants coming from Africa. In 2011 it was the 4th highest asylum seeker receiving country.³²⁰ Although Italy is one of the highest asylum seeker receiving countries in Europe and the world, the number of asylum applications made by Eritreans has decreased over the years. If we look at graph 3.0 we can see that since 2005 the number of applications have increased two folds up until 2008, and then decreased dramatically during the years after 2008. The reason for the fall in Eritrean asylum applications especially in 2010 and 2011 has more to do with the tougher measures of border control introduced by the Italians. In 2008 Silvio Berlusconi's party announced a harsh stance towards non-European immigrants and illegal immigrants. He promised to deport any non-European Union person who was unemployed or caught committing a criminal offence. His attitude and remarks towards illegal immigrants was well met by the Northern League party in Italy, which in 2004 declared that immigrants and refugees caught attempting to enter Italy should be shot in their boats. In 2008 Italy and Libya signed a Friendship Agreement; the treaty was followed by the introduction of joint naval patrols in the Mediterranean Sea to stop refugees crossing the sea from Libya to Italy.³²¹ Together with the new policy towards non-European immigrants and together with its treaty with Libya,

³²⁰ UNHCR Report, Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries in 2011. <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=4e9beaa19&query=asylum%20applications%20italy%202010>>, p. 12.

³²¹ HRW Website: Italy/Libya: Gaddafi Visit Celebrates Dirty Deal. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/06/09/italylibya-gaddafi-visit-celebrates-dirty-deal>>.

in 2009 and 2010 Italy intercepted a number of boats containing Eritreans and other African refugees.³²² The Italian authorities sent back the migrant boats intercepted in the Mediterranean, without assessing the refugee protection needs of those abroad. These new measures introduced from 2008 are the reason for the fall in Eritrean asylum applications.³²³

After the introduction of these new refugee measures and after its treaty with Libya, Italy has received considerable criticism and condemnation from the Eritrean diaspora and human rights organisations. Much of the criticism surrounds Libya's treatment of refugees and Italy's involvement in what is happening. The UNHCR compiled a report in 2010, raising concerns over the controversial 'push-back' agreement between Italy and Libya, where Italy would deport migrants intercepted in international waters back to Libya. These deported refugees like many refugees in Libya were subjected to terrible treatment in the Libyan detention centres often beaten and then deported back to their home country.³²⁴ In 2008 an Italian documentary called "Come Un Uomo Sulla Terra" was released which reported on how Italian and European money is funding Libya's cruel operations surrounding the control of African emigrants and refugees trying to reach Europe. The documentary discussed the difficult journey many Africans including Eritreans had to make in order to make it to Europe and described the treatment they received in Libya. Many of the Ethiopians and Eritreans in the documentary intimated that the Italian authorities seemed supportive and in full knowledge of the terrible violence and cruelty imposed on immigrants by Libyan authorities. It is not certain whether Italy had a hidden agreement with Libya over the treatment and control of refugees and immigrants to Italy, although what is clear is that Italy has since suspended its agreement with Libya.³²⁵ Moreover in February 2012 the European Court censured Italy over its actions on refugees and migrants coming from Libya. The European Court of Human Rights ruled that Italy had violated the rights of Eritrean and Somali migrants by sending them back to Libya.

³²² UNHCR Website: UNHCR deeply concerned over returns from Italy to Libya. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4a02d4546&query=italy%20sent%20back>>.

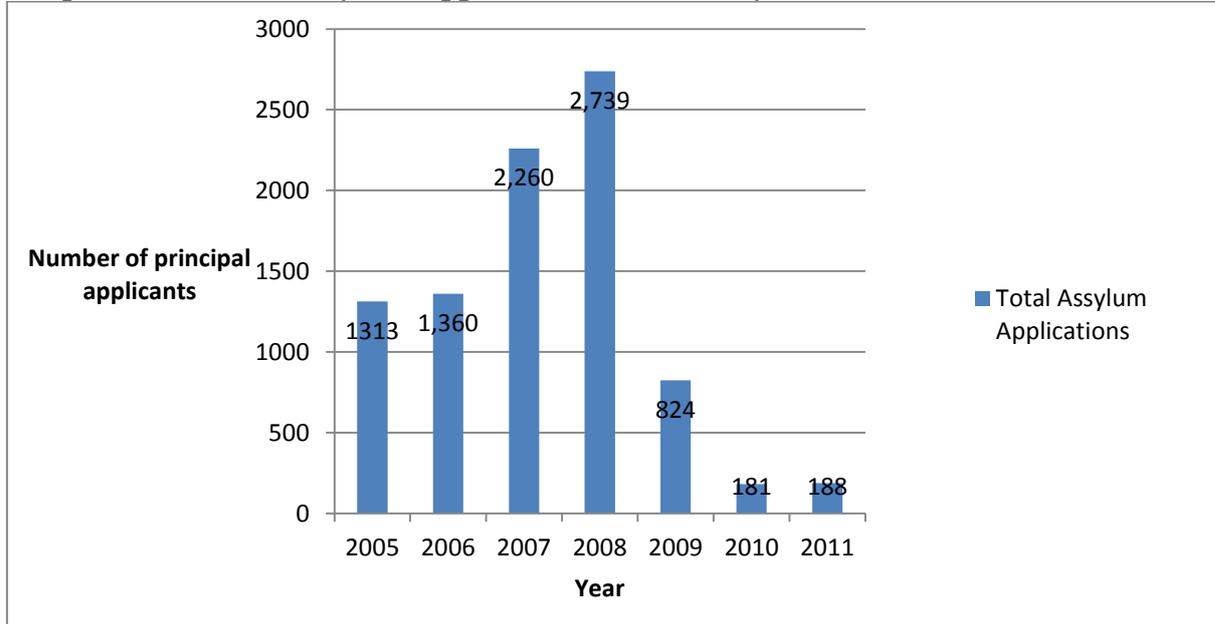
³²³ JRS Website: Externalisation of Asylum. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.jrseurope.org/AdvocacyPages/Externalisation%20of%20Asylum/EXTERNALISATIONcampaign.htm>>.

³²⁴ UN watch Website: UN report criticises Libya's treatment of refugees. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.unwatch.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=bdKKISNqEmG&b=1319279&ct=8865327>>.

³²⁵ BBC Website: European Court censures Italy over African migrants. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17138606>>.

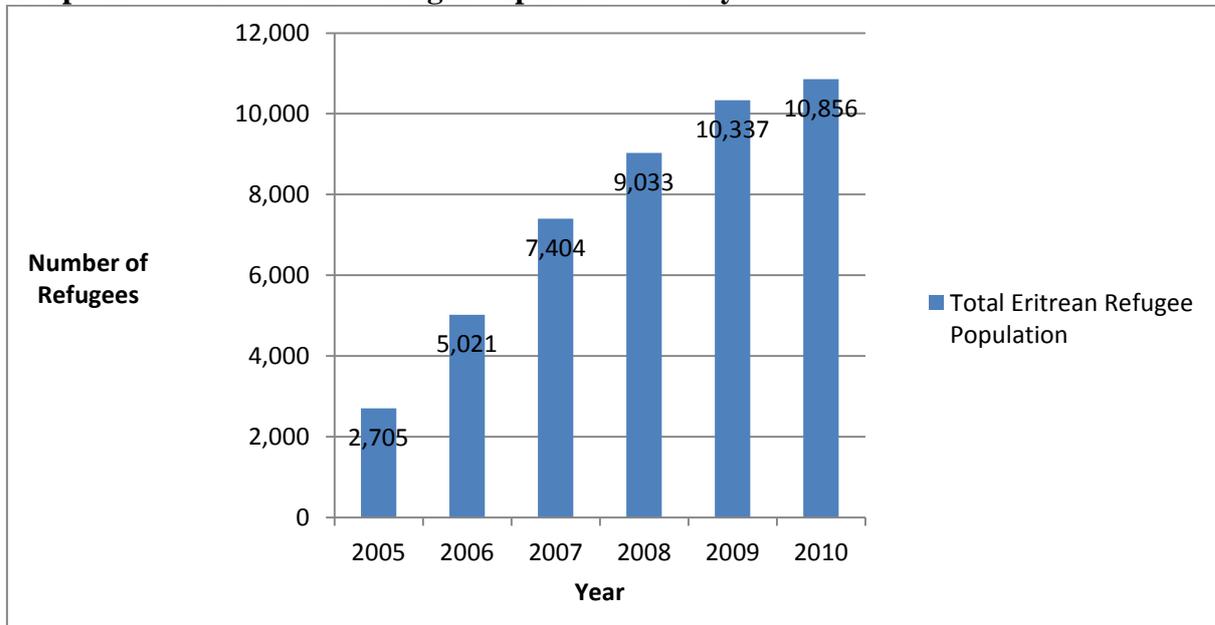
The court ruled that Italy had to pay 15,000 Euros to 13 Eritreans and 11 Somali refugees.³²⁶

Graph 3.0 – Eritrean Asylum Application made in Italy



Source: UNHCR: Applications submitted by country of asylum and origin, 2005 to 2011.

Graph 3.1 - The Eritrean Refugee Population in Italy



Source: UNHCR Total refugees and people in refugee-like situations 2005 - 2010.

³²⁶ Ibid.

In 2010 UNHCR statistics outlined that the number of Eritrean refugees in Italy stands at 10,856. Looking at the refugee population trend from 2005 we can see that the Eritrean refugee population has consistently increased. As we can see from the UNHCR statistics in Graph 3.0 and 3.1, Italy has taken in many Eritrean refugees over the last 7 years. As we saw earlier, immigration has become a hotly covered topic in Italy in the last few years, and although new asylum applications have dramatically decreased in the last 2 to 3 years, the Eritrean refugee population has increased regardless. On the basis of assumption, one can conclude that those 10,000 Eritrean refugees have a residential address and are in employment in Italy.

Although many Eritreans have sought refuge and asylum in Italy over the years, many Eritreans still see Italy as the first port to freedom, as a bridge into other European countries such as the United Kingdom. The reason behind this behaviour lies with how Eritrean refugees feel they are treated by Italian authorities when they arrive. Eritreans feel that Italy purposely maintains poor reception conditions in order to scare off future African migrants from attempting to enter into Italy.³²⁷ Many Eritreans believe that the Italian government does not offer any support to refugees that arrive on their shores. In March 2011 at a JRS conference held in Brussels on the migrant poverty problem in Europe, Mr Simon Tesfamichael, an Eritrean Refugee living in Italy presented his experience on the situation.

“I got my freedom. But I had no support from the Italian government. In Rome, I joined a group of 500 migrants living under a bridge. My medical condition worsened, but JRS Italy helped me to access medical treatment. I lived in a wooden shack. I learned the language but could not become self-sufficient. I didn’t have help to find a job. In Italy, refugees have no rights”³²⁸

His experience is one that is shared by many Eritreans living in Italy, but also the experience of many Eritreans living in Germany and France too.³²⁹ A number of Eritreans are forced to sleep on the streets, homeless and forced to remain in Italy because of a refugee tagging system which forbids them from applying for asylum in another country after they have lived or even travelled through another country that gives protection to

³²⁷ UK Independent Party Website: Eritrean refugees criticise Italy and Malta. 25 April 2012.

<http://www.ukipmeps.org/blog_view_3690_Eritrean-refugees-criticise-Italy-and-Malta.html>.

³²⁸ JRS Website: The Invisible Borders, Migrant Destitution in Europe. 25 April 2012.

<http://www.jrseurope.org/news_releases/ANDES%20Conference%20announcement.htm>.

³²⁹ Ibid.

refugees.³³⁰ Italian authorities seem to demonstrate a lack of assistance when it comes to refugees, and it's this absence of government assistance that is leading Eritrean refugees to move away from Italy.

3.8.1 Asylum Seeker Rights in Italy

Italy like many other European countries gives asylum to people under the 1951 United Nations Convention. It also offers asylum to people under the European Convention of Human Rights. Most Eritreans who arrive at Italy's borders who are proven to be genuine refugees often receive humanitarian asylum. This entitles Eritreans to three years of asylum as opposed to 5 years of asylum under the 1951 United Nations Convention.³³¹ In theory according to international refugee law, all Eritreans should have a strong case when asking for Asylum in Italy, because if they return to Eritrea they will be persecuted for having fled the state and asking asylum in another country.

As a humanitarian refugee Italy require that Eritreans meet the following requirements or otherwise face deportation:

- Have a residence permit with a registered address.
- Have a job contract for a minimum of one year.
- Minimum salary of 8000 Euros a year.³³²

3.8.2 Eritreans Living in Italy

According to Comuni-Italiani.it, in 2011 there were approximately 14,000 Eritreans living in Italy. Of these 14,000 Eritreans, 9,000 are living in Italy with a refugee status. There are communities of Eritreans in many of the major Italian cities, with the larger Eritrean communities found in Milan and Rome, and smaller communities in cities such as Parma, Bologna and Florence.

³³⁰ Asylum Law Website: Asylum Law. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.asylumlaw.org/firstaid/4/>>.

³³¹ UNHCR Document: Refugee Protection, a Guide to International Refugee Law. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/3d4aba564.html>>.

³³² Ibid.

Table 3.0 – The Number of Eritreans in Italy

Region	Number of Eritreans
Lazio	5157
Lombardia	3511
Emilia-Romagna	1389
Sicilia	711
Toscana	552
Puglia	360
Veneto	357
Piemonte	248
Campania	190
Abruzzo	172
Liguria	165
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	127
Umbria	110
Calabria	97
Basilicata	71
Marche	71
Trentino-Alto Adige	47
Sardegna	25
Molise	8
Total	13368

Source: Comuni Italiani - Statistiche Demografiche Eritrei in Italia³³³

Table 3.1 – The top 5 Cities with a Population of Eritreans

City	Number of Eritreans
Rome	4996
Milan	2595
Bologna	753
Florence	216
Parma	207

Source: Comuni Italiani - Statistiche Demografiche Eritrei in Italia³³⁴

There are some community associations in Italy that provide support to Eritrean citizens. Most of the associations are based in the larger cities such as Rome and Milan. For example in Rome the ‘Comunita’ Eritrea Nel Lazio’ offers help and support to Eritrean immigrants in the Lazio region. Table 3.2 contains a sample list of Eritrean associations based in Italy.

³³³ Comuni Italiani Website: Eritrei in Italia. 25 April 2012.

<<http://www.comuni-italiani.it/statistiche/stranieri/er.html>>.

³³⁴ Ibid.

Table 3.2 – Eritrean Community Groups and Initiatives in Italy

Association Name	City	Description
Comunita' Eritrea Nel Lazio	Rome	Provides advice and support for Eritrean citizens in the Lazio region. Provides translation services and language courses.
Erythros	Rome	Provides advice and support for younger Eritreans that come to Italy, promoting social and human rights.
BaoBab comunita' immigrati a Roma	Rome	Helps Eritrean asylum seekers, introducing them to the Eritrean community in the region.
Comunita' Etiopie Eritrea, chiesa San Tommaso in Parione	Rome	An Eritrean church, that also provides social and moral support to Eritrean church goers.
ASPER	Naples	A charity that provides supports for the humanitarian rights of Eritrean citizens in Italy.
Associazione Eritrea	Naples	Provides social support for Eritreans.
Comunita' Eritrea Milanese	Milan	Provides advice and support for Eritrean citizens in the Lombardia region. Provides translation services and language courses.
Chiesa Ortodosa Eritrea	Milan	Eritrean Christian Orthodox church providing Eritrean community support.
Comunita' Eritrea	Milan	Provides advice and support for Eritrean citizens. Provides translation services and language courses, and organises social events.
Associazione Immigrati Eritrei in Italia	Milan	Provides advice and support for Eritrean citizens.
Associazione Futura	Rome	Provides support to Eritreans and helps Eritreans integrate into their local community.
Comunita' Eritrea in Toscana	Florence	Provides advice and support for Eritrean citizens in the Tuscany

		region.
Comunita' Eritrea	Catania	Provides advice and support for Eritrean citizens in Catania.
Associazione Comunita' Eritrea di Bologna E Dell' ER	Bologna	Provides support to newly arrived refugees, and helps to maintain their cultural values.
Associazione Giovani Eritrei	Bologna	Provides social events and promotes community integration. Provides advice and support with regards to racism and discrimination.

In many of the major cities Eritrean Restaurants and cafes can also be found. The restaurants are typically decorated in a traditional manner, adding a touch of Eritrean culture. The Eritrean communities also hold many events and festivals during the year, helping to maintain social links and maintain a sense of culture. For example every year the Eritrean community across Italy convene in Milan and Rome to celebrate the Eritrean Independence Day.³³⁵ The events provide an insight into the togetherness that the community shares and the cultural traditions that they try to maintain through concerts, through food and through social links.

Although there are a number of Associations and groups that are organised to provide support and aid to Eritreans living in Italy, many Eritreans still feel abandoned and without any support. Although those that have lived many years in Italy have created a life of sorts, many of those Eritreans still find life in Italy a struggle to survive. While those who arrive in Italy find it almost impossible to start or create a life, with a lack of assistance from the Italian government acting as the stifling factor behind these problems.

3.9 The United Kingdom

Like with Italy there is no exact census on the number of Eritreans living in the United Kingdom, although it is estimated that the British Eritrean community has grown over the past 60 years to a population of around 40,000. More than 30,000 of that number live in

³³⁵ All Africa website: Eritrea Festival 2008 in Italy Opens. 25 April 2012. <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200810270166.html>>.

London.³³⁶ There is a general consensus that Britain is the preferred destination for many Eritrean refugees who flee into Europe. An online article published by the Guardian newspaper in 2009 goes some way in highlighting this fact. The article reported on a number of asylum seekers in Calais aged between 14 and 30 years old, nearly all male. They were all hoping and waiting for the opportunity to cross into Britain.³³⁷ Many of these Eritreans, have spent time and sought refuge in other European countries such as France and Italy, and used those countries as a temporary stop over before crossing into the UK. Many of these Eritreans risk their lives trying to make their way into Britain illegally. So why do these Eritreans seek asylum and refuge in the UK, rather than stay in France or Italy? Reporter Caroline Woods interviewed an Eritrean in 2009 that had come from Italy and was stuck in a Calais refugee camp trying to cross into Britain, and his answer to this question was:

“in Italy we were like animals – no, like garbage. I cannot survive my life in Italy, it was impossible. And my life in Calais is very hard too. So I will try again to arrive in the UK, this is my dream. The UK has humanity. But when they get my fingerprints, they will try to send me back. I will ask, where will I go? I have no alternative but to come here. So I ask the UK government to please, please help me.”³³⁸

Between 2001 and 2004, 4000 Eritreans applied for asylum in the United Kingdom.³³⁹ Since then asylum applications made by Eritreans to the United Kingdom have steadily increased. In 2008 there were 2255 Eritrean applications for asylum in the UK, with 30% of those applications being granted. In 2011 there were a further 810 asylum applications by Eritreans, with 243 of those applications being refused and 53 also being withdrawn. Graph 3.2 shows the number of Eritrean Asylum applications and the number of applications granted between 2005 and 2011. From this data we can see that Eritreans over the last 5 to 10 years have consistently been trying to seek asylum in the United Kingdom. Together with the continued applications of asylum by Eritreans, we can see in Graph 3.3 that the number of Eritrean refugees living in the United Kingdom has consistently increased over the years. In 2010 there were 9,430 registered Eritrean refugees living in the UK.

