

Sergio Grande
Via Roccaforte, 24 – 10139 Torino - Italy
Phone: +39 011 6993205
Mobile: +39 339 4646769
e-mail: sergio.grande72@gmail.com
www.sergiogrande.it

Shadows Behind the Edge

“All human beings are born free and with equal dignity and rights. They have a mind and a conscience and they shall interact with spirit of brotherhood.” This is the wording of the 1st article of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights drawn up in 1945. Mankind and its dignity of individual was defined a *san insuperable* borderline, a fixed point which cannot be left out of consideration, a starting point from which everything must come from and develop. Seventy-five years later, these words sound as a far echo. The force of those words seams dissolved, thwarted by the distance between the ideal and the actual conditions. The verb becomes an empty frame, a nonsense, without the disrupting power for which it had been pronounced. The ideas, even the most noble ones, to be able to have the weight they deserve, must necessarily be put into practice. The ideas end up confined in the world of utopias, and utopias are too far away from the real world to be used as a point of reference. Thus, even the 1st Article of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights loses its actual value when the reality it refers to denies it, ignores it, forgets it. This is why the banks break up, the words crumble, and the rights are lost in actual living everything becomes licit and possible. The traffic of human beings and the condition of refugees everywhere in the world are a witness of the distance between the ideal values and the values actually applied in reality More than a next target, a mirage difficult to reach. Escaping. Running away toward the north where, it is said, the rights are respected and people still have a value. Therefore, the desert, the heat, the thirst, the human being traffickers, the prisons, the laws against immigration, the police. And then the imprisonment centres, hunger, forced repatriation, the refugee centres: all walls that these persons have to pull down to be able to be free again. The Eritrean dictatorship forces thousands of persons to abandon their country, their village, their family. They run away trusting in a better future: from Sudan, through Egypt, Israel and Syria. To reach Europe. To be trafficked, exchanges, sold various times to the traffickers, raped, beaten, and transported as merchandise in red-hot container through the Sudan desert. Most of them end up in prison - Epyptian or Lybian lagers. The only alternative to imprisonment is the refugee centres in Ethiopia. Here, thanks to the intervention of UNHCR and above all of dott.sa Fessaha of the Gandhi NGO, these people can live in a decent way. In the centre of Mai Aini, consisting of mud and metal plate houses, tents, emergency shelters, the Eritrean refugees built schools for their children, small handicraft and commercial as well as meeting points for the whole community. In the Mai Aini and in the Mai Sebri centers, 45000 persons are sheltered. Many of them have been living there for more than three years, waiting for being welcomed by a foreign country, which will never happen. The hope to be free men again in Eritrea is the hope with which these people plans the future, imagines and dreams about it. To exorcize the present talking about a different future without walls and bars, means giving back a meaning and strength to the words, granting them new energy. In place like these, in the middle of dust, poverty, suffering, mankind dignity meaning is built up again. The Declaration of Humn Rights is not etched on polished marble s labs, but scratched with the nails on skew and rusted plated, held together by a few twisted links and by the indestructible volition of a few persons of good will.



In the province of Tigray in Ethiopia, the Eritrean refugee camp in Mai Aini houses more than 12,000 refugees, under the control of the Ethiopian police, from this open-sky prison, there is no escape: everybody lives hoping to obtain asylum from some foreign country to be able to rebuild a new and free future.



The refugee camp is not only a physical place, but also a mental space of existence, where each human being becomes the universal representative of the lack of freedom and of the denial of the fundamental rights of mankind.



**From Simien mountain tableland toward Gondar: a forbidden road for these people.
A woman seems to want to entrust her hopes to a truck passing by.**



The dwelling self built by the inhabitants of the camp in Mai Aini are made of mud, wood and metal plate. Particularly during the rainy season, nylon cloths protect their walls and roofs against the abundant precipitations.



The drinking water problem is a priority that cannot be disregarded: the camp is assisted by some distribution centres for the provisioning.



The houses have no tap water. From the distribution centres, the water is transported to the houses using heavy plastic drums.



Water transport is a women task, too: in the camp, there is no other provisioning opportunity. For this reason, water is a precious asset that is rationed with attention and great care.



Most of these people, running away from Eritrea, has reached the camp after having been bought and resold many times by the human being traffickers in Sudan and in Libya during the long journey toward the Mediterranean coast of Europe.



