

WHAT AN ETHIOPIAN MUST DO TO PROVE DESERVING OF ASYLUM

The New York Times

February 15, 1982, Monday, Late City Final Edition

Copyright 1982 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Page 16, Column 4; Editorial Desk; Letter

Length: 541 words

Body

To the Editor:

Assistant Secretary of State Chester A. Crocker's letter (Feb. 1) charging Anthony Lewis with "gross inaccuracies and distortions" in his column on the deportation of Ethiopians (Jan. 4) is devoid of evidence supporting Mr. Crocker's assertions.

Mr. Lewis's column demonstrates the glaring inconsistency of our U.N. Ambassador's scathing condemnation of human-rights abuses and political repression in Ethiopia in light of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's demand, during the same month, that thousands of Ethiopians depart this country within 30 days.

Instead of elucidating this paradox, Mr. Crocker's letter served only to underscore the hypocritical treatment Ethiopians seeking refuge in the United States will face. He makes this alarming statement:

"Although the human-rights picture in Ethiopia is still very bleak, the level of chaos and violence in most of the country has declined since the period of the Red Terror and the other postrevolutionary excesses. It is now possible for Ethiopians who are not on their Government's 'wanted' list to return without fear of falling victim to persecution."

C O'Neill Brown and Viviane Eisenberg letter refers to January 4 column by Anthony Lewis, "Hypocrisy Wins Again"

While admitting the bleakness of the "human-rights picture" in Ethiopia, circumstances Ambassador Kirkpatrick more aptly termed "savagery," Mr. Crocker pronounces that, in order to be granted political asylum, an Ethiopian must prove that he is on the Government's "wanted" list.

It is absurd to maintain that such an identifiable list exists, and ludicrous to think that any refugee should have had the foresight to have secured a copy of it. Such a high standard is patently unfair and discriminatory, and it definitely overshoots Mr. Crocker's stated goal of bringing the status of Ethiopians "in line with that of most other nationalities."

Are Cubans, Russians, Poles or other East Europeans who also flee Soviet-inspired political repression required to show inclusion on a "wanted" list of their government in order to obtain political asylum? Most decidedly not. Such a standard for determining "a well-founded fear of persecution" has no basis in the law or in the I.N.S. regulations or operating instructions. Moreover, adherence to such a standard would violate this country's international commitments under the United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Rather than contradicting Mr. Lewis's article, Mr. Crocker's letter exemplifies the "particular political callousness" of our Government toward Ethiopians characterized by Mr. Lewis.

It is, to say the least, difficult to explain why unusually high standards are set for Ethiopians seeking refuge in the United States. It was also difficult to explain the recent reinstatement of tax-exempt status for racially discriminatory schools. However, in that case, the President had the courage to admit and seek to correct his mistake.

WHAT AN ETHIOPIAN MUST DO TO PROVE DESERVING OF ASYLUM

The case of the Ethiopians is a terrible mistake yet in the making. We pray this Government has the strength to undo it before an unspeakable toll is paid in human suffering.

C. O'NEILL BROWN, VIVIANE EISENBERG, New York, Feb. 9, 1982

The writers are lawyers; Miss Eisenberg heads the New York City Bar Association's Committee on Immigration and Nationality Law.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: HUMAN RIGHTS (90%); HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS (90%); HUMAN RIGHTS & CIVIL LIBERTIES LAW (89%); REFUGEES (89%); POLITICAL **ASYLUM** (89%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); EMBASSIES & CONSULATES (78%); IMMIGRATION (77%); DEPORTATION (77%); INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (77%); UNITED NATIONS (76%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (75%); LETTERS & COMMENTS (74%); UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTIONS (71%)

Company: UNITED NATIONS (57%); UNITED NATIONS (57%)

Organization: UNITED NATIONS (57%); UNITED NATIONS (57%); UNITED NATIONS (57%); UNITED NATIONS (57%)

Geographic: ETHIOPIA (97%); UNITED STATES (92%); RUSSIAN FEDERATION (52%); EASTERN EUROPE (52%)