³³⁶ The Telegraph Website: Surge in Eritrean population in Britain. 25 April 2012.

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2072304/Surge-in-Eritrean-population-in-Britain.html>>.

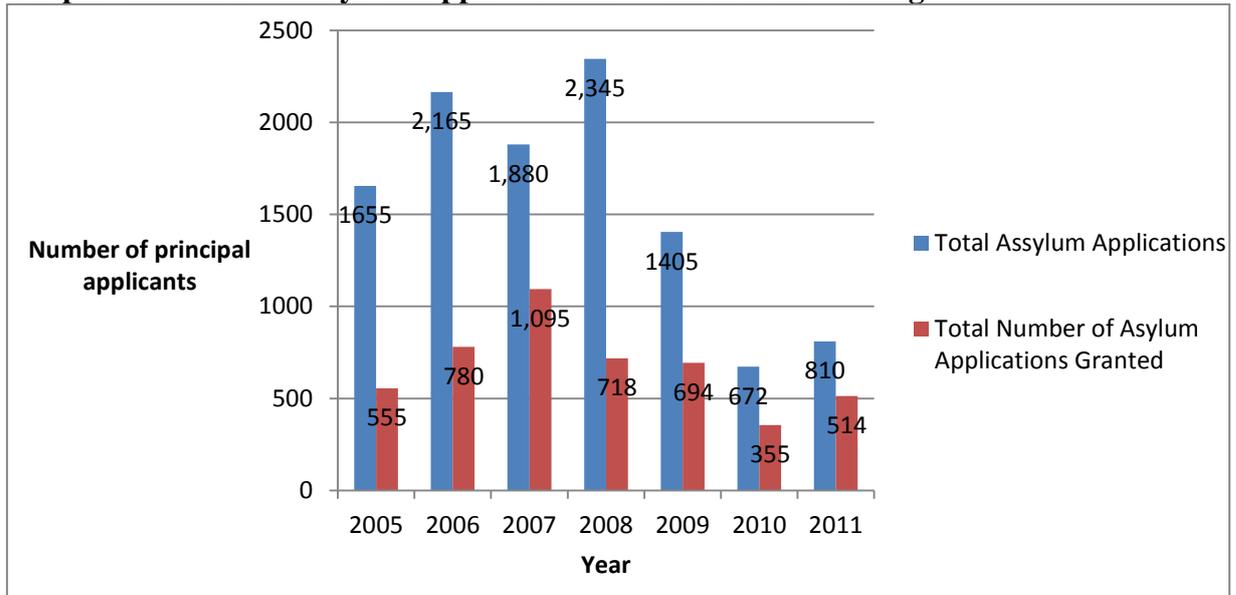
³³⁷ The Guardian Website: The house of despair. 25 April 2012.

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/jul/30/calais-eritreans-asylum-seekers>>.

³³⁸ Ibid.

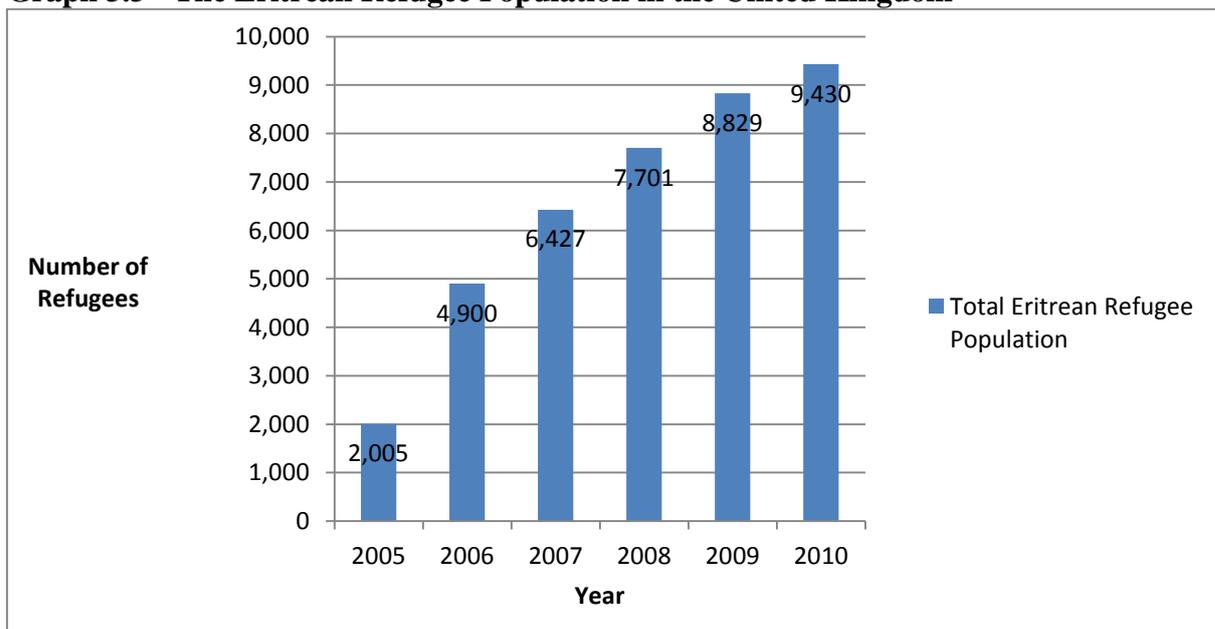
³³⁹ MPI Data Hub Website: United Kingdom: Annual number of asylum applications by nationality. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/countrydata/data.cfm>>.

Graph 3.2 – Eritrean Asylum Application made in the United Kingdom



Source: UK Border Agency. Asylum applications received in the United Kingdom.³⁴⁰

Graph 3.3 - The Eritrean Refugee Population in the United Kingdom



Source: UNHCR Total refugees and people in refugee-like situations 2005 - 2010.

³⁴⁰ Rice and Vadher, “UK Border Agency: Practices in the UK Concerning the granting of Non-EU Harmonised Protection Statuses and Leave to Remain”, pp. 21-22.

3.9.1 Asylum Seeker Rights in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom gives asylum to refugees under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The UK recognises that many Eritreans cannot go back to their country after leaving because of the fear of persecution. Although many Eritreans are fleeing because of the poor human rights issues in Eritrea, this alone is not a justifiable reason to be given asylum under the 1951 United Nations Convention. To qualify for asylum under the 1951 convention, Eritrean refugees must prove that they are fleeing persecution in their own country.³⁴¹ Strictly speaking humanitarian refugees do not meet this guideline, and subsequently can be refused asylum under the requirements of the 1951 convention. The UK though also adheres to the European Convention on Human Rights, which prevents them from sending refugees back to a country where there is a risk that they will be exposed to torture, or inhuman treatment.³⁴² The UK recognises that many Eritreans fall under this category and many are given asylum under the European Convention on Human Rights. Adding to this, the UK Border Agency has also compiled a report on Eritrea in 2010 outlining the violations of human rights and the risk of persecution if asylum seekers were sent back to Eritrea. The report outlines the measures UK border officers must take, and provides guidance on the nature and handling of the most common types of claims received from refugees asking for asylum from Eritrea.³⁴³

3.9.2 Eritreans Living in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has a population of circa 62 million people, with a democratic and multi-cultural society. Unemployment figures show that 2.5 million people or 8% of the employable population are unemployed in the United Kingdom.³⁴⁴ As we have seen the UK contains an Eritrean population of about 30,000 to 40,000 including the Eritrean refugee population. A significant reason for Eritreans wanting to come to the UK is thanks partly to the communities and networks of Eritreans in the UK, especially in London, which accounts for 17,000 of the estimated 20,000 plus Eritreans in Britain. In Table 3.3 I

³⁴¹ UK Border Agency Website: Asylum. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/asylum/>>.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ UK Border Agency Document: Operational Guidance Note Eritrea. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/countryspecificpolicybulletins/eritrea?view=Binary>>.

³⁴⁴ BBC Website: Economy Tracker: Unemployment. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10604117>>.

have compiled a list of all the registered Eritrean communities I have found on the internet and speaking to people. From table 3.2 we can see that the majority of community groups are based in London, another reaffirmation that the largest concentrations of Eritreans are based in the London region. There are also a number of Eritrean Restaurants and cafes in the United Kingdom, particularly in London. A quick internet search brings up around 25 Eritrean Restaurants and cafes in the London and Greater London area, with restaurants such as Mosob, Adulis and Red Sea just a few examples of restaurants that maintain a strong Eritrean theme in terms of cuisine and culture. Again it is interesting to note that all the Eritrean Restaurants were based in London, another indication of how the Eritrean population is concentrated in this area.

The Eritrean community in the United Kingdom is quite a small community compared to other groups such as that of the Ethiopian community. But in the last few years Eritreans have established a real sense of identity through organised events and through community groups' setup in local areas. The community at large is also united against the human rights issues in Eritrea. In December 2004 hundreds of Eritreans from the Eritrean diaspora protested outside the Eritrean Embassy in London, calling for a change from President Isaias Afewerki's regime. Present at the demonstration were a large number of young Eritreans from across London and the Southeast of England, who had first-hand experience of the cruelty of the Eritrean government.³⁴⁵ There have been many other demonstrations by Eritreans living in the United Kingdom, including a recent peaceful demonstration held in May 2011, where a number of Eritreans joined to protest the about the continued violations of human rights in Eritrea, and to call for the resignation of the Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki.³⁴⁶ There is a considerate amount of unity amongst Eritreans in the UK, surrounding the policies and behaviour of the Eritrean government.

The United Kingdom authorities on a whole are very much understanding and sympathetic of Eritreans and the issues that have afflicted them in their home country. Britain is a multi-cultural and democratic society, and most Britain's do not have feelings of discrimination or resentment towards Eritreans. London in particular is one of the most multi-cultural cities in the world with many people and residents coming from different backgrounds. Although it is important to realise that not all British people feel this way.

³⁴⁵ EHDR Website: Demonstration outside Eritrean Embassy in London. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.ehdr.org.uk/PR-Demo-10Dec2004.htm>>.

³⁴⁶ Christian Solidarity Website: Protest outside the Eritrean Embassy in London. 25 April 2012. <<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=1117>>.

With the poor economic climate and with unemployment at one of its highest levels in UK history, some people in the UK are not in favour of the growing number of asylum seekers in the country. A small majority of detractors and campaigners have questioned the UK's asylum and immigration policies, with some even suggesting that refugees should be deported from the UK.³⁴⁷ The head of the UK Border Agency, Matthew Coats responded to this criticism affirming that “the UK has been retaining its tradition of welcoming and providing refuge to those who are genuine and are in dire need of asylum”.³⁴⁸ Although there are some that do not welcome asylum seekers, we must not forget that the UK and its people are a welcoming nation who do much for those who genuinely need help. There are a number of UK based charities organised to help asylum seekers and migrants. For example a Swindon charity in 2010 helped many Eritreans by setting up drop in centres and providing food.³⁴⁹ Not only this, but in 2009 the UK National Lottery released information on the sum of donations it has made to Eritrean communities and groups across the United Kingdom. The total funds donated at the time were £911,265 and the funds have helped those groups and communities provide advice and support to Eritreans in those regions.³⁵⁰

Table 3.3 – Eritrean Community Groups and Initiatives in the United Kingdom

Community Name	City	Description
Eritrean Community in the UK	London	A charity established in 1987 to help Eritreans, providing advice and guidance with education, welfare and culture in the UK.
Eritrean Bethel Church	London	Church group for Eritrean and other Christians
Eritrean Community in Haringey	London	Provides a range of services, including information, advice and guidance, interpreting and translation services and organises social, cultural and sporting events

³⁴⁷ Emigrate Website: Survey Confirms UK as Hotspot for Asylum Seekers. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.emigrate.co.uk/news/1262342.html>>.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ BBC Website: Swindon asylum seeker charity. 25 April 2012. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-10995831>>.

³⁵⁰ Adal voice information Website: The UK National Lottery good causes has funded various Eritrean community initiatives to the tune of £911,265. 26 April 2012. <<http://adalvoice.wordpress.com/2009/03/21/the-uk-national-lottery-good-causes-has-funded-various-eritrean-community-initiatives-to-the-tune-of-911265-2/>>.

		to the Eritrean and wider population in Haringey.
Eritrean Community Support and Information Centre	London	Charity formed to help Eritrean refugees and Eritrean migrants, providing translation services, support and social and integration services.
Eritrean Education and Publication Trust	Southwark, London	Help Eritrean migrants and Eritrean refugees with public education.
Eritrean Muslim Community Association	Stockwell, London	A Mosque for Eritrean Muslims, and also a place to meet other Eritreans.
Eritrean Orthodox Christian Church and Community Centre	Camberwell, London	Provides mother tongue (Tigrinya) education and supplementary education to young Eritreans.
Eritrean Community in Lambeth	Lambeth, London	An Eritrean youth cultural group.
Eritrean Parents and children's Association	Kensington and Chelsea, London	Provide Eritrean children from the community with the chance to take part in recreational activities. Also provides a social environment for Eritrean parents.
Association of Eritrean Jeberti in the UK	Hammersmith and Fulham, London	
Eritrean Community in West Midlands	Birmingham	Provides Eritreans in the region help in finding work, providing advice and details of social events that are being organised.
Eritrean Women's Action for Development	Lambeth, London	A recently formed group in the London community, offering a range of support services to Eritrean women.
Eritrean and Ethiopian Advice and Information Centre	Hackney, London	This group provides advice, information and advocacy services to Eritreans and Ethiopians.
Eritrean Diaspora Community Network	Greenwich, London	This community group was established in 2005, and offers mother tongue lessons to Eritrean children, and organises social

		events within the community for Eritreans.
North East of England Eritrean Community Association	Newcastle Upon Tyne	Provides advice and information to local Eritreans in the North East of England. Organises sport and social events for the Eritrean youth.
ST Antonio Eritrean Refugee Women's Group	Lambeth, London	This community group provides support to Eritreans, in particular to women and older Eritreans.
Eritrean Community Development Initiative	Hillingdon, London	A group set up to help Eritrean children with schooling and education.
Eritrean Welfare Association	Birmingham	A charity setup to help Eritrean Muslims in the region.
Cleveland Ethio-Eritrean Community Association	Middlesbrough	Provides a range of services, including information, advice and guidance, interpreting and translation services and organises social, cultural and sporting events to the Eritrean and wider population in Middlesbrough.
Eritrean Community in South Yorkshire	Sheffield	A relatively new group, setup to provide help, support, advice and social activities to Eritrean refugees wishing to settle and lead independent lives in the area.
Eritrean Community	Newport	This community group provides advice, information and advocacy services to Eritreans in Newport.

The Eritrean community in the United Kingdom is the largest in Europe, and shows signs of continuing to grow if Eritrea's refugee crisis continues to worsen. Many Eritreans see the United Kingdom as a true safe haven, as a place they can seek asylum, and also a place where they can connect with other Eritreans, maybe even friends or families. The United Kingdom offers a far greater opportunity for Eritreans to maintain their social and cultural roots, where they are finding the multi-cultural cities such as London a place they can maybe start to build a temporary home while the Governmental violations continue back in their homeland.

Chapter Four

Research and Data Collection

4.0 Overview

During my research and data collecting I met a number of Eritreans both in Italy and the United Kingdom. What I found in both countries was that many of the Eritreans although friendly and approachable, were very reluctant to talk about the political situation in Eritrea. Many Eritreans I encountered were suspicious and distrustful when I first approached them. Many chose to remain silent when the matters of home country politics and general home country life were brought up. The few Eritreans who initially did open up also spoke of Eritreans in their community fearing monitoring by their own government. I cannot confirm how much of their fear is based on fact or on suspicion, but what was clear to me is that the fear they feel is very real. After speaking to the Eritrean UK community officer based in London, he too made it clear to me that many Eritreans are afraid that they or their family still living in Eritrea will be victimised by the Eritrean government officials if they came to know that they were talking to me about the human rights and political situation in Eritrea. Taking this on board I decided that in order to get Eritreans in Italy and the United Kingdom to participate in my surveys and interviews I had to make sure that their responses would be kept confidential and would not be shared with other parties within the community or parties who are not involved with the research project in any way. I also offered participants the option to remain anonymous, and the wish of those who chose to do so was respected.

4.1 Research Objectives

The aim of this research first and foremost is to understand how Eritreans living both in Italy and the United Kingdom have assimilated and adapted in a foreign country. There are four main objectives that I wish to cover:

- How do Eritreans find themselves in a society other than that of their home country Eritrea?
- What are their ambitions and aspirations for the future?
- What factors are shaping their life and community in Italy and the United Kingdom?
- What relationship they have with their homeland?

Using these topics above I will also compare the life Eritreans lead in both Italy and the United Kingdom and whether the two host countries offer different opportunities and support to Eritreans, and identify whether Diasporas communities in these two different host countries lead different lives. The research will also help to provide insights and an understanding of the challenges and issues Eritreans abroad encounter after leaving their post-authoritarian home country, and whether they still hold a longing feeling to return to Eritrea.

4.2 Methodology and Data Collection

My thesis so far has very much been based on secondary sources of data, such as books, articles, reports, websites and other studies on the subject of Eritrea and on the subject of Diaspora. My personal research method now focuses on the primary sources of data, and is divided into two techniques and strategies. The first is in the form of a questionnaire which I used to obtain valuable quantitative and demographic data. The second form of primary data collection is through the use of interviews. I conducted a series of interviews with Eritreans living in London the United Kingdom, and also conducted interviews with Eritreans from Rome in Italy.

4.2.1 The Questionnaire

Prior to the interviews came the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to be completed by Eritrean individuals living in Italy and the United Kingdom. The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions that were designed to collect statistical data on the demographic and social characteristics of the Eritrean community in their respective host country. The English language questionnaire was used for both sets of Eritreans living in Italy and the United Kingdom. The questionnaire provided an insight into the demographics of the Eritrean community, and helped to gather information on topics such as employment, reasons for moving away from Eritrea, their feeling towards their host country and homeland and overall helped to gather information on the characteristics of the community population.