Many women have been raped by the criminal bands of traffickers or by the Libyan and Egyptian policemen. Many of their children are the fruit of the rapes suffered in Northern Africa jails and along the terrible journey through the Sudan desert.



For some children, the future is a territory that they cannot focus, a place too often only dreamt about and imagined, closer to an assumption than to an actual life and freedom opportunity.



While the European society closes the doors and the eyes on the African refugees situation, two Eritrean girls play to jump the rope on the mud roads in the Mai Aini camp.



The migration policies of the European countries have the purpose to stop the flows toward the Mediterranean coasts without looking after the destiny of the persons who are refused or repatriated. To close the eyes not to look is an egoist and dangerous attitude.

In the refugee camp, children play hide-and-seek hoping that this play will not become a reality.



The faith is a consolation and a support. A girl shows the crucifix she always has on herself.



In Mai Aini, approx. 1,500 children live, of which 300 without a family. In a camp tent, the daily school lesson takes place.



The poster of UNHCR expresses the hope of all Eritrean refugees. The challenge is to transform these words into reality.



**Northern Ethiopia, there are 5 Eritrean refugee camps for a total of approx. 45,000 persons.
Approx. 1,900 persons are still imprisoned in the Libyan and Egyptian jails.**



Saba and Salina live in Mai Aini since just 18 months. They reached the camp from the Eritrean border. Some refugees, if recognized, may be exposed to blackmail and violence by the regime police as to their families that still live in Eritrea. The hatch of dictatorship does not just pursue the refugees and the dissidents, but it also hits their families without scruples.



“What colour has a ghost ? Surviving meant escaping one’s destiny .” from: “Fugitive” by Anne Michaels



The history of a population may be understood also thanks to its rites, to the simplest habits: the ceremony of the coffee, besides being a brotherhood gesture, is an important moment for getting together and a exchanging opinions. Mikeal, ex soldier, is sought by the Eritrean regime as opponent and betrayer of the homeland.



All the human beings are born free and with equal rights and dignity". The 1st Article of the Universal Human Rights Declaration. The face of Hadgu is made unrecognizable because he is sought by the Eritrean regime.



Sons of the same God. Sons of the same hearth. Exiles because looking for freedom. The death of Christ on the cross, beyond this boy, is an image opening up to hope but that, at the same time, clashes against a reality that means to have another direction.



The habit to look at the external world through a barrier, a forbidden pass, is a prerogative that affects the look adversely. Even if just the audience of a football game, one seats on the prisoner side.



Regardless to the difficulties these persons have to face. A cheerful and playful spirit animates the camp roads.



The lack of alternatives promoted the development of a local economy that brought about the birth of small handcraft and commercial activities. In the morning, the roads of Mai Aini liven up as any other Eritrean village free from dictatorship oppression.



From the window of a tent, these boys look at their mates during the school lesson.



The community spirit of brotherhood and sharing is the base of the social relationship. A woman is about to prepare the lunch for her own family and the neighbouring ones.



“When only man looks at a wall, he is a lonely men. When various men tool at a wall, this is the beginning of an evasion” J. Folla



