



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

IOM and UNHCR assist Eritrean Kunama refugees to resettle in the USA

The first group of ethnic Kunama refugees of Eritrean origin, resettled by IOM and UNHCR, departed to the USA on Wednesday 4 July 2007. This group, consisting of 29 persons, is the first of some 700 Eritrean Kunama refugees accepted by the US government for a group resettlement.

The Kunamas came to Ethiopia between 1998-2000 fleeing the two-year war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. A considerable number of the refugees opted to stay in the refugee camps long after the two countries signed a cease fire.

UNHCR, together with the Government of the United States, arranged for the group resettlement of the Kunama refugees while IOM logistically organized the programme including transportation, medical screening and cultural orientation. The Government of Ethiopia and the Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) are also partners in the resettlement program of the Kunama.

The 29 refugees traveled by road from the camp to Addis Ababa three days before their departure to the new home. While in Addis Ababa, they stayed in an IOM-run transit center where they were given the chance to briefly experience a life style that is remotely similar to the one awaiting them in the US.

There are more than 1,260 Eritrean Kunama refugees in Ethiopia of whom some 700 have already been granted resettlement in the USA under the US resettlement programme funded by US State Department (PRM). There are 14,453 Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia and the population keeps growing at an average rate of 200-300 refugees a month.

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