Initially the questionnaires were distributed through the better known community groups in London and Birmingham. Through members of these community groups I was introduced to other Eritreans who also filled out questionnaires. I also attended an Eritrean festival in Brixton London where a few Eritreans kindly answered questionnaires. I also went to a number of Eritrean Restaurants and Cafes in London and left copies of my questionnaire with the hope that an Eritrean who would go and eat or drink there would answer the questions. Unfortunately only a few Eritreans filled out the questionnaire in the Restaurants and cafes. In Rome and Milan I was fortunate enough to have met individuals who had contacts with the Eritrean communities in both cities. In Rome most of my research was carried out via telephone, while in Milan I used email and telephone to maintain relations with my contact. During my field work in London and Birmingham I was fortunate to meet an Ethiopian and Algerian man who was kind enough to introduce me to Eritreans living in the respective communities. With their help I then revised a strategy whereby I would go to the cafes and bars that Eritreans would frequent and introduced myself in a friendly and informal manner. I then would explain the objectives of my study and made sure to highlight that I would show discretion and that their anonymity would be respected. Although at the beginning I had the intention of carrying out a face to face questionnaire, whereby I would record the participant's answers, it soon became clear to me that the participant would be more willing if they were able to complete the questionnaire privately and then have me collect them at a later date. For example at a London internet cafe and coffee bar where some Eritreans would congregate, many of the Eritreans who did fill out my questionnaire insisted that I leave the questionnaires with them and then return to collect them, and only in a few cases did the participants complete the questionnaire in front of me. This was yet another example of how guarded many of the participants were and in respect of their wishes I made sure that their responses were kept confidential.

During my field work and with the help from my contacts in Italy and the UK, a total of 82 Eritreans completed my questionnaire. 47 Eritreans successfully completed my questionnaire in the United Kingdom, 32 in London and 15 in Birmingham. In Italy a total of 35 Eritreans completed my questionnaire, with 21 responses from Milan and 14 from Rome. A sample copy of the questionnaire I designed and used is included in appendix 1 of this thesis.

4.2.2 Interviews

Although many of the participants of the survey decided to complete the questionnaires anonymously and away from my prying eyes, a few Eritreans did agree to participate in a one on one interview. The interviews were conducted with Eritreans living in the London area of the United Kingdom and with Eritreans living in the Lazio region in Italy. In total between Italy and the United Kingdom eight different Eritreans were interviewed. Five of the interviewees were living in London, while the other three were based near Rome in Italy. The interviewees were chosen at random and by chance. While carrying out my field work with my questionnaire I was able to meet some Eritreans who intimated that they may be happy to carry out a discrete and anonymous interview. Although only a small number of interviews were carried out, the sample of interviewees varied enough regarding sex, age and religion. Overall the objective of the interviews was to gather information on the personal experience of Eritreans and their perceived opinion on matters in their host country and their homeland. In particular my goal was to discuss which reasons they had for leaving Eritrea, any future ambitions they had, and what feelings they had towards their homeland's government and whether their journey and life had been the result of the Eritrean government's behaviour since the country's independence. Moreover the interviews provided cultural insights into their experiences of living abroad, and what the differences of living in a host country such as Italy or the United Kingdom were like. The interviews in London were all conducted in a café in London, in a quiet corner. While all the Eritreans living in Italy were interviewed via the internet using a video call service and also via a mobile phone.

Although I was conscious of making the participants feel at ease, I did have an interview structure prepared with a number of themes in mind. Using an interview guiding model, I outlined a set of subjects I wished to cover during the interviews, such as personal background, Eritrean culture and identity, feeling towards home government and Remittances. The interviews were carried out in a narrative manner, without a formal quick fire question and answer approach, and were set in an environment where the participants felt relaxed and calm. Even though the guiding model helped to form an interview structure, I was conscious not to push the participants on topics they felt uncomfortable talking about, such as home politics and remittances, and let them speak about the subjects through their stories. Although these participants volunteered to take

part in an interview they all insisted that they did not want the interview to be recorded. Subsequently during the interviews I took notes using a pen and notepad. The prepared guiding model can be found in Appendix 2. As I mentioned previously, not all the subjects and themes were covered in the interviews, as some participants did not feel comfortable talking about these subjects. An account of their stories and responses to my questions can be found later on in this chapter in the Interview section of this thesis.

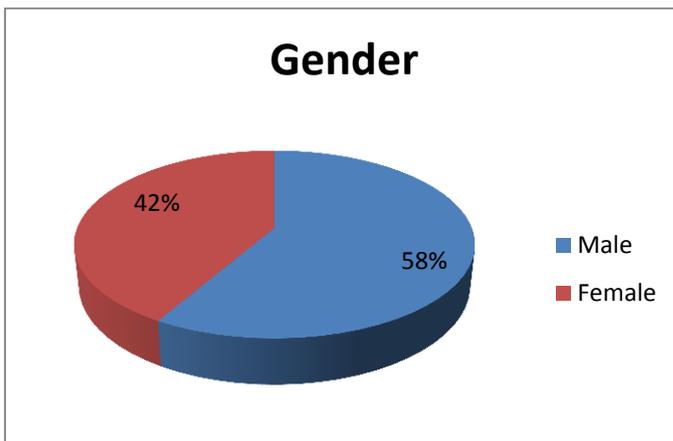
The data I have collected from the questionnaires and the interviews provide a demographic profile and a clearer understanding of the experiences felt by some Eritreans in diaspora. The accumulation of the collected data and a thorough analysis of the information will be provided later in this chapter.

4.3 Research Analysis

The following section provides a graphical representation of the questionnaire results, and provides an analytical examination of the results and their meanings.

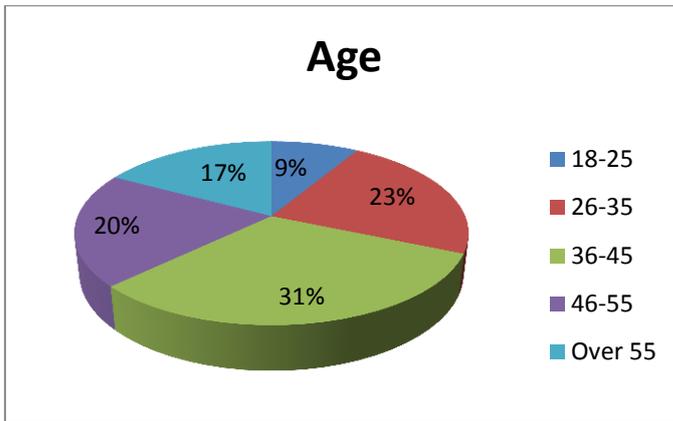
4.3.1 Questionnaire answers from Eritrean Participants in Italy

1. What is your gender?



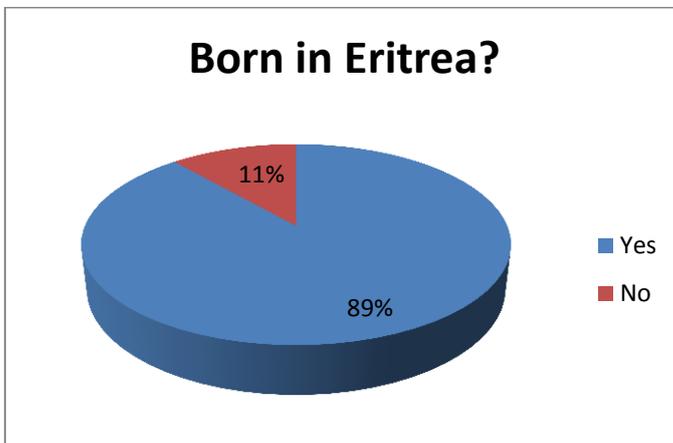
In Italy the total numbers of respondents were almost evenly split in terms of gender. There was not a large male majority nor was there a female majority in terms of numbers.

2. How old are you?



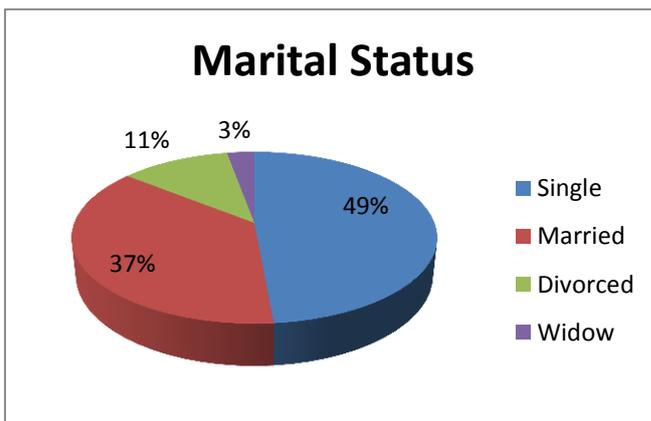
Predominately speaking the participants who filled out the questionnaires were mainly in the 36-45 age range. The 18-25 age range contained the fewest participants, possibly an indicator of the younger Eritreans not wanting to come or live in Italy.

3. Were you born in Eritrea?



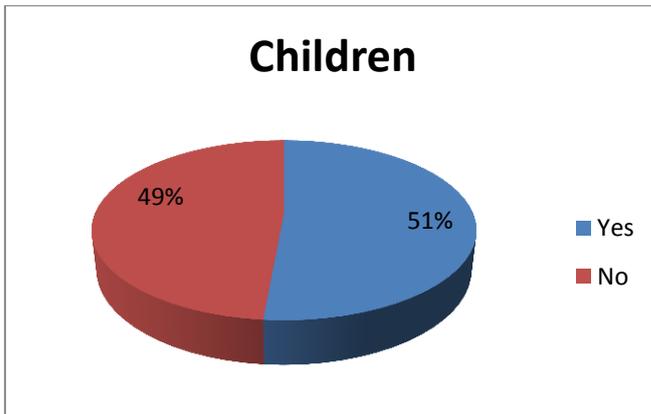
Nearly all the participants who filled out the questionnaires were born in Eritrea. The small number who answered no to this question wrote on the questionnaire that they were born either in Ethiopia or Italy. The two participants who answered being born in Italy probably shows that there now exists a young generation of Italians with Eritrean parents.

4. What is your current marital status?



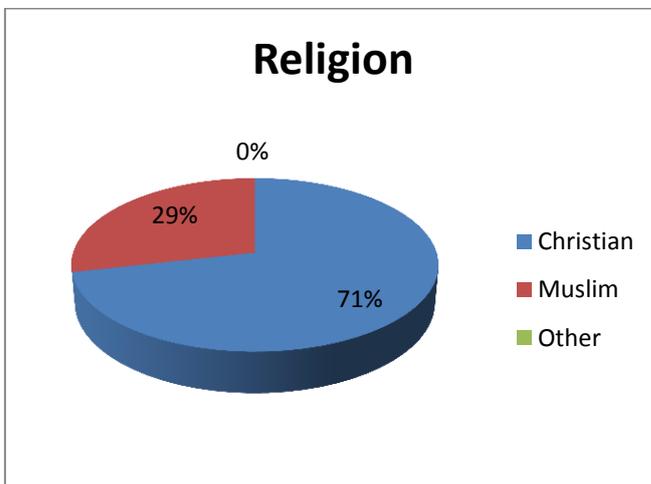
Nearly all the participants were divided between single and married. Only a negligible number of the participants answered divorced and widowed. The 46-55, over 55 and some of the 36-45 age range Eritreans answered they were married. Many of those who answered they were single were aged between 18-25 and 26-35.

5. Do you have children?



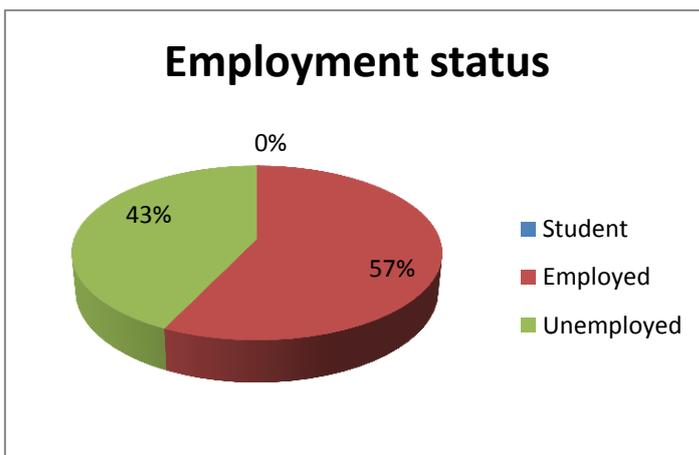
There was almost an even divide between the participants who had children and those who did not. This again could indicate that many Eritreans who live in Italy are living in the country with a family with children. Again what we saw here was that many of the 26-35 and 35-46 aged Eritreans who answered yes they had children, were living in Italy with their children.

6. What is your religion?



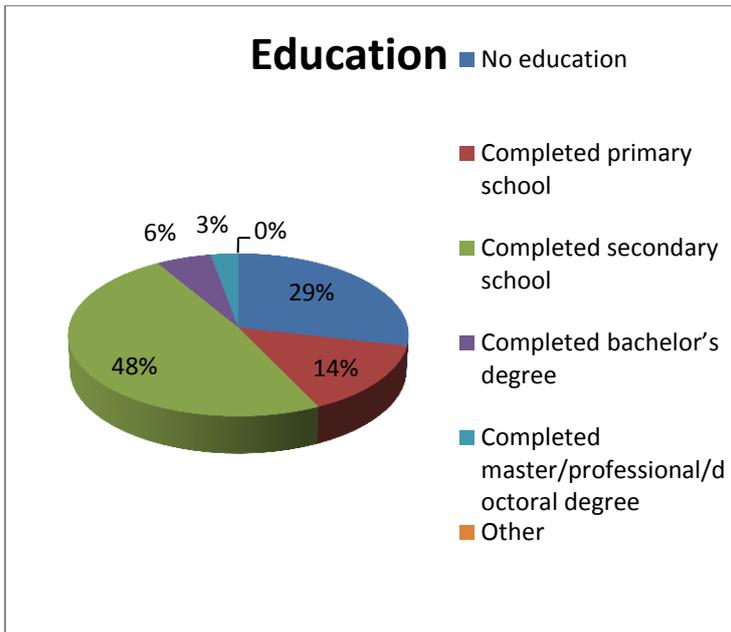
The greater majority of respondents answered that they were Christian; while only 29% of the participants answered they were Muslim. This may correlate with the general idea that Christian Eritreans move away from their country and migrate to the west and to Europe. While it is generally assumed that Muslim Eritreans migrate to the Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and Israel.

7. What is your occupation status?



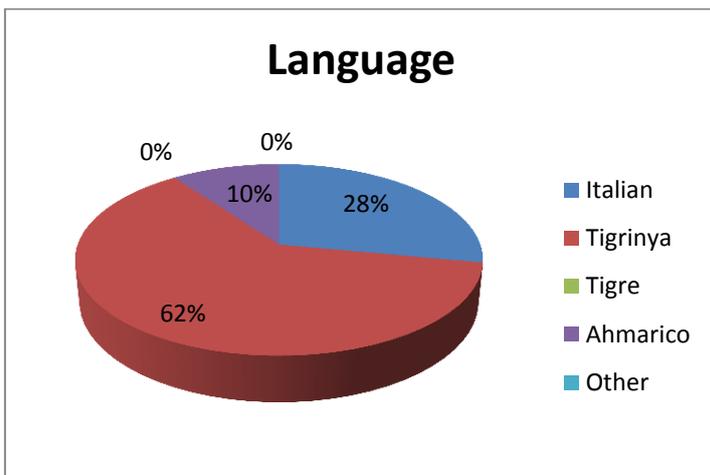
Although the largest of majority of participants answered that they were employed, there still was a high percentage of unemployed. It is also interesting to see that none of the participants were studying in Italy. The 43% of unemployed signifies that it is true that many Eritreans struggle to find a job in Italy.

8. What is your highest level of education?



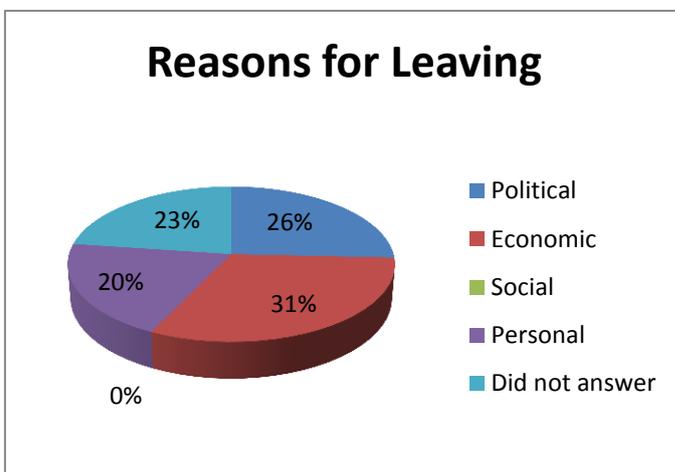
It is interesting to see that half of those who did complete my questionnaire had completed the Secondary school and 6% had even completed university and attained a bachelor's degree. This shows that they have a level of education that would allow them to carry out a number of jobs and even contribute to the host society. Another interesting statistic from this question is the high number of participants who had no education. When looking at this in greater detail we can see those with no education was Eritreans who left Eritrea during the 30 year war.

9. What Language(s) do you speak at home?



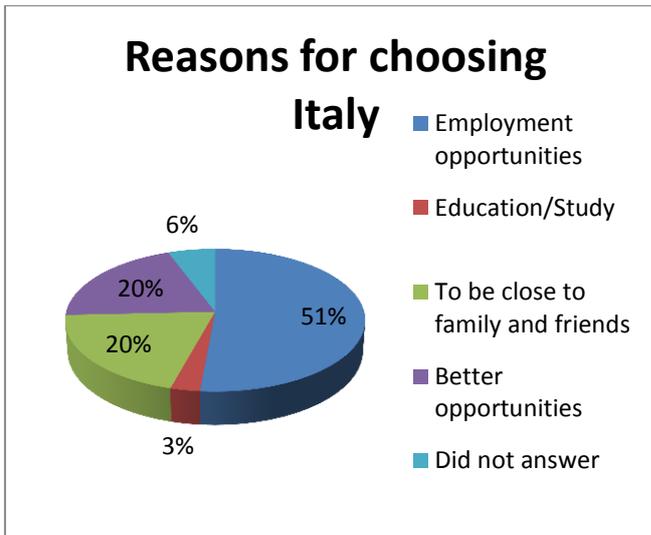
Most of the respondents spoke Tigrinya at home, with a figure of 62%. It is interesting to see that even though they live in another country they continue to speak their homeland language. This suggests they continue to maintain an Eritrean culture in some respects. Nearly 30% of the participants also spoke Italian, an indication that some Eritreans had integrated more than others.

10. Why did you leave Eritrea?



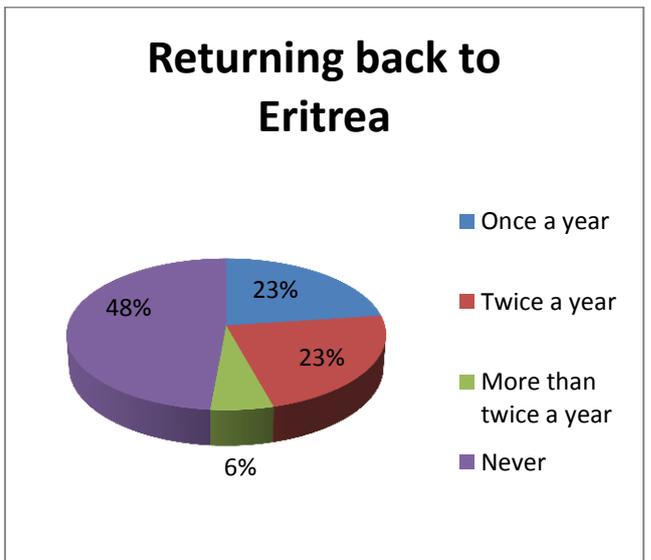
A third of the respondents answered that they left Eritrea for economic reasons. This is a response that tallies with my expectation and with the issues of famine and poverty in their homeland. 26% also answered that they left because of the political issues in Eritrea. Again it signifies that there really is a problem with the Eritrean government. Finally the 23% that did not answer this question may have not done so out of fear and outlines the suspicion and mistrust they still hold.