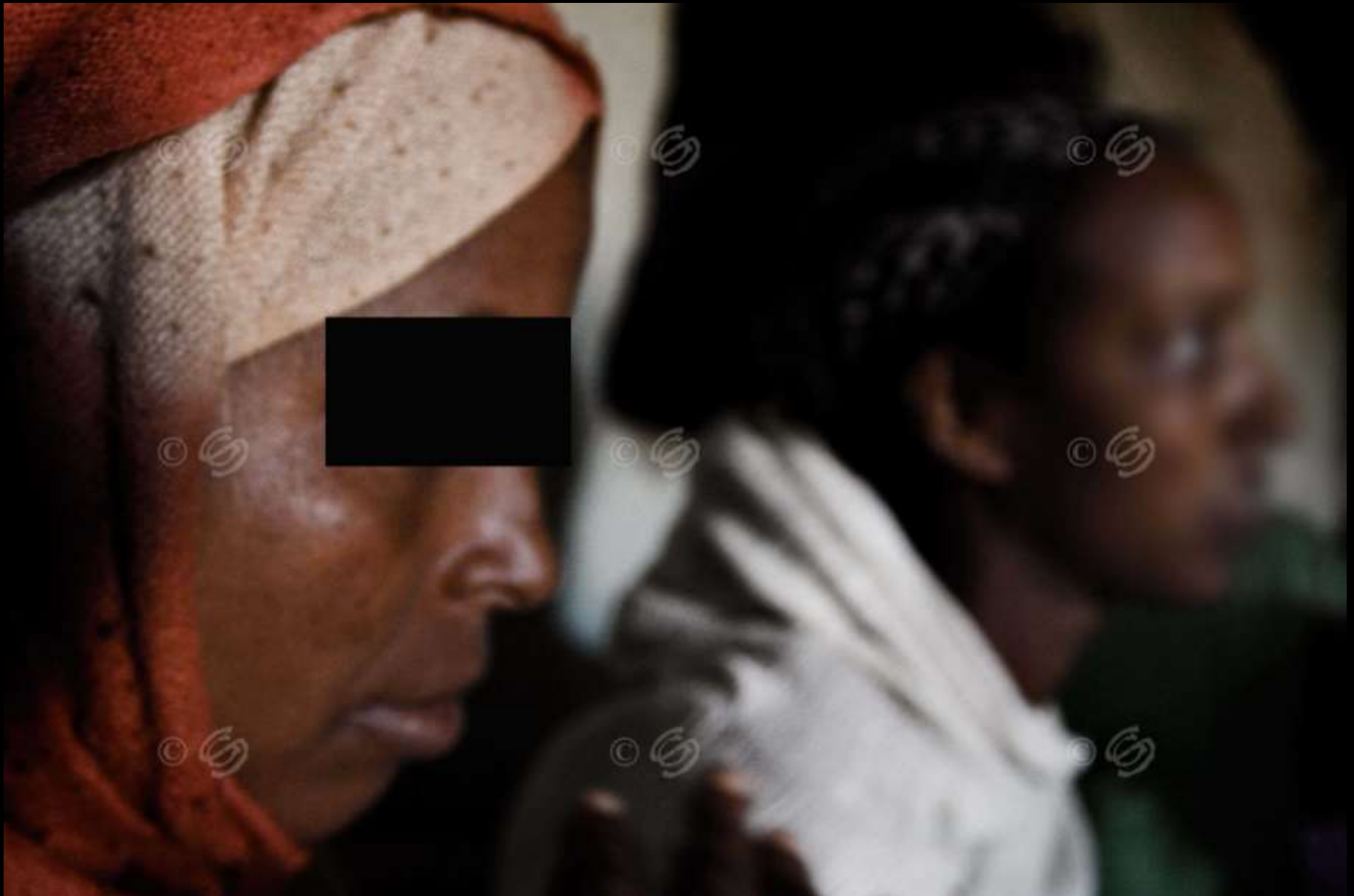
The Mai Sebri camp is a new construction. Here, 5,000 persons still live in the tents set up by the UNHCR.



Eritrean youths in the Mai Sebri camp.



Mrs. Alganesh Fessaha, coordinator of the Gandhi NGO, illustrates the severe situation that the husbands of these women are still forced to face in the Egyptian jails.



The husbands of these young women are still imprisoned in the Libyan and Egyptian jails. Their faces are covered to avoid being recognized and to prevent their families from being persecuted at home as the family of betrayers. Moreover, besides supporting the refugees who already reached the camp, the Gandhi NGO, is committed in the attempt to free the Eritreans still in jail.



Barack Obama: a new hope for the whole world and for Africa. Beyond this woman, the American President, means to embody more a wish of change than an actual reality.



The situation in the Libyan and Egyptian jails is dramatic: more than prisons, they are actual lagers where the condition of the prisoners is at the limit of human strength. The despair of this woman for his husband still prisoner is as evident as disarming.



Even if difficult and hard, living in the Ethiopian refugee camps cannot certainly be compared to the inhuman treatment that these persons are forced to stand in the Northern African jails.



Same rights and equal opportunities and progress for all: an idea of future that appears to be shared by many.



In the “cinema” in the Mai Aini camp, the afternoon show is not full up. More than a get-together place, this is an attempt to reconstruct a normality by this time nearly forgotten.



Two young women in the bar of the new Mai Sebri camp.



The real victory for these persons is to return to their country as free beings.