

# WHY HAVE ASYLUM SEEKERS LEFT THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN?

## Some examples

### **Eritrea (East Africa)**

Thousands have left the country, often to escape national military service which lasts for an undetermined period and can extend to 20 years. The security forces have been responsible for illegal civilian deaths, and thousands of political prisoners are detained without charge or trial. Freedom of expression and religion are severely limited and citizens are often prevented from leaving the country.

### **Guatemala**

Although a 36 year armed conflict ended 10 years ago, Guatemala has the highest regional levels of violent crimes as well as extreme social inequality. Assaults, death threats and killings of human rights activists, journalists, trade-unionists and many involved in investigating human rights crimes and government corruption are common place. Brutal forced evictions are targeting thousands of rural and indigenous families - Canadian mining companies have been implicated in this - and social cleansing by state and private security forces target street children, LGBTI people, sex workers and other marginalised peoples. There is a rule of impunity as these crimes go unpunished.

### **Haiti**

After the disastrous earthquake of 2010, Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti last year affecting 2.1 million people including nearly 900,000 children. 175,000 people lost their homes. On top of this the Dominican Republic expelled 40,000 Haitians to Haiti and 68,000 more returned due to threats of violence. All of this has added to the ongoing humanitarian challenge of helping those affected by the earthquake. Hurricane Irma has recently damaged crops and livelihoods.

### **South Sudan**

22 years of violent civil war in Sudan ended in 2006 and South Sudan gained independence in 2011. But civil war soon engulfed this fledgling nation. Thousands of civilians have been killed because of their ethnicity or perceived political alliances. 3 million have fled their homes and hundreds of thousands are in refugee camps. The government has become increasingly repressive, imprisoning politicians, journalists and other civil society actors. Famine broke out in areas of the country early this year and now some 1.7 million people are one step away from famine.

### **Syria**

Since 2011 the ongoing armed conflict in Syria has been the source of widespread devastation: war crimes, human rights violations, barrel bombings, artillery and chemical attacks killing civilians, arbitrary arrests, torture and deaths in detention and thousands of women and girls subjected to sexual slavery. By the end of 2016 300,000 Syrians had died, 6.6 million were internally displaced and 4.8 million had fled the country. The destruction of infrastructure and property is massive and has cost the Syrian economy \$226 billion USD.

### **Turkey**

Following an attempted coup d'état in 2016, by a faction of the Armed Forces, the Turkish government unleashed a massive campaign of repression against civil servants and civil society. During a six month 'state of emergency' more than 40,000 people were detained and many subjected to torture. Non-governmental organisations and media were closed down while journalists, activists and even parliamentarians were arrested. Widespread violations of human rights have taken place at the hands of the security forces with impunity and nearly half a million people have been displaced internally.