11. Why did you decide to travel to Italy?



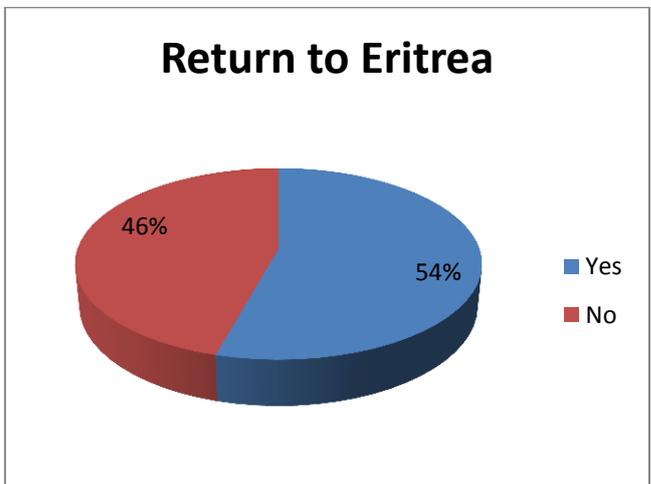
Over half of the respondents answered that they chose to live in Italy to better their employment opportunities. With half of the respondents being unemployed I assume that before arriving in Italy they expected more opportunity. 20% also answered they chose Italy because it offered better opportunities all round, in terms of social and health services. This suggests that there is a real poverty issue in Eritrea. 20% also answered to be close to family and friends, suggesting that Eritreans prefer to go where there already exists an Eritrean community of sorts. 6% also did not answer, which means they do not have a motive; they just want to leave Eritrea.

12. How often do you return to Eritrea?



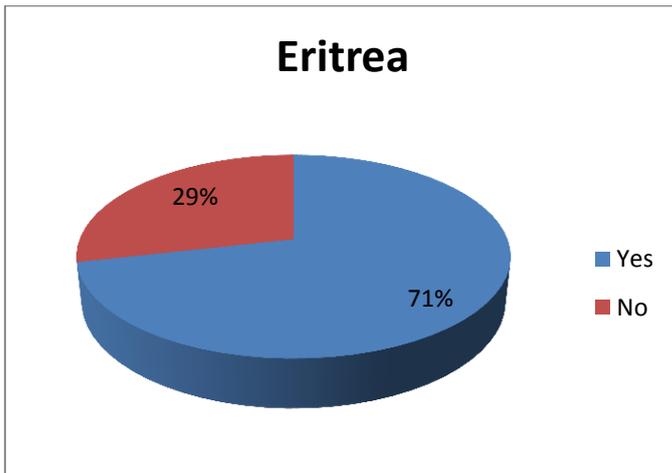
Nearly half of the respondents answered that they never go back to Eritrea. This highlights the fear that many Eritreans have of their homeland government. The reason they do not return could also be put down to the fact they do not have a necessity to go back. It is important to note that although these 48% of participants never return to Eritrea, this does not mean they do not maintain contact with their homeland. 23% return once a year and 23% answered they return twice a year. So we can see there are Eritreans in Italy who do and can return back to see family and friends or return for a holiday.

13. Would you like to return and live in Eritrea?



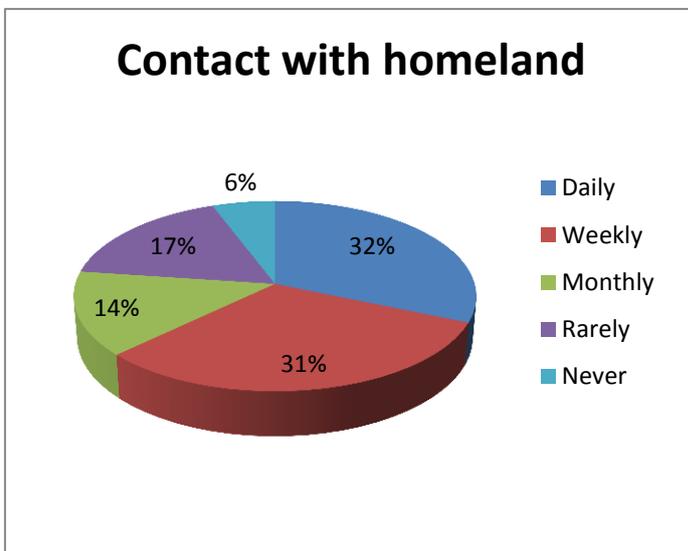
The majority of respondents answered that they would like to return to Eritrea. The number is not as high as I may have expected. 46% of the respondents also answered that they would not like to return to Eritrea. This clearly shows that a large number of Eritreans are not happy about the situation that lives in Eritrea. While maybe the 54% who answered they would like to return, did so more in terms of dreaming to return if the situation allowed them to.

14. Do you miss Eritrea?



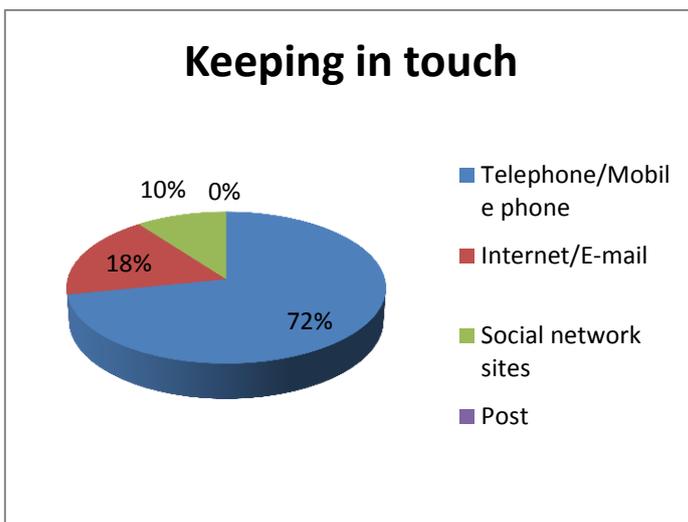
Over 70% answered that they missed their homeland. This highlights that although many look to create a life abroad; their hearts are nevertheless tied to their homeland, even though Eritrea has been reported as a place of oppression and struggle. The affection they hold for their homeland is not surprising, especially when many still have family and friends still living in Eritrea.

15. How often do you keep in touch with your homeland?



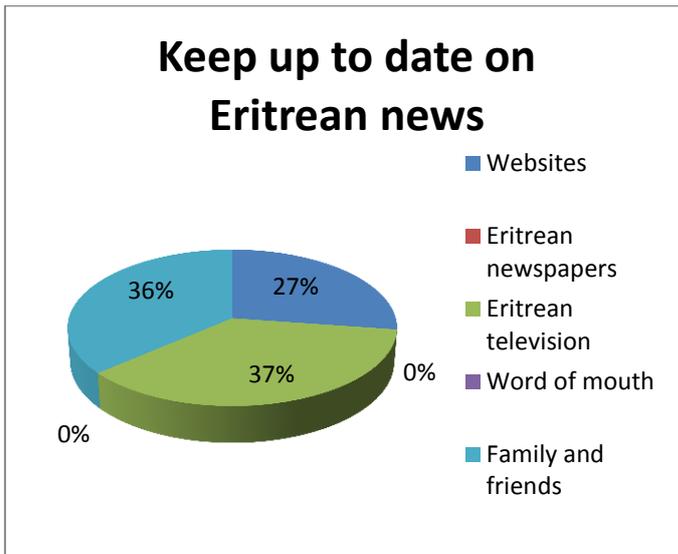
What we can see from this question is that nearly all Eritreans maintain a contact with their homeland, be it daily, weekly or monthly. This reinforces the idea that the diaspora members through the contacts they maintain with family and friends, continue to have contact with their homeland.

16. How do you keep in touch?



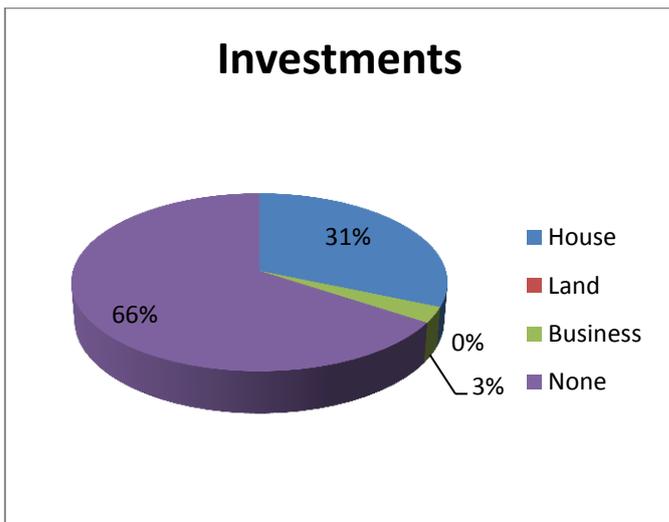
The principal ways in which the participants maintain contact with people in their homeland are through the use of mobile phones and telephones. Only 18% use the internet and email to maintain contact, and 10% use social networking sites to contact those in Eritrea. This is not surprising considering the small number of Eritreans in Eritrea who have access and use of the internet.

17. How do you receive information about Eritrea?



This data again highlights how the Eritreans living abroad maintain contacts and keep up to date with Eritrean news. 37% of the participants answered they watch Eritrean television to receive information about their homeland. A sign that a number of Eritreans watch Eritrean television channels, which again shows how they maintain their culture and habits abroad. 36% use family and friends who live in Eritrea to keep up with news about their homeland, again a sign of how the diaspora maintains consistent contacts with Eritrea. 27% of respondents also answered they keep up to date through the use of the internet and websites

18. Have you made any investments in Eritrea?



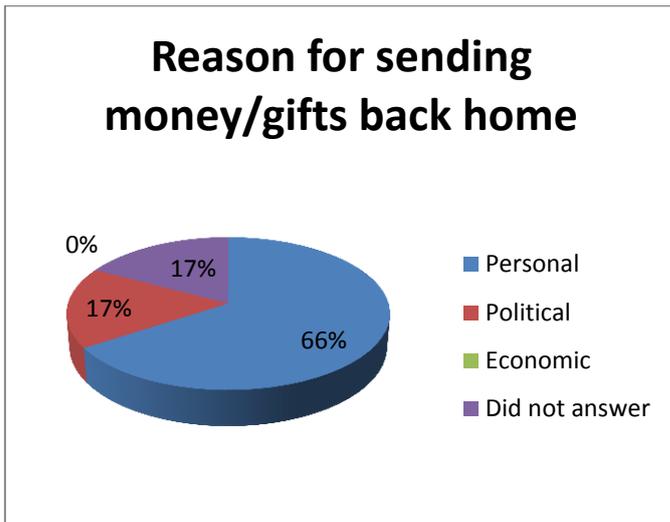
The majority of respondents answered that they have never made an investment in Eritrea. Only 31% answered that they had bought a house in Eritrea and used it as a holiday or family home. With 66% having answered that they have never made an investment suggests that their homeland cannot offer them a future or as has been reported that their government does not give them the opportunity to invest. Broadly speaking the investment that most diaspora members make is that of a house or holiday home.

19. Have you ever sent money or gifts back home?



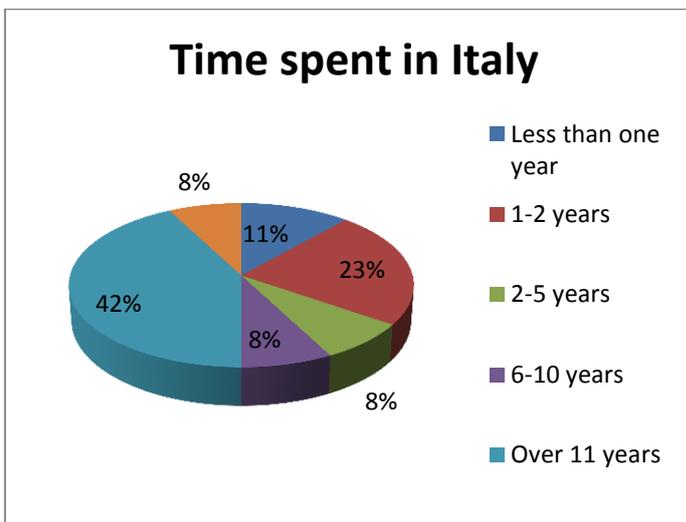
A large majority of Eritreans send money or gifts back home. This is another indication of how the diaspora supports Eritreans back home and how they support their homeland. The 26% who answered no to this question were all unemployed and aged between 18-25 and 25-36.

20. What was the purpose for sending the money or gifts?



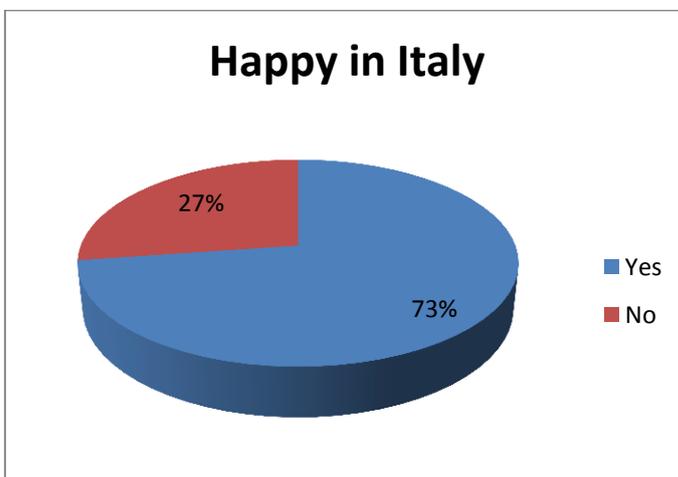
A large majority of respondents answered that they sent money and gifts back home because of personal reasons. An indication that the money they send home is to help and support family and friends that are suffering from the poverty issue. It is also interesting to see 17% answered for political reasons, referring to the diaspora tax. But when we add this with the 17% who did not answer we can see that it is possible that a greater number pay the diaspora tax. And it also shows the fear and suspicion that still exists amongst Eritreans abroad.

21. How long have you lived in Italy?



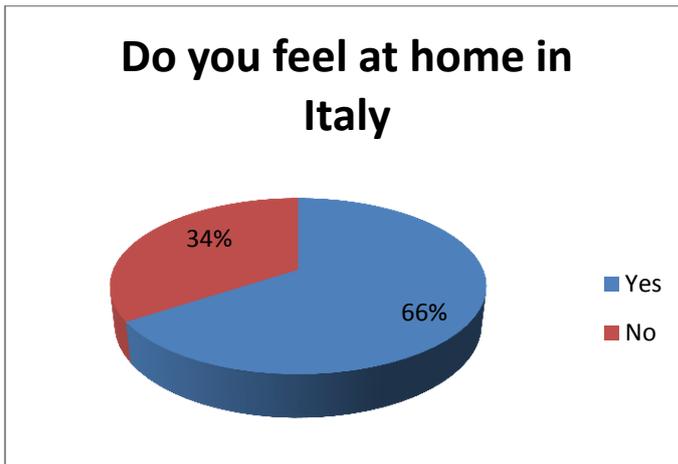
42% of the participants answered that they have lived in Italy for more than 11 years. This suggests that they have created a life in their host country although they miss their homeland. 23% answered they have been in Italy between one and two years and 11% answered less than one year. This shows that the flow of Eritreans arriving in Italy is still constant in the 21st century. It is interesting to note how 8% of the respondents preferred not to answer suggesting that maybe they represent the people who left the country illegally and they have not found a dimension in Italy.

22. Are you happy in Italy?



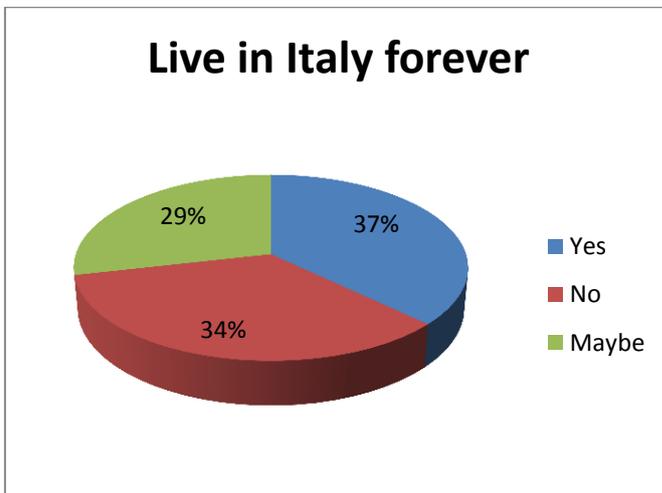
Almost 75% of respondents answered that they are happy with life in Italy. Again this is an indication that their life in Eritrea was very difficult. The 27% who answered "No" were all unemployed, which undoubtedly is a reason for their unhappiness. The samples of Eritreans were also over a certain age and had spent a number of years in Italy which probably reflected in the statistics of this question.

23. Do you feel at home being abroad?



The results of this question again confirm that a large number of the respondents are happy in Italy and have made a life for themselves. With 66% having answered "Yes" they feel at home in Italy, suggests that they are happy with their life in Italy. The 34% who answered "No" to this question had all spent between 1 and 10 years in Italy, and demonstrated that they are still strongly attached to their homeland.

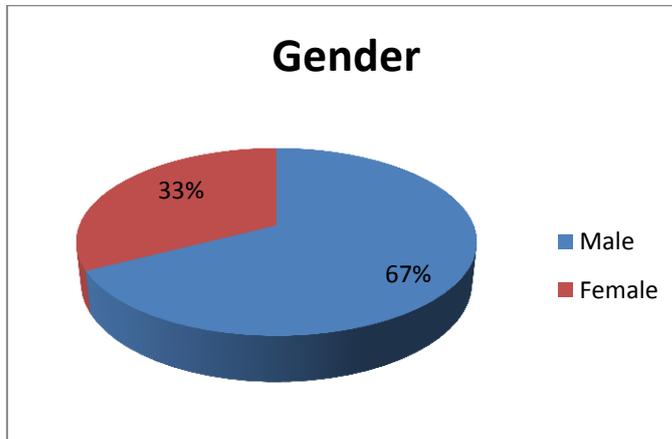
24. Would you like to stay in Italy forever?



A third of the respondents answered that they would like to remain in Italy forever, although this is not a large number compared to the number of Eritreans who said they are happy and feel at home in Italy. This indicates that many Eritreans are happy in Italy but nevertheless see Italy as a temporary landing place. But with only 34% answering "No" to this question, this shows that the number of Eritreans who want to leave Italy is not as high as one may have first thought.

