

# The paradox of refugee export



A refugee camp in Northern Uganda. Author: Ed  
(CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

**The year 2013 seems to be a breakthrough for the Tel-Aviv and Canberra administration in terms of cementing their unwelcome attitude towards refugees. Though it might be contrary to international law, Israel and Australia have come up with a new approach towards Asylum.**

It all started in July when news came out that Australia was to start exporting the refugees entering the country by boats to Papua New-Guinea. The two nations from Oceania have since signed an agreement whereby refugees are now going to be sent to settle in Guinea instead of Australia. Of course, the latter will be funding the program which is a first of its kind. Possibly due to sharing some similar history, Israel, also in the month of August, was reported to be willing to export African refugees to Uganda, an East African nation.

There is a tale of a renowned Greek scientist, Archimedes, who is credited of finding a way of measuring the volume of irregular objects. This discovery happened accidentally when he entered into a tub and noticed that the water level increased as a result of his action. He suddenly understood that the volume of water displaced must be equal to the volume of the part of his body he had just submerged. Well, the tale continues to mention that upon realizing his discovery, he shouted EUREKA and ran out of the house naked to celebrate. I am sure that the Australian and Israeli government are happy with their draconian solution but as they shout Eureka, it's Papua New-Guinea and Uganda that are showing their nakedness to the whole world by supporting a controversial arrangement.

As I mentioned in the beginning, Israel and Australia share some history whereby they are both relatively young nations whose foundations were built on misfortune; the convicted ancestors of modern Australians were pushed away from the United Kingdom in order to settle in a strange land thousands of miles away from their relatives. For Israel, the history is still recent; the Israeli nation was formed 70 years after the horrors of German concentration camps. No other nation in world history has known the challenges of being a refugee than the ancestors of the modern Israelites.

The persecution of Jews dates back to the middle ages. In 1396, 100,000 Jews were expelled from France. In 1421, thousands were expelled from Austria. Many of the expelled Jews fled to Poland. The trend of their killing and persecution reached its crescendo in the 20th century when Hitler's evil anti-Semitism led to the death of millions. Actually the Jews were in the same bracket as the blacks (being the unwanted). I would therefore have expected more from the Israel nation, having shared the experience of persecution to handle the refugee burden in another way.

The amazing paradox came from Uganda, in 2010, when the Kampala administration had been pushing out the Congolese refugees back to Congo yet the M 23 rebels continued to terrorize Eastern Congo. One wonders as to why the Ugandan government is trying to portray a good humanitarian image of itself, yet the Congolese and the Rwandese refugees are being pushed out of the country. Those who still remain are mistreated and their children are being denied access to education and are also frequently beaten by the Ugandan police. There is no explanation to why Uganda cooperated with Israel apart for financial reasons. Uganda's respect of human rights is very low and a certain percentage of refugees in Israel might have run away from their countries due to lack of respect of human rights.

For the past 5 years, Uganda has closed more than 6 private

radio stations twice and the police keep on brutalizing opposition leaders...so it leaves a lot to be desired that Israel chose such a country to send its refugees.

When Uganda was still a colony under the control of the British, there was an idea of creating the Jewish state in Uganda in 1903. The meeting was held in Basel, Switzerland. The next year, a three-man delegation was sent to inspect the area. Its high elevation gave it a temperate climate, making it suitable for a European settlement. However, the observers found a dangerous land filled with lions and other creatures. A hundred years later, the problem of Uganda is not one of dangerous animals and other creatures but that of the dictatorship of President Museveni, who has been in power with an Iron fist for the last 28 years. This makes Israel's decision of sending vulnerable refugees to Uganda an inconsiderate step.

As the world keeps walking on the road of turmoil and life becomes more dangerous, the rise of extreme nationalism and protectionism will see more countries signing covert agreements with the underdeveloped, « underdog” countries. Maybe the words “Every man on his own and God for us all” will be heard more and more as countries continue to close their borders to refugees.

**Marcus**

**Membre de la redaction valaisanne de Voix d'Exils**