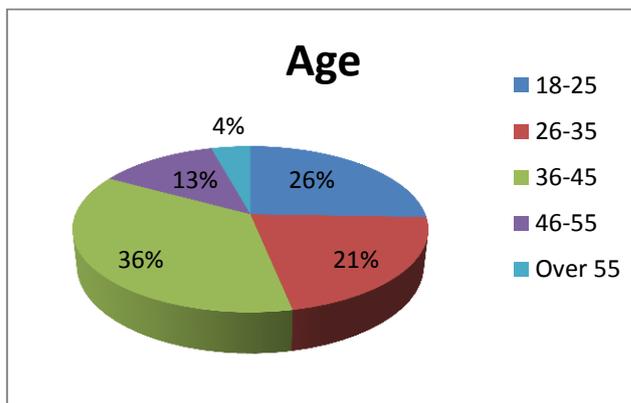
4.3.2 Questionnaire answers from Eritrean participants in the United Kingdom

1. What is your gender?



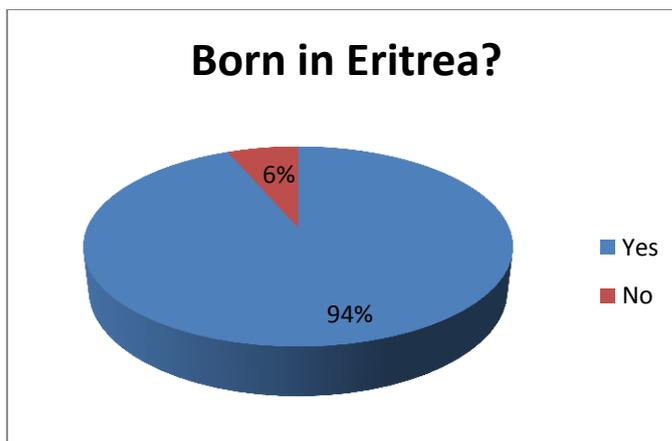
Unlike the Italian respondents two thirds of the UK participants were male, meaning only a third of the respondents were women. Therefore a fairly large majority of respondents were male.

2. How old are you?



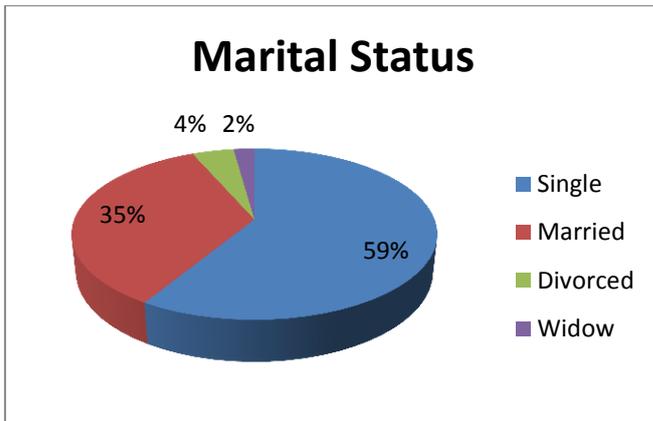
The largest percentage of respondents was aged between 36-45 years old. There were also a large number of younger participants; with 26% aged between 18-25 and 21% aged between 26-35 years old. There were only a small percentage of older participants with figures of 4% and 13%. Compared to Italy the respondents were generally younger. This could possibly suggest that the younger generation have ambitions of coming to the UK rather than staying in Italy.

3. Were you born in Eritrea?



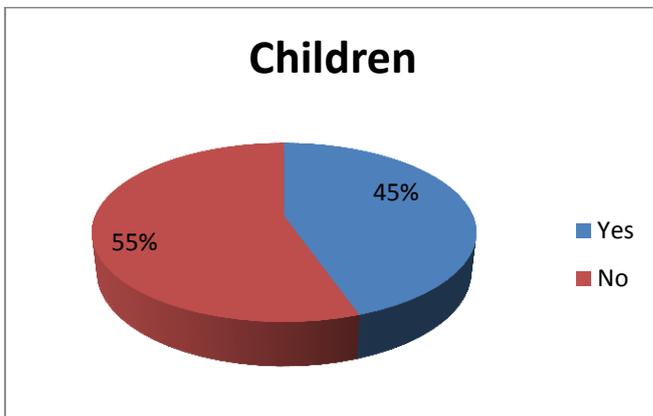
Nearly all the respondents were born in Eritrea, with a majority of 94%. 6% answered that they were born in Eritrea's neighbouring country Ethiopia. None of them said they were born in the UK or any other European non-African country.

4. What is your current marital status?



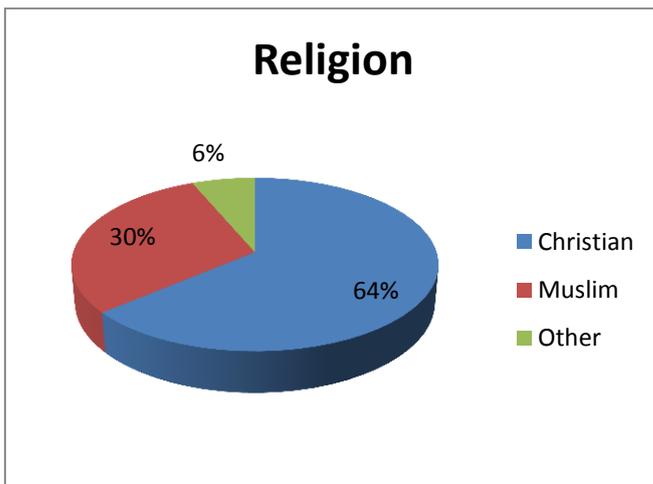
Nearly 60% of the participants said they were single. This probably coincides with the greater number of younger respondents taking part. 35% also said they were married, and only a very small number were divorced or widowed.

5. Do you have children?



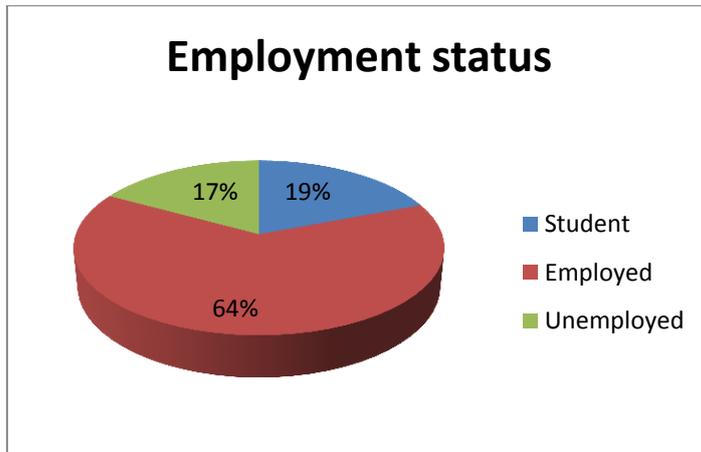
55% of the participants answered that they did not have children, which reaffirms the fact that there were a greater set of younger respondents compared to the Italian participants. Although it is interesting to note that there were also a number of single respondents who answered they had children.

6. What is your religion?



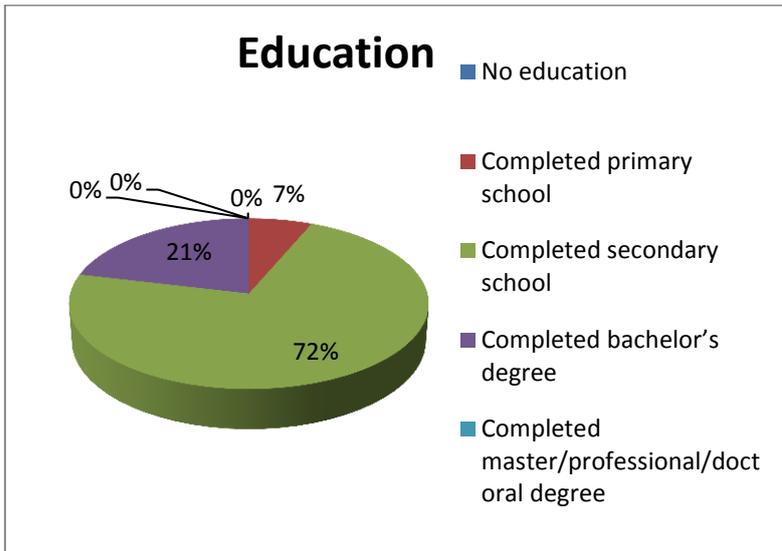
Like in Italy the majority of participants are Christian. This backs up the theory that Christian Eritreans move away from their country and migrate to the west and to Europe. While it is generally assumed that Muslim Eritreans migrate to the Middle East. Although compared to Italy there were more Muslim participants, I expected the number to be higher still considering the UK's reputation of being a far greater multi-cultural country.

7. What is your occupation status?



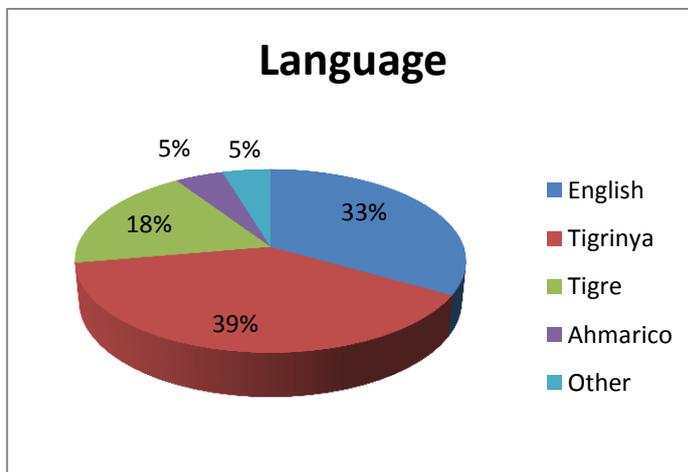
The majority of participants are employed in the UK. The unemployed were only 17%, a much lower number compared to the Italian participants. Also a difference to the Italian respondents is the fact that in the UK 19% of the respondents answered that they were studying, a vast difference to the Italian results where none of the participants put that they were studying. A reason for more students could lie in the fact that the UK sample of Eritreans was much younger than the Italian Eritreans.

8. What is your highest level of education?



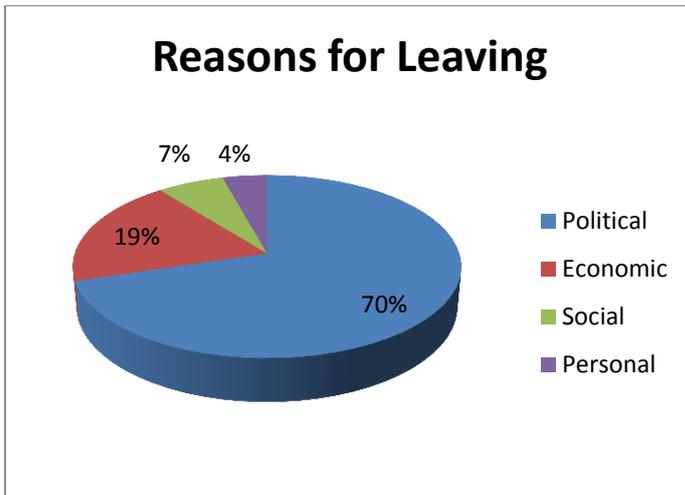
A majority of 72% of the respondents answered that they had completed Secondary school. 21% said that they had completed university and attained a bachelor's degree. The level of education among the Eritrean participants in the UK was higher compared to those in Italy. Another interesting statistic from this question is that none of the respondents answered that they had no education, unlike in Italy where they did.

9. What Language(s) do you speak at home?



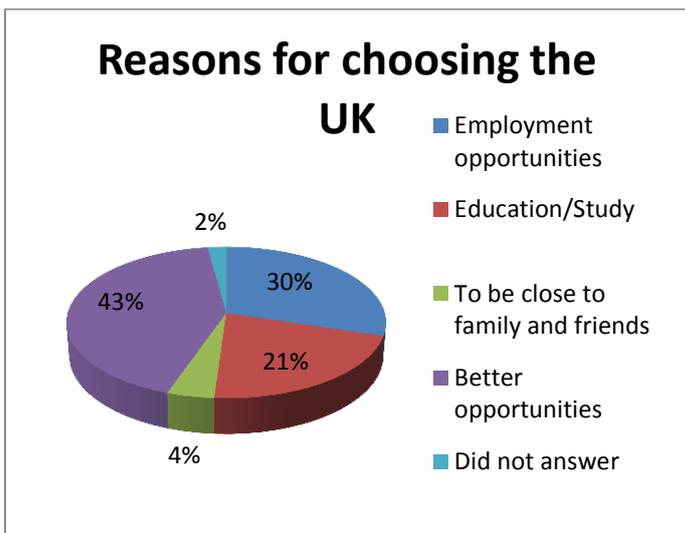
The higher percentage of respondents answered that they speak Tigrinya at home, followed closely by English at 33%. 18% also answered that they speak Tigre and 5% answered that they speak Ahmarico at home. Unlike in Italy we have respondents that speak Tigre and Ahmarico. This may be thanks to the greater number of Muslim participants amongst the UK participants.

10. Why did you leave Eritrea?



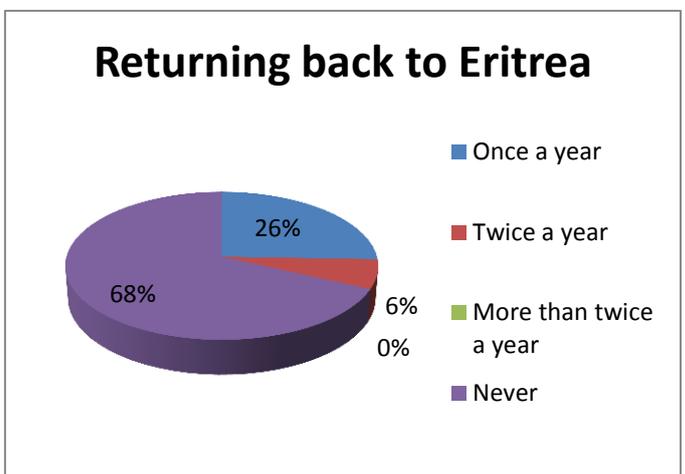
The large majority of the respondents answered their reason for leaving Eritrea was because of problems caused by the political policies of their homeland government. This links into the problems seen after post-independence, and the new generation of immigrants from Eritrea. 19% answered that the motive for leaving was linked to economic reasons. Only 4% answered that they left Eritrea for personal reasons, a stark difference to the Italian respondents, of which 20% answered personal.

11. Why did you decide to travel to the United Kingdom?



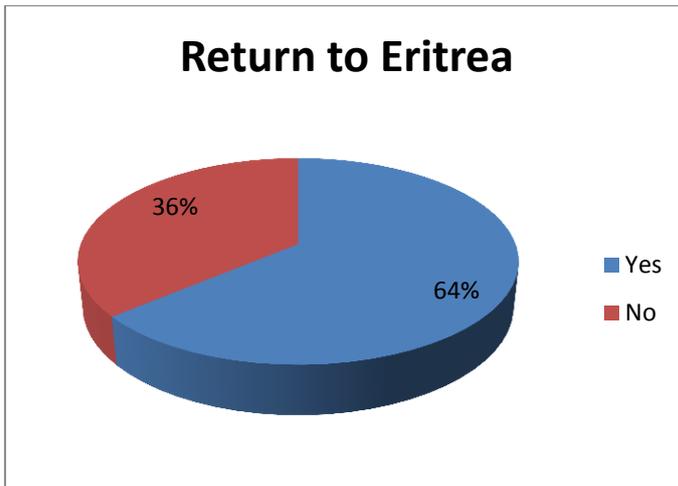
The largest percentage of respondents was those who answered better opportunities as the reason for choosing the UK. This was followed by 30% who chose employment opportunities as their reason for moving to the UK. 21% also chose Education/Study as their reason for choosing the UK.

12. How often do you return to Eritrea?



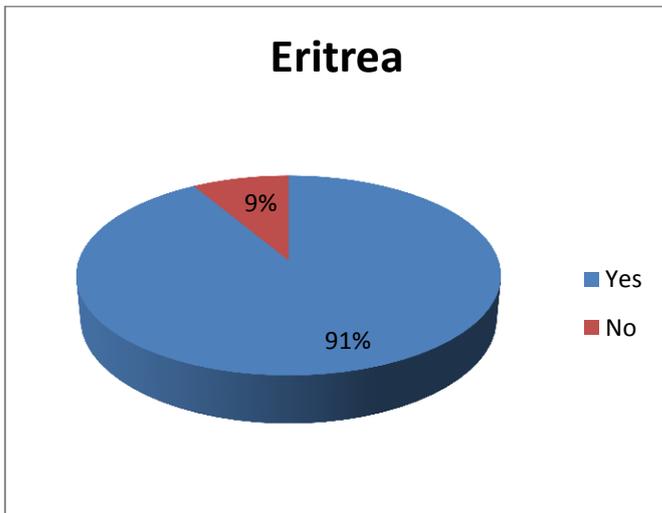
The large majority of the respondents answered that they have never returned back to Eritrea since leaving. 26% answered that they have returned roughly once a year. These statistics match what we saw from the Eritreans living in Italy. This reinforces the views that the Eritrean people fear their homeland government or do not feel safe in their homeland.

13. Would you like to return and live in Eritrea?



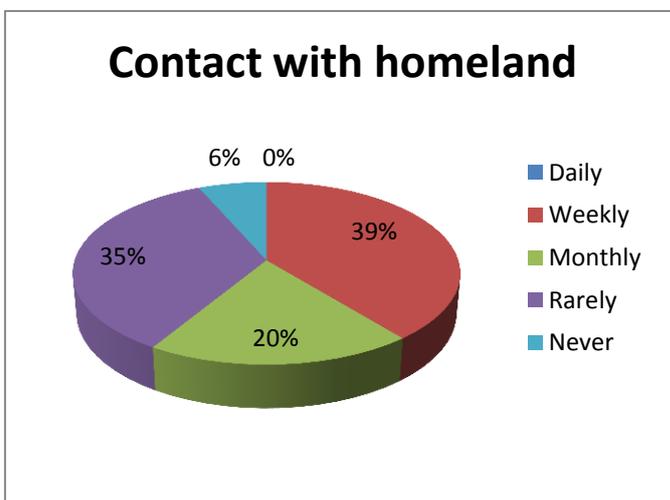
It is interesting to note here how a considerably large majority of the respondents living in the UK answered that they would like to return and live in Eritrea. And when compared to the Italy respondents the number is greater in the UK. Only 36% answered they would not return to Eritrea.

14. Do you miss Eritrea?



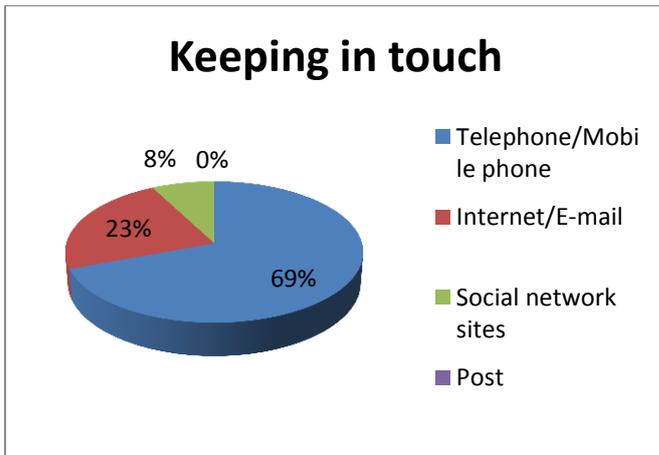
A very large majority of nearly 95% of the respondents answered that they missed Eritrea. This is an interesting statistic, because it suggests that Eritreans still maintain a desire and connection to their homeland. More important is if we refer this data to the respondent's age. Even though the respondents were young, we can see that the young generation are still very much attached to Eritrea.

15. How often do you keep in touch with your homeland?



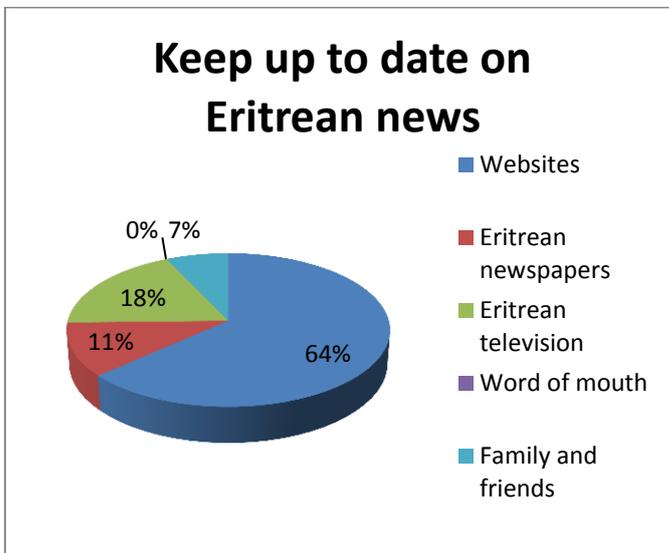
In this question there is no large percentage referred to a single answer. The respondents are almost evenly divided between weekly, monthly and rarely. A small number did answer that they never keep contact with their homeland.

16. How do you keep in touch?



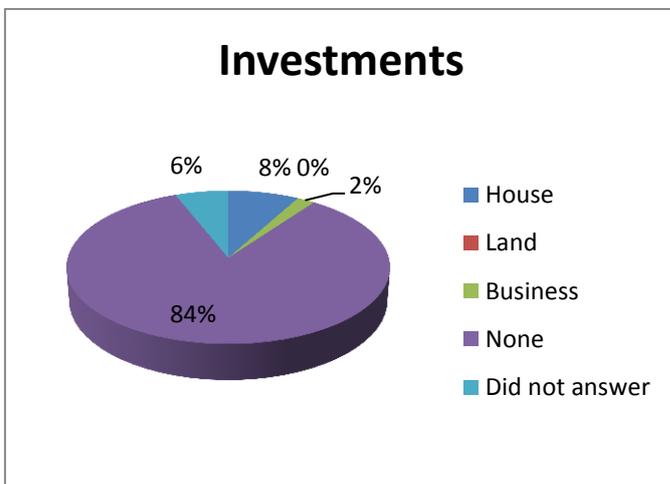
This question suggests that the main ways in which the Eritrean participants maintain contact with people in their homeland are through the use of mobile phones and telephones. Only 23% use the internet and email to maintain contact, and 8% use social networking sites to contact those in Eritrea. This is not surprising considering the small number of Eritreans in Eritrea who have access and use of the internet.

17. How do you receive information about Eritrea?



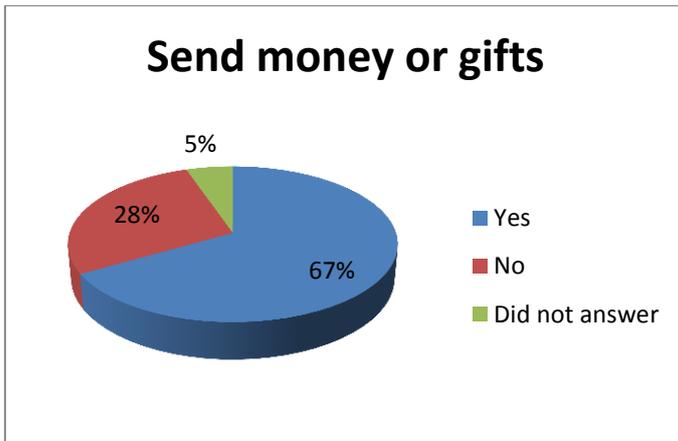
The large majority of participants answered that they used the internet and websites to keep up to date with news on Eritrea. Compared to the Eritreans in Italy who answered that they use mainly family and friends for news, we can see that the Eritreans in the UK rely hugely on the internet. This again could be attributed to the difference in age between the respondents. Although even in the UK 18% answered that they use television and 11% use Eritrean newspapers. Only 7% answered that they use family and friends.

18. Have you made any investments in Eritrea?



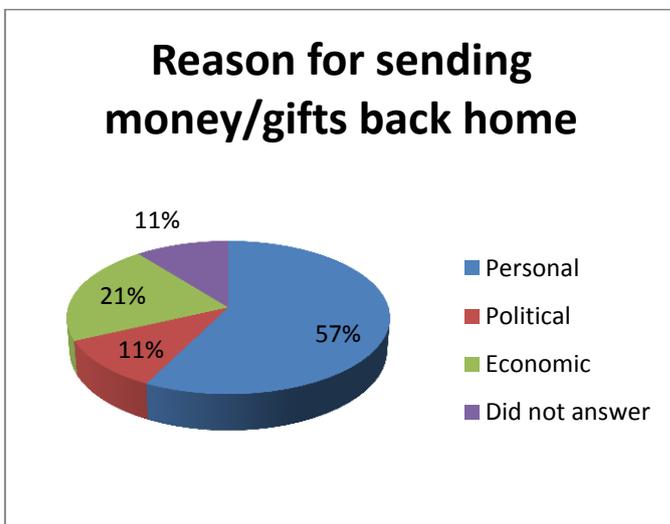
The majority of respondents answered that they have never made an investment in Eritrea. Only 8% answered that they had bought a house in Eritrea and used it as a holiday or family home. With 84% having answered that they have never made an investment suggests that their homeland cannot offer them a future or as has been reported that their government does not give them the opportunity to invest or because of the age of the participants. Broadly speaking we can see that diaspora members do not make investments in their homeland.

19. Have you ever sent money or gifts back home?



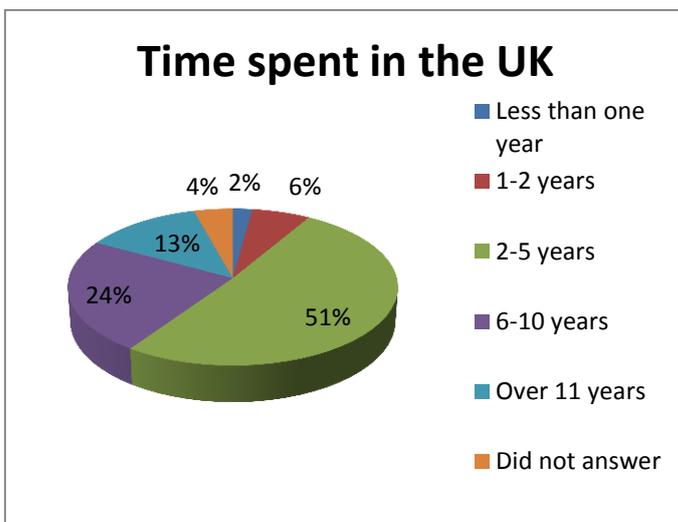
67% answered that they had sent money or gifts back home. This shows that even young or old members of the diaspora support their homeland and their family and friends living in Eritrea in particular. The 5% who did not answer could have chosen to not answer either because they were ashamed that they did not send money back or because they were suspicious of the question.

20. What was the purpose for sending the money or gifts?



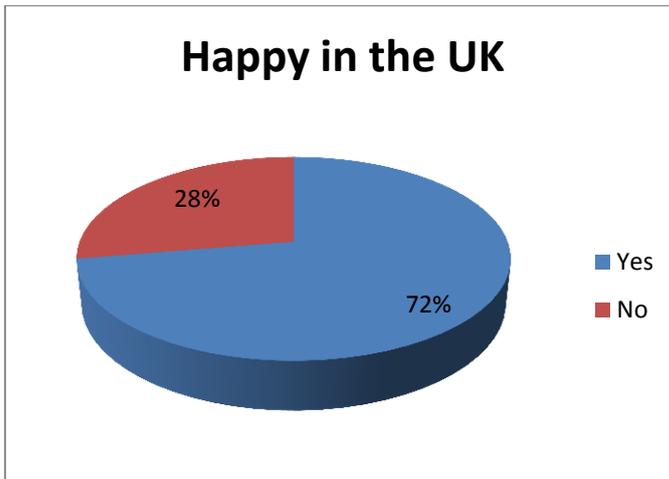
A large majority of respondents answered that they sent money and gifts back home because of personal reasons. An indication that the money they send home is to help and support family and friends. It is also interesting to see 21% answered for economic reasons, referring to the poverty issue in Eritrea. 11% answered that they sent money back for political reason, while another 11% decided not to answer this question.

21. How long have you lived in the United Kingdom?



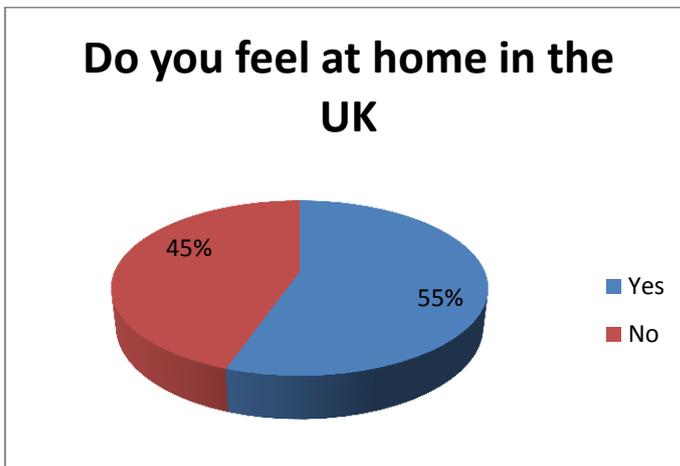
A small majority of the respondents answered that they have lived in the UK for two to five years. This corresponds with the young age group of the participants. 24% also answered that they had lived in the UK for six to ten years, while 13% have lived in the UK for over 11 years. 8% also answered that they had been living in the UK for less than 2 years, an indication that Eritreans are still freely arriving in the UK.

22. Are you happy in the United Kingdom?



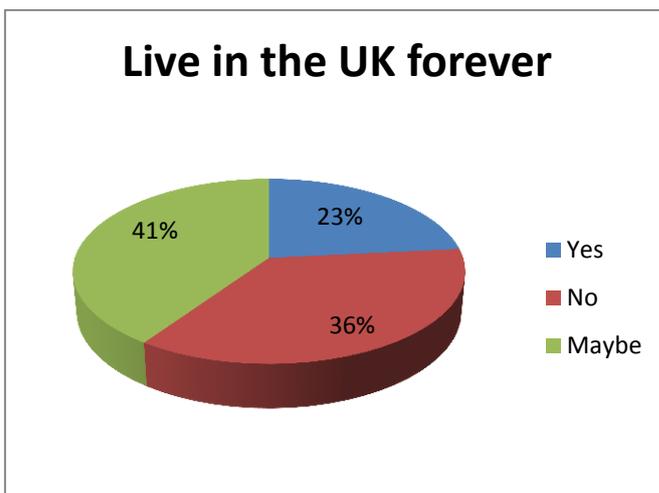
Almost 73% of respondents answered that they are happy with life in the UK. Again this is an indication that their life in Eritrea was very difficult. Some of the 28% who answered “No” to this question were unemployed, while others could just be dissatisfied with life in the UK.

23. Do you feel at home being abroad?



Just over half of the respondents answered that they felt at home in the UK. If we consider that 72% answered that they were happy in the UK and yet only 55% answered that they feel at home, it can lead us to think that they still have a strong attachment and loyalty to Eritrea.

24. Would you like to stay in the UK forever?



Although a large number of the respondents answered that they were happy in the UK, only 23% answered that they would like to live forever in the UK. 41% answered maybe, while 36% said they would not like to live in the UK. This shows that they have a double sentiment, in terms of they appreciate their life in their host country, but it cannot replace their homeland entirely.

4.4 Interviews with Eritreans Living in Italy

The following section provides an account of my interviews with Eritreans who live in Italy.

4.4.1 Interview 1

- Eritrean woman
- 34 years old
- Interview was conducted over a video call

My first interview was with a 34 year old Eritrean woman, who works as a waitress in an Eritrean Restaurant in Rome. She began her story by telling me that her experience was similar to others. She said she was born in Eritrea and had spent her childhood in a village in the Eritrean country side and said it was very difficult. She also said she has a big family, and then began to repeat more than once the following, *“I’m sure you know the current situation in Eritrea is, and know its history, how it was for so long, and how it has changed so much”*.

She told me that she left Eritrea about ten years ago. She said that the journey from Eritrea to Italy was a long and difficult one. She also went on to say that she could not remember exactly the day she left or the day she took the decision to leave her homeland. She told me that her reasons for leaving were simple. She left Eritrea because of the forced military conscription policy and because of the famine. She described being forced into the military service and that she did not want to be a soldier for ever. Her dream was to study and better her life.

When she left Eritrea she was not alone, and was accompanied by some friends. They were very conscious of being caught when they tried to reach the Eritrean/Ethiopian border, and travelled through Eritrea at night and not during the day. They feared being caught because they knew if they were found they would be imprisoned or worse. Together with her friends she walked for seven nights without eating or drinking. Her ambition was to arrive in Italy and build a new and better life. I asked why she wanted to go to Italy and replied *“It was the only place outside Eritrea where I knew someone who could help me when I arrived there”*. She said the dream of escaping the oppressive regime in Eritrea and to find a better life spurred her on during her journey and helped her to get through the difficult moments. She crossed the border into Ethiopia, from Ethiopia she then travelled to Sudan.

She said that this was the most common journey that Eritreans took to get out of Eritrea. She also said that she had to pay the border control officials to cross into Ethiopia. She also said it was thanks to the money sent by family and friends, and also some members in diaspora that she was able to raise enough to pay the Ethiopian border control officers.

She said she did not want to go into too much detail over her experience in Sudan and then in Libya because it was a painful and upsetting experience. She spent one month in Sudan and then crossed over into Libya, where she said she was quickly put in prison with other Eritreans who had crossed over with her. She described the conditions in the Libyan prison as *“inhumane and awful”*. She said that the Libyan guards would treat the prisoners badly, abusing women and beating the men. She said they went days without food or water, and the conditions were unbearable. Everyday hundreds of people were crying and praying. She said she will never forget the experience and that it would live with her forever, and in the end said that the time spent there *“was like living in hell”*.

Thankfully she said that together with some other prisoners they were able to escape and leave the prison. She said they reached the Libyan coast and paid someone there to get on a boat that was meant to take them to Italy. While on the boat, the boat broke down somewhere in the middle of the sea, and she said at that moment *“I thought I would die there in the middle of the sea”*. She described how they floated for days without any news of help or rescue. She then said, *“Fortunately one day after I don’t know how many days a big ship arrived. It was an Italian ship. They rescued us and took us to the Italian coast in Lampedusa”*.

She described how she was finally happy to have made it to Italy and to be alive. She told me at Lampedusa they took all her details and then took her to a camp in Foggia. In Foggia after 2 months she said they granted her humanitarian asylum and was free to leave the city.

After Foggia she decided to go to her friend who lived near Rome. She said that now she is happy, and that she has a house and she works. She also said that now she has the opportunity to earn money and help and support her family in Eritrea. She then said that she wanted to thank the Italian people and authorities, who helped her build a life here in Italy. She also went on to say that she knows how difficult it is for Italians to welcome everyone because of the economic crisis but she wanted to highlight how desperate and difficult the situation in Eritrea was. She then said *“All I wanted was to escape and find a better life”*.

She did not want to say much more about her experience and contacts with her homeland because most of her family still lived in Eritrea and she was concerned that they may suffer if the Eritrean government found out. She said she knew how the Government reacted when someone leaves the country illegally and she had left illegally. She did say that she kept in contact with her family weekly and that she doesn't want to go back in Eritrea now because of the governmental policies. Although she did say that if the Eritrean government were to change their ways, she would return quickly to Eritrea.

After this she did not want to add any more, she just wanted to thank the Italian people again and said *"the Eritrean people are good people, and they don't want to create problems for Italy, they just want to find a better life"*.

4.4.2 Interview 2

- Eritrean man
- 40 years old
- Interview was conducted over the phone

My second interview was with a 40 year old Eritrean man, who works in a factory near Rome.

He started his story by telling me how generous and friendly all Eritrean people are. He then said that it was not an easy thing to think back to the time when he left Eritrea and came to Italy, because it was very painful and terrible experience.

He then told me that he was born in Eritrea and lived there with his father, mother and brothers. He then went on to say that he took the decision to leave the country because of the forced military conscription policy. He then said *"I do not want to be a soldier, I never have, but you don't have a choice"*.

He left the country with two friends and when they set off they did not have an idea of where to go or what to do, they just wanted to escape the life they had in Eritrea and create a new and better one abroad. He described how they walked for ten days to get to the Sudanese border. He then said that from Sudan he and his friends travelled to Libya. In Libya they were picked up by human traffickers that put them on a Toyota pickup truck, where they lived for two weeks. He said that during his time on the Toyota truck a number of people died from dehydration and heat exhaustion. He then went on to say, *"The*

Libyans are very bad people, they don't treat like a human being, they treat you like a worthless animal".

He also told me that these Libyan men ask for all the money and possessions you have, and if you don't give them what you have they will beat you. He then said *"In Libya it was very bad, it is impossible to understand how bad it is. It is like a nightmare. If you pay they give you the chance to leave the country in a small boat, or they just let you go to find your own way out"*.

During the call and during this moment in the interview I could see just how distressed he was, and that this period in his life was very difficult for him.

Then he said to me, *"they teach someone to drive a boat and then they let you go, if something happens it is your problem"*. He told me that the Libyans were just interested in money, and that if you have the money you have a chance to survive. Many of his friends were left behind in Libya because they did not have the money to get on the boat and cross the sea to Italy.

He spoke about how he was continuously praying to God to help him through this situation, and that his faith was his salvation. He then told me that his boat made it to Italy, and from there his life could begin. Now he works in a factory and he is happy but when he watches the TV or reads newspapers about Eritrean refugees he feels so sad thinking about his people struggling. He then added that he dreams of Eritrea every night and misses his family and friends very much. He also said that if the situation changes he would be happy to go back and help his country rebuild. He sends money back home to his family and friends whenever he can. He also said that he sometimes pays the 2% diaspora tax, but not always.

He also told me that he does not feel at home in Italy, but he is nevertheless happy away from his life in Eritrea. He ended by saying that he misses his country and his family and finished the interview by saying *"Eritrea is a special country, being ruined by a dishonest government"*.

4.4.3 Interview 3

- Eritrean man
- 27 years old
- The interview was conducted over the phone

My final interview was with a 27 year old unemployed Eritrean man.

He started by telling me why he decided to leave the country. He like some of my previous interview participants said his reason for leaving was due to government's forced military conscription policy. He told me that he left Eritrea 5 years ago, and that some of his family and a number of his friends still live there.

He then told me that he left the country illegally and that he cannot go back home even if he wanted to because the Government would punish him and his family if he returned. While speaking to him about this, I could hear it in his voice that he was sad being away from his family and friends. He then told me that he is not happy in Italy and that he has many problems.

He then went on to say that he thought at the time that leaving the country was the best thing for him and that when he left Eritrea his intentions were to arrive in Italy and then from there go to America. He then said "*dreams never come true*".

He then spoke about his journey after leaving Eritrea. He started by saying that it is imaginably difficult and that you never know where you will end up and if you will be safe. He then went on to say "*often during the journey you have to trust people, sometimes bad people, otherwise it is impossible to get where you want to get to*". He then told me that he left Eritrea with a group of other Eritreans that included men, women and children. He told me how they were all excited about leaving, but at the same time were also scared of what they may find.

He told me that the group crossed from Eritrea into Sudan, and that they spent 20 days to reach the border. He then said that he spent just over one year in Sudan. In Sudan he was able to save some money to continue his journey. He told me that "*Without money you cannot carry on with the journey, it is very expensive*". He told me that in Sudan he lived in a refugee camp and told me that the conditions were awful, and that his morale and hope was diminishing the longer he stayed in that place.

After having saved enough money he told me he took the decision to get out of Sudan, and get to a better place. He told me that at this point his dream was still to get to Italy and from there travel to America or Australia. I then asked him why he did not want to stay in Italy, and he told me "*I had heard from other people in Sudan and in Eritrea that the situation in Italy is not very good*". He then told me that from Sudan he crossed into Libya, and in Libya he was able to reach the coast to get a boat over to Italy. When he arrived in Italy he was quickly registered as an asylum seeker and they took my finger

prints. He told me how he asked the officials not to take his finger prints because he did not wish to remain in Italy, but told me that the Italian Authorities did not care and ignored his request. He then told me *“I am stuck in Italy even if I do not want to stay here, and I cannot ask for asylum in another European country now”*.

He told me that he did not have a job, although he was trying to find one. He also told me that it is very difficult to find a job, and that he does not receive any support from the Italian government. He told me that he was living in a homeless shelter just outside Rome and that all he had was a mobile phone and his respect. He also said he felt ashamed of his life in Italy. He then told me that he wanted to leave Italy because he was not happy in the country. He then told me that if it wasn't for the churches and the charity associations he would not be able to eat or find shelter. He then said *“it was impossible for refugees to stay and create a good life in Italy”*.

He then said that he did not want to continue with the interview and did not want to dwell on his life in Italy. The last thing he did say was that he did not want to remain in Italy, but did not know what to do in order to leave. His last words were *“America is still my dream, and I hope one day I will get there”*.

4.5 Interviews with Eritreans Living in the United Kingdom

The following section provides an account of my interviews with Eritreans who live in the United Kingdom.

4.5.1 Interview 1

- Eritrean man
- 19 years old
- Interview was conducted in a Café near Finsbury Park, London.

My first interview was with a 19 year old Eritrean man living in London.

He told me that he came to the U.K. by plane and that he did not experience problems or issues leaving Eritrea and getting here in the UK. Before arriving in U.K. he spent a long time in Rome where his parents have been living for 30 years. He did not want to tell me why he chose London, he just told me he was studying. An interesting thing to come from

our discussion was the concern he showed for some friends of his that should have arrived in Italy with a boat weeks ago. He had not heard word about their arrival and wanted to know if I had any information for him. After I said I did not have any news of this, he reacted quite rudely and did not want to carry on with the interview and walked out from the café. I was quite taken aback by this response, and did not want to contact him again. I cannot say for sure what brought on this reaction, but think maybe he had agreed to an interview with me in the hope I could give him information about his friends, and once he realised I could not, decided not to speak to me.

4.5.2 Interview 2

- Eritrean man
- 39 years old
- Interview was conducted in an Eritrean Restaurant in London.

This was my second interview, and after my first with the young Eritrean Man in Finsbury Park, I was a little apprehensive and did not know what to expect. When the interview started the atmosphere felt much more relaxed. He began by telling his story by first saying how when he left Eritrea over 20 years ago, his dream was to arrive in America. He unfortunately was not able to make it to America. He didn't want to tell me why he didn't make it to America, although I could tell that he was sad and slightly disappointed that his dream hadn't come true. He described how he left Eritrea and spent the first few years of his time away in Kenya, and then from Kenya had the opportunity to travel to the UK. He arrived in London 20 years ago, and lives alone in London, running an Eritrean restaurant. What was interesting during our chat was his stories of other friends who he said had bad experiences in Italy. He told me that *"look he had a bad journey to arrive here, I was lucky but the Italian government doesn't help the Eritreans"*. He described the experiences of his friends, explaining the issues Eritreans face when they land in Italy. He went on to say, *"When you arrive in Italy at least you feel lucky because you didn't die out in the sea or in the desert. Then the Italian authorities ask you to do the finger print and this fact doesn't allow you to claim asylum in other European countries, and they take your finger prints even if you don't ask for asylum in Italy. They do this because they don't care and they don't give you protection, they just ignore your wishes and carry on with their*

procedures". Although these were not his experiences, having never been in Italy, he did keep saying how he would not like to go to Italy because of the ways his friends had been treated. When I asked him about his homeland he just said that right now he doesn't want to go back to Eritrea because there is no freedom of will and choice. He explained that if he returned to Eritrea he would be forced into military conscription and he does not want to be a soldier for his entire life. He said that he would only think to go back when the Government changes. He also made it very clear to me that he misses Eritrea and the friends he left behind, and that he doesn't feel at home being abroad but he doesn't moan, he is trying to build a sort of life in the U.K. He didn't want to talk about family or the past very much, and only said that he did not have family in Eritrea or here in the UK.

4.5.3 Interview 3

- Eritrean man
- 48 years old
- Interview was conducted in an Eritrean Restaurant in London.

My third interview was with a 48 year old Eritrean man, working as a security guard in a London office building. It was interesting how my interview with this man came about and started. I approached him one afternoon describing a little what my research was about and if he could help me, and then suddenly he replied "*I know you, you came last week and I filled in your questionnaire. I can help you with your research and questions*". The reason I was so surprised was because of this man's openness, not as guarded and protected as the Eritreans I had met before then.

This man's journey from Eritrea started in 2005. His passage from Eritrea to the UK was a very difficult journey. From Eritrea he first crossed over into Sudan after having walked for seven days through desert and wasteland. He crossed the border illegally because he was an Eritrean soldier without permission or papers to leave the country. He had been a soldier for 14 years and he said "*you know the government doesn't pay you enough to live*". When he was telling me his story, although he was smiling, his eyes told a different story and were sad. At the border he had to pay the border control soldiers to let him cross into Sudan. From Sudan he travelled to Libya. I asked him about his experience in Libya, but he did not want to talk about it, although he did say it was a very difficult experience.

From Libya he travelled to Italy by boat, and spent 4 months in Italy. From Italy he went to Paris and then from Paris travelled to London by train, hidden in a car on the train. He was not alone, and said that there were many other Eritreans and other illegal immigrants with him on that train. He was trying to make the journey less tremendous than it was. I asked why he didn't stay in France or Italy. And he said because he didn't know anyone there and he knew someone here and because of this decided to come to the U.K. When he left Eritrea, other friends of his had tried to leave Eritrea together with him. He said how some of these friends were living in the U.K. and some of them had stayed in Italy and others went to America. He also said he feels fine in the UK, but he would like to go back to Eritrea if the Government changes. He said he still keeps contact with friends and relatives that still live in Eritrea and that he often sends money back home. He also said that he had recently bought a holiday house in Eritrea and was very proud of the fact. He also said that the government has let him buy the house because he is paying the 2% tax and said he feels ok with paying the tax because it helps the country. He also said that the community organises a number of things during the year, and that he often participates and goes to the Eritrean festivals and activities. During the interview I could tell that he was happy to be leading the life he was leading in the UK, although it was obvious to me that he missed his country very much.

4.5.4 Interview 4

- Eritrean woman
- 30 years old
- Interview conducted in an Eritrean Restaurant in London

My fourth interview was with a 30 year old Eritrean woman, working as a waitress in an Eritrean restaurant in London.

Before starting the interview she offered me a tea and was very friendly with me. It was not the first time I had met her and this I think helped the situation, as she was very welcoming and open. In fact we have continued to keep in contact and have built up a friendly relationship.

Before starting the interview she said the following to me, *"I want to talk just about how I arrived here, not about my life before and not about my life after"*. Of course I agreed and

I told her *“feel free to tell me whatever you want; I am here only to listen to whatever you wish to tell me”*. She started by telling me that when she left Eritrea illegally she didn't know where she wanted to go and ultimately all she wanted was to leave the country. She told me that she was married and her husband had left the country before her but she did not know where he was. While she was travelling through Sudan and then Uganda she discovered the whereabouts of her husband. She also spoke about how she was very lucky not to be abused while in Sudan. She said that 90% of women are abused by the soldiers at the borders and in the Sudanese camps. She spent three months in Sudan in the camps and described her time there as a nightmare, an impossible place to live. In order to cross into Sudan from Eritrea she had to pay the Sudanese border patrol agents. Thanks to family and friends she was able to raise the money to pay the border patrol. It was also thanks to family and friends that she was able to pay for a flight from Sudan to Kenya. She spent two weeks in Kenya, and said it was very difficult there because the cost of living was so high, *“I was still in Africa but the prices were very high, it was impossible to stay there”*. In Kenya she then paid \$2000 to cross the border into Uganda. She arrived in Uganda by bus and asked for asylum. Her asylum application was accepted and lived and worked in Uganda for just over one year. While in Uganda she discovered that her husband was living in the U.K. After hearing this news she decided to leave Uganda and went to the U.K. In the U.K. she was able to claim family reunification. She also said that she had never planned to come to U.K. and pointed out that she was not particularly happy with her life in the U.K., she then went on to say that it was not the U.K. in particular she was unhappy with but just that she doesn't feel at home being abroad. She then said that the English Government at least helps the Eritreans and the asylum seekers that come here. She left Eritrea in 2006 and has never returned back. She said she keeps in contact with family and friends back home, and said that she would not want to go back because after leaving the country illegally the Eritrean government would punish her. In order to go back she said she would have to write a letter excusing and apologising for her actions and then maybe the Government would accept her return, but even then she was sceptical and would not feel safe. Her family in Eritrea have a bar and while she was talking about her family, I asked her if the Government sent someone to check why she left, and she said that the Government checks but because she was married, her family were not responsible for her and were therefore safe from any retaliation from the government. When we were talking about the 2% tax she said that her and her husband both pay, and are happy to pay because although the money goes to the government, the government can help the people

in Eritrea, and according to her those who do not pay are selfish. She also said that she attends almost all the festivals organised by the Eritrean communities in her area and that she is good with her life. The interview then ended abruptly and I was asked to leave by the Restaurant owner who said she didn't feel comfortable with the interview and the subject.

4.5.5 Interview 5

- Eritrean man
- 25 years old
- The interview was conducted in a café in London

My final interview was with a 25 year old Eritrean man, studying accountancy at college in London.

Like the previous interview it was not our first meeting, and had maintained contact up until the interview. He left Eritrea in 2005 and said he had left for personal reasons. He like many other Eritreans left the country via Sudan. And said it took about one day of walking with his friends to reach the border. He wanted to point out that often Eritreans spent days to reach the border and then cross into Sudan because without a map it was easy to get lost. He said he spent 3-4 months in Sudan but he could not remember precisely how many. Then from Sudan he went to Senegal. I asked why he chose to go to Senegal, and he said "*that when you leave your country you don't know where you will end up; you just go where the wind and the news take you*". He continued to say that he received an opportunity to go to the U.K. through Senegal and decided to take it. Then from Senegal he took a flight to the U.K. He said he was dreaming of going back home but not now and that since leaving the country he has never returned back home. He said that he had left family and friends back in Eritrea. He said he doesn't feel alone in U.K. and that he has many Eritrean friends in the community. I then asked him if he has English friends or whether he mixes with people other than Eritreans he said "*No not really, we have nothing to share!!!*" He then went on to say that he just wants to study and then go back and help his country. He said he wished he could be a doctor, but he was studying to become an accountant. We then spoke about the 2% diaspora tax. He said that the Eritrean people's attitude had changed lately, and thought those who were paying the tax did so because they

were scared and uncertain of what the Eritrean government would do. He went on to further say that many people pay the tax because they are pressurised to do so, and not because they want to send money to their family or people. When I asked him whether he had ever paid the tax, he answered no, but then he confessed that he had sometimes paid the 2% tax and said he had paid it to help his family. During the interview he criticised the Eritrean people abroad, and said that many of the Eritreans were lying about the oppression in Eritrea and were lying about the Eritrean government's repressive policies just so they could claim asylum abroad. He went on to say, "*The reason they blame the Government is to get sympathy, and without it they would not be able to get help from other countries*". He said it was the same for him, that he had to lie in order to get asylum in the U.K. He then kept repeating saying that all Eritreans wanting to leave Eritrea and build a life in another country lie. He then said that the Eritrean people should not be judged for this and that Eritrean people are friendly and generous. He went on to say that the Eritrean people help each other often and that whatever they say they have a strong connection with their homeland. They have a big a deep sense of belonging. I sometimes found it difficult to understand him, he would often contradict himself and seemed like he had double sentiments, positive and negative. He also said that he had no plans or intentions returning back to Eritrea and if he did it would depend on the Eritrean government. He then confessed that he felt guilt for leaving the country in what he called "*its moment of need*", but had to leave in order to find a better life and make something of him. He concluded by saying that war was not a solution and that the ELF was defeated not because the EPFL were stronger but just because the party was too fractured. I thought this last comment from him was a little strange, not for what he was saying, but because we hadn't spoken about the past or politics in this manner.

4.6 General Interactions with Eritreans during my Research

When I met my first group of Eritreans it was very interesting to note that they were with some Ethiopians and they were referring to each other as friends. I had met them in bar where normally Eritreans go to socialise and have break. After explaining the aim of my research to them, the Ethiopians quickly began to speak about the Eritrean Government's politics, some of them then gave me some advice, for instance never directly tell an Eritrean your opinion or position on Eritrean politics, because you never know who they

support. Suddenly an Eritrean man said to me. “I think everyone should have an idea and tell it, never feeling oppressed or jailed”. After having drunk a coffee with them I left the bar to look for others.

I went to the first internet café in the area and found many Eritreans but when they understood what I was doing there and the research I was carrying out, they just began to ignore me. Although many in the internet café’ ignored me, one guy did approach me and tried to tell me his story, but he too was suspicious. He did tell me that he had spent four months in Italy and decided to leave Italy because the Government did not give protection or support to immigrants from Africa, and it was impossible to live there. What was interesting during the chat was his strong feeling toward the homeland and the fact that he was not happy in the U.K. either. Although he also said that many Eritreans live scared, fearing that one day the Government will send someone to collect them all and send them back home. While I continued to talk to this Eritrean man, a woman came in and asked about my research. She said she did not want to tell me her story or experiences and that she was bored of people filling the newspapers with stories about Eritreans. She just told me that whenever she introduced herself she would often say she was from Ethiopia and not from Eritrea, but not because she was ashamed of Eritrea, but just because people may not know the country.

During my field work in another café I met an old Eritrean man, who at first was very friendly and approachable, and told me that Eritreans living abroad were very happy and content. But when I tried to ask more questions he began to distance himself and ignored me.

During the festival I attended in Brixton in London, I found it very interesting to see how the Eritreans abroad maintain their traditions and culture in terms of food, dance and dress. The atmosphere was very spirited and joyful, the Eritreans were very welcoming and invited me to dance and join in with their celebrations. Although my intentions at the beginning were to ask some Eritreans to fill out my questionnaire, but then by just mixing and integrating with people during the festivities I was able to gain a much better understanding of their culture and modes of socialising. This more than the questionnaire gave me a greater insight into their lives. The festival in Brixton was a lovely day, but I must also make it clear that not all the members of the diaspora take part in these events. I spoke to some Eritreans who gave me the impression that they did not want to celebrate

their home country or the upcoming anniversary of Eritrea's independence. One Eritrean man I spoke to answered me in no uncertain term when I asked him about the celebrations of the 24th May, that he did not want to celebrate or be part of an event that celebrates the birth of a dictatorship regime. I thought this view demonstrated just how fractured the diaspora opinion can seem at times, and yet what it demonstrated most of all, is how diaspora opinion and support has changed in recent years. In the past the diaspora members would have nearly all celebrated their independence day, yet today their independence day no longer is seen as a symbol of liberation but one of oppression.

Chapter Five

My Findings and Conclusions

5.0 My Findings

My research from the start set out to identify how Eritreans in diaspora handled life in their host country and whether there was a difference between the general attitude and feeling of Eritreans living in Italy compared to those living in the United Kingdom. Although the questionnaires and interviews provided a small insight into the Eritrean community in Italy and the United Kingdom, it can't be used solely to paint a picture one way or another. Although the sample of participants for both the questionnaires and interviews were both selected at random, the sample was nevertheless relatively small and cannot constitute the views of all the members of the Eritrean diaspora.

What I found from both the questionnaires and interviews is that many Eritreans are suspicious and mistrustful towards anyone outside their diaspora or community. Although it is important to realise that once you break down those initial barriers that most Eritreans are kind and friendly. What became apparent to me during this research is that many members of the Eritrean diaspora have a guarded nature. There is a level of reluctance and almost hesitancy when I tried to raise the subjects of politics and human rights with many Eritreans. Now whether this reluctance or avoidance is related to many feel scared of their homeland government cannot be confirmed. Only a few of the participants directly told me that they feared their homeland's government, but nevertheless this suggests that some Eritreans abroad fear the Eritrean government.

The questionnaires did outline patterns and answers to some of my questions and objectives. What I found from my questionnaires and from my interviews initially was that the majority of the participants were male. Whether this can be discounted or not is difficult to say. There is no census that tells us how many Eritrean men or women live in Italy or the United Kingdom. But what I have noticed from my research even just in terms of interaction is that there are many more Eritrean men than women. What I also found from my questionnaires was that there were younger Eritreans in the United Kingdom compares to in Italy. The reason for this difference in age groups can be attributed to their perception of the two host countries. My initial research indicated that some members of the Eritrean diaspora believed that Italy did not offer them aid or support, either as a refugee or as a citizen. Many of those who are leaving Eritrea today are young people, young men or women who have been forced to join Eritrea's military service and used for

forced labour earning a very small wage. From the questionnaires and interviews I was able to gauge an understanding of how they feel abroad and how they feel in their respective host country. From the questionnaires alone I found that in Italy three quarters of the participants answered that they were happy in Italy. Nearly all the participants who answered that they felt happy in Italy also answered that they felt at home being abroad. Although it is also important to note that only a small percentage of those who took part same participants answered that they would like to remain in Italy. These sets of statistics suggest that although many of the Eritreans in Italy were happy with their lives, they nevertheless saw Italy just as a temporary substitute for their homeland, and that many of the participants dreamed to one day return to Eritrea. If we compare these views to those in the United Kingdom, we can quickly see that the participants in the UK also responded that they are happy with their life in the UK. Although only half of the UK Eritrean participants answered that they felt at home being abroad. This is lower than the Eritreans who live in Italy. Therefore if we take into consideration the high percentage of participants who answered that they were happy in the UK, but answered that they did not feel at home in the UK can lead us to understand that they still hold a strong attachment and sense of loyalty to Eritrea. In fact we can say the same to the Eritreans who live in Italy, who also have said that they are happy in Italy but do not feel at home there. My findings also suggest that the Eritrean diaspora both in Italy and the United Kingdom both long to return to Eritrea one day. They both show a level of appreciation for their life in their host country but also recognise that it cannot replace their homeland.

If we examine the factors that shape the life of Eritreans living in Italy and the United Kingdom we can quickly see that a greater number of Eritreans in Italy were unemployed. The fact that Eritreans in Italy struggle to find work undoubtedly leads many Eritreans feeling unhappy and unsatisfied in Italy. This could also explain the low number of Eritreans now living in Italy compared to the United Kingdom. Another factor that came from the questionnaire and interviews is that many Eritreans in the United Kingdom have the opportunity to study unlike Eritreans in Italy who cannot. This can possibly be put down to the education system or just simply down to the fact that the UK has many more English as a foreign language courses compared to Italy where without having a satisfactory level of Italian you cannot go to college or university. This can also be a motive for why many young Eritreans choose the UK instead of Italy. Also from the interviews we were able to understand that some of the Eritreans in Italy felt like they had

no support or help from the Italian authorities or government. This is in contrast to the Eritreans in the United Kingdom who reported that they received a fair level of support and help from the UK authorities. Whether this conclusively proves that the Italian government shows less support to refugees compared to the UK government is difficult to say, especially when there is proof that Italy runs programs to help refugees. Another piece of information that came from the research was the matter of treatment at the hands of Italian border officials. Some of the interviewees from Italy and even from the UK reported of being treated badly by Italian border agents, with an interviewee describing being ignored and treated like an animal. Another interviewee also mentioned friends that had been treated badly in Italy, and described how they faced issues and problems when they were in Italy. None of the participants complained of being treated unfairly or badly by UK border officials.

From the research I also found that many of the participants had a double sentiment towards their homeland. From a perspective they showed a strong affection and devotion, and yet from another perspective they showed a sense of fear or maybe more a sense of mistrust. The affection side of their sentiments comes from the connection many still have with family and friends who live in Eritrea. My research shows that both Eritreans in Italy and in the United Kingdom maintain frequent contact with people back home. The majority of the participants in Italy answered that they use telephone and mobile phone to keep contact with people in Eritrea, followed by internet and email. This was the same amongst Eritrean participants in the UK. The sentiment of devotion and affection again becomes obvious when we analyse how they receive information about Eritrea. The fact that they continue to keep up to date with news about Eritrea suggests that they still maintain a strong sense of national identity. The research also highlighted that a large majority of the Eritreans send money and gifts back home. Their motives for sending money and gifts are to help loved ones back home. Some also did answer that they sent money back for economic and political reasons. Nearly all the interviewees also spoke about sending money to the Eritrean government and spoke about paying the 2% tax. It is therefore obvious that much of the Eritrean diaspora still pay the 2% diaspora tax. What the interviews also highlighted was that many were happy to pay the tax, and saw it as a way of helping their homeland. Although a large number of the diaspora members send money back to their homeland be it for personal reasons or political, what also came from the research was the lack of investment that many diaspora members made. A large

majority of the Eritreans living in Italy and the United Kingdom answered that they have never made an investment in Eritrea. This leads us to believe that although many dream of returning to Eritrea, in reality very few see a future in Eritrea. A few participants in the research had answered that they had a house or had bought a holiday home in Eritrea, but even these participants had few expectations of returning for good on Eritrea. Overall there is a sense of sadness amongst Eritreans, and this can be attributed to the fact that many miss Eritrea and even dream of returning, yet believe that there is no future for them any longer in the country. From the interviews and the questionnaires to a degree it became clear to me that life in Eritrea is a difficult struggle. Many of the participants one way or another showed that they feared their homeland government and felt a level of resentment towards them. What also came from the interviews and questionnaires was the level of poverty that exists in Eritrea. Whether the level of poverty and famine can be attributed to the Eritrean government is difficult to say, although with their policies of forced labour and forced conscription one can only reach one conclusion.

What also came from the interviews was the difficult journey many Eritreans had to go through when they escaped Eritrea. Both in Sudan and in Libya many of the interviewees gave accounts of being treated like animals and described being subjected to beatings and abuse. As I touched upon earlier on in my research, similar accounts of refugee mistreatment have also been reported through documentaries and newspaper articles in recent years, a sign that at least international powers and authorities have recognised there is a problem.

Although the Eritreans in diaspora show a level of sadness being away from their country, they nevertheless continue to maintain Eritrean culture within their host country. The questionnaires and interviews suggest that the Eritreans both in Italy and the United Kingdom speak their native language at home and participate in community festivals and activities.

5.1 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was first and foremost to explore and investigate the Eritrean diaspora in Italy and the United Kingdom. From this primary objective I analysed the other factors and elements that affect the diaspora and its members. My research started overlooking to the concept of the diaspora in general and then looked at the history of Eritrea and at the connection of past episodes in its history that may have contributed to the life of Eritrean communities abroad. I also analysed the factors and circumstances that play a role in the attitude and decisions that members of the Eritrean diaspora are making. I also looked at the experiences and involvement of the diaspora members and looked at the characteristics of its relationship with its homeland throughout the years. My study also compared the Eritrean communities that live in Italy and the United Kingdom and examined which were the factors within a host country that mould the shape of an Eritrean community. Through this I was able to recognise the differences between the communities of Eritreans living in Italy and those living in the United Kingdom.

5.1.1 Eritrea

Throughout Eritrea's history the country has had to overcome colonisation, famine and war. Immediately after Eritrea gained independence there were positive signs of a stable and established country forming after its 30 years' war. Today the situation is very different from those initial post-independence years. Today Eritrea is seen as one of the most authoritarian regimes in the world, with international organisations such as Human Rights Watch and the United Nations reporting it to have one of the poorest levels of human rights in the world.

In many respects Eritrea represents a complex and multifarious country, where it is difficult to form a unique and clear opinion on the behaviour and actions of Eritrea's government. The United Nations and other international organisations have compiled reports describing and explaining the actions behind the poor levels of human rights. There are reports from Eritreans who have fled the country and from researchers that the Eritrean government has imposed a number of repressive policies such as, forced labour, forced military conscription, the militarisation of the country, no freedom of speech and no freedom of religion. The country also suffers from a deep economic crisis and its people

from of famine and poverty. The culmination of these factors has seen a great number of Eritreans leaving the country and has seen the recent attitudes of Eritrean people living at home and abroad change towards their homeland.

Much of Eritrea's history has seen the country come under attack from outside forces for economic and political gain. Eritrea had fought one of the longest and bloodiest struggles for independence in the region of the Horn of Africa. After the country achieved independence in 1991 the Eritrean people's hope was to build a new and democratic country. What came instead was very different. This optimism was soon destroyed by a set of repressive policies introduced and imposed by the Eritrean government at the beginning of the twenty first century. It was these policies that have led to the creation of an oppressive environment, and these policies that have forced many Eritreans to flee the country. The high flow of refugees during the current years is a sign of the disillusion felt by many Eritreans.

Today Eritrea is described as one of the most brutal and repressive dictatorship in the world where there is a daily violation of human rights; there is no freedom of press, no freedom of religion, and no freedom of speech. It is this current social, political and economic environment in Eritrea that has shaped the flow of refugees in the last decade.

What concerns many people is the Eritrean government's attitude towards criticism and pressure that it has received from internal and outside powers. The country's president, President Isaias is not showing any sign of wanting to change its party's internal or international policies.

According to many international organisations and powers, Eritrea's issues of repression and isolation are a concern that cannot be ignored. They say that the Eritrean people are suffering at the hands of their government. The three decades of war saw its population struggle and suffer at the hands of its enemy Ethiopia, but now the country's people are suffering as the results of its government's politics. From my research and time I have spent talking to many Eritreans in Italy and the United Kingdom, I believe that although there has never been any form of revolt against the Eritrean government by the Eritrean people, it may just be a few years away before a revolution happens. If the Eritrean government are reluctant to change and show no sign of changing their repressive policies

then we could see a situation in Eritrea like the situation and revolts that have happened in Libya and Egypt.

5.1.2 The Eritrean Diaspora and its Experiences

From my research and study it became clear that throughout the years the Eritrean diaspora has had a huge hand in the making of today's Eritrea. The beginning of the Eritrean diaspora started in the 1960s and 1970s when many Eritreans fled Eritrea while it was at war with Ethiopia. Many of these Eritreans fled to the west to America and many also fled to Europe. It was thanks to these Eritreans abroad that the Eritrean front that fought during the liberation war was able to have the funds and support to carry on with their war efforts. During the post-independence years and after the 1998-2000 border war with Ethiopia, the diaspora numbers abroad have increased. New influxes of Eritreans have been fleeing their home country in search of life that is not filled with tyranny and oppressiveness. These Eritreans are fleeing from their own government, a government with who the older members of the diaspora worked with during the liberation war. These younger members of the diaspora are now having an effect on the attitude and feeling the diaspora has towards its homeland government. Drawing on the reports from my own questionnaires and interviews and on reports by Human Rights Watch and the UN Refugee Agency it is clear that the modern Eritrean diaspora are voicing their dissent and opposition to the repressive political climate that now exists in Eritrea. What my study shows is that the recent and current majority of Eritreans who have left Eritrea have left because of the human rights issues and the poor economic situation in Eritrea. In addition to this, the current feeling of fear amongst many Eritreans abroad has meant that, although many miss their country of origin, few would consider returning to their homeland unless the government changes. Throughout my research I can just say that what I saw was a deep sense of mistrust and sadness among the Eritrean members of the diaspora towards the current situation in Eritrea and also a strong sense of community and national identity abroad.

5.1.3 Final Words

From my research and from the time I have spent with Eritrean people, what I found was that the Eritrean community both in Italy and the United Kingdom is very much the same, yet also different in other aspects. Although both the set of Eritreans living in Italy and the United Kingdom maintain an attachment and loyalty to their homeland, as I saw in the literature I have studied and from the questionnaires and interviews I conducted, it is also true that many Eritreans are afraid to return, and realise that in the near future they will have no choice but to live a transnational life. What was clear to me from my research is that there exists a real sense of mistrust and disillusion amongst the Eritrean community abroad. None of the Eritreans I encountered or spoke to gave me the impression that they were forming a life in their respective host country. Some members of the diaspora seem that they have not integrated very well in their host country and gave me an impression that they have no wanting to integrate themselves into Italian or UK life. Although by the same token not all the Eritreans displayed this attitude, and many Eritreans were happy in their host country and happy with their lives.

From my studies and research I have understood that the Eritrean diaspora's role in its homeland is no longer like it once was. Much of the Eritrean diaspora no longer supports the Eritrean government, not like it did during the 30 years' war or after the country gained independence. In fact today many Eritreans are either protesting against their homeland government or are remaining totally silent on matters of politics and human rights in Eritrea.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire for Eritreans in Italy and the United Kingdom

Eritrean Diaspora in Italy and in the United Kingdom

Professoressa: Emanuela Trevisan Semi

Laureanda: Marialibera Iavasile

- 1) _____ What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

- 2) _____ How old are you?
 - a. 18-25
 - b. 26-35
 - c. 36-45
 - d. 46-55
 - e. Over 55

- 3) _____ Were you born in Eritrea?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 4) _____ What is your current marital status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Married
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Widow

- 5) _____ Do you have children?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 6) _____ What is your religion?
- a. Christian
 - b. Muslim
 - c. Other (please specify)
- 7) _____ What is your occupation status?
- a. Student
 - b. Employed
 - c. Unemployed
- 8) _____ What is your highest level of education?
- a. No education
 - b. Completed primary school
 - c. Completed secondary school
 - d. Completed bachelor's degree
 - e. Completed master/professional/doctoral degree
 - c. Other (please specify)
- 9) _____ What language(s) are currently spoken at home?
- a. English
 - b. Tigrinya
 - c. Tigre
 - d. Ahmarico
 - e. Other (please specify)
- 10) _____ Why did you leave Eritrea?
- a. Political reason
 - b. Economic reason
 - c. Social reason
 - d. Personal reason
 - e. Other..... (please specify)

- 11) _____ Why did you decide to travel to the United Kingdom?
- a. Employment opportunity
 - b. Education/Study
 - c. To be close to family and friends
 - d. Better opportunities
 - e. Other..... (please specify)
- 12) _____ How often do you return to Eritrea?
- a. Once a year
 - b. Twice a year
 - c. More than twice a year
 - d. Never
- 13) _____ Would you like to return and live forever in Eritrea?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 14) _____ Do you miss Eritrea?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 15) _____ How often do you keep in touch with your homeland?
- a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Rarely
 - e. Never

- 16) _____ How do you keep in touch?
- a. Telephone/ mobile phone
 - b. Internet/ email
 - c. Social networks..... (please specify)
 - d. Post
- 17) _____ How do you receive information about Eritrea?
- a. Websites
 - b. Eritrean newspaper
 - c. Eritrean Television
 - d. Word of mouth
 - e. Family and friends
- 18) _____ Have you made any investment in Eritrea?
- a. House
 - b. Land
 - c. Business
 - d. Other..... (please specify)
 - e. None
- 19) _____ Have you ever sent money or gift to Eritrea?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 20) _____ What was the purpose for sending the money or gift to Eritrea?
- a. Personal reason
 - b. Political reason
 - c. Economic reason
 - d. Social reason
 - e. Other..... (please specify)

- 21) _____ How long have you been in the United Kingdom?
- a. Less than one year
 - b. 1-2 years
 - c. 2-5 years
 - d. 6-10 years
 - e. Over 11 years
- 22) _____ Are you satisfied/ happy with your life in the United Kingdom?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 23) _____ Do you feel at home being abroad?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 24) _____ Would do you like to stay in the United Kingdom forever?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe

Appendix 2

Guiding Model for the Interviews

Not all participants answered the questions in this interview model.

Personal Background

- When did you leave Eritrea?
- How did you leave Eritrea?
- Why did you leave Eritrea?
- When did you arrive in Italy/UK?
- How long have you lived in Italy/UK?
- How did you arrive here in Italy/UK?
- Do you miss Eritrea?

Relationship with homeland

- Have you got family and friends still living in Eritrea?
- Do you keep in contact with these family and friends?
- Have you returned back to Eritrea since leaving?
- What is your feeling towards the Eritrean government?
- What is your opinion of the government's conduct and policies?
- Do you agree with reports that criticise the Eritrean government for its authoritarianism?

Remittances

- Do you pay the Eritrean government's diaspora tax?
- Why or why not do you pay this tax?
- Do you agree with this tax?
- What other remittances or contributions do you make?

Relationship with host country

- How long have you lived in your host country?
- Are you working?
- How do you feel living in Italy/UK?
- Have you found it difficult to integrate into your host country's society?
- What other difficulties have you experienced since living in Italy/UK?
- Does your host country's government/council offer any support or help?

Diaspora and Eritrean community

- Is there a large Eritrean community where you live?
- Do you attend any Eritrean community groups?
- How are the internal relations within the Eritrean communities?

Note: This template was only intended as a guide during the interviews and some of the stories and topics covered in the interviews are not present in this guide.

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**ESTRATTO PER RIASSUNTO DELLA TESI DI LAUREA E
DICHIARAZIONE DI CONSULTABILITA'(*)**

Il sottoscritto/a MARIALIBERA IAVASILE

Matricola n. 831245 Facoltà LINGUE E LETTERATURE STRANIERE

iscritto al corso di laurea laurea magistrale/specialistica in:

Relazioni internazionali comparate - International relations

Titolo della tesi (**): Exploring the Eritrean diaspora in Italy and the United Kingdom

DICHIARA CHE LA SUA TESI E':

- Consultabile da subito Consultabile dopo 3 mesi Non consultabile
 Riproducibile totalmente Non riproducibile Riproducibile parzialmente

Venezia, 28/05/2012

Firma dello studente

(spazio per la battitura dell'estratto)

The purpose of my thesis is to explore and research the Eritrean diaspora and investigate the communities of Eritreans that have formed in Italy and the United Kingdom. I will look at the issues that affect Eritreans in Italy and the United Kingdom and compare their experiences according to their host country. The research will also examine the background and the history of the country of Eritrea, and examine its relations with its neighbouring countries and other international states. Part of the thesis will also focus on the reasons why Eritreans left their homeland and look at the complex relationship Eritrean members have had with their homeland since leaving. My research will also help to understand the Eritrean diaspora's connection and importance to its homeland, a homeland that has been under the microscope for a number of years for its human rights violations and repressive policies. I will pay special attention to the social, political and institutional factors that have shaped the Eritrean diaspora through the years and examine the affect these dynamics have had on the diaspora communities and members. This thesis will look at data gathered from a set of designed questionnaires and interviews conducted with Eritreans in Italy and the United Kingdom, to provide an overview of the communities. The research will identify how Eritrean communities have settled in their respective host country and focus on the role the communities play in a broader transnational, cultural and economic sense.

(*) Da inserire come ultima pagina della tesi. L'estratto non deve superare le mille battute

(**) il titolo deve essere quello definitivo uguale a quello che risulta stampato sulla copertina dell'elaborato consegnato al Presidente della Commissione di Laurea



Informativa sul trattamento dei dati personali

Ai sensi dell'art. 13 del D.Lgs. n. 196/03 si informa che il titolare del trattamento dei dati forniti è l'Università Ca' Foscari - Venezia.

I dati sono acquisiti e trattati esclusivamente per l'espletamento delle finalità istituzionali d'Ateneo; l'eventuale rifiuto di fornire i propri dati personali potrebbe comportare il mancato espletamento degli adempimenti necessari e delle procedure amministrative di gestione delle carriere studenti.

Sono comunque riconosciuti i diritti di cui all'art. 7 D. Lgs. n. 196/03.