

# Refugee Crisis: Brought to You by Western Imperialism

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*While Europe is erecting fences, deploying armies and expressing its “concern” about how to deal with the annual influx of some 300,000 asylum seekers, vast areas of the world – namely the Middle East and Africa – are essentially ceasing to exist.*

For years, I have been witnessing the desperate movements of millions of refugees and migrants all over the world.

The West has been redrawing the borders everywhere, performing direct invasions, or using proxy wars, in order to destabilize or directly destroy all “hostile” governments (read: those that have been determined to feed, educate, house and cure their own people).



Somali refugees in Dadaab © Andre Vltchek

Wherever a socially oriented government gets into power, the West immediately begins to manufacture and sponsor so-called “opposition movements.” Civil wars are triggered, sometimes followed by direct invasions.



Syrian refugees Lebanon © Andre Vltchek

The result is easy to predict: when progressive governments are forced to leave and the extreme, pro-business and pro-Western regimes are installed, the social fabric quickly collapses, brutality begins to reign and millions of desperate people are forced to flee. The same goes for when some horrific civil war is triggered from outside and divides the country.

*Internally displaced, people begin to move all around their countries, aimlessly and in deep confusion. In the past it happened in such places as Cambodia, during and after the savage US carpet-bombing of the countryside, and it is now happening in Syria.*

*Those whose cities, village and livelihood were destroyed have to search for basic safety, food and shelter. After all, parents must feed their children. Natural survival instincts kick in. Borders become irrelevant. The Empire knows all that; it employs thousands of psychologists to analyze and manipulate the world. To claim that the “refugee crisis” comes as a surprise to the West’s governments is absolute hypocrisy.*



Kibati Camp, Goma, East Congo © Andre Vltchek

In just a few years, I have seen masses of Syrian refugees, 2 million of them, scattered all over tiny Lebanon. I have also witnessed Syrians and Iraqis escaping to Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, Syrians fleeing to Turkey, South Asians escaping to Turkey via Iran, North Africans and Central Africans escaping directly to Europe. Sometimes it feels that all of humanity is on the move.

I made a documentary film about the Somali refugees and incorporated stories of Congolese refugees into my film about Rwanda.

The great majority of Westerners has no idea how many human lives of what George Orwell used to call "*un-people*" have been sacrificed in Africa, Asia and elsewhere, in order for them to be able to maintain their routine and unrealistically high standards of living.

A long time ago, Congo had one of the greatest leaders on earth – Patrice Lumumba. He was a true patriot, and an anti-imperialist fighter. A joint British, US and Belgian operation murdered him (the same thing occurred in Iran in 1953, in Indonesia in 1965 and in Chile in 1973, to name just three places). Much later, in 1995, two of the West's client states, Rwanda and Uganda, were designated to exploit the DRC, potentially one of the richest countries on earth. They overthrew governments and murdered millions.

The plight of the refugees pouring from the Congo is too far from Europe. The faces of these people will never be seen. Their suffering will not be witnessed on television screens in Paris, London or Berlin. For Europe, these are "*perfect refugees*" and "*perfect victims*." They are dying, getting raped, getting robbed, "*silently*," without any scandal, without bothering or annoying citizens of Western countries, without demanding anything, without receiving any compensation for the horrors they are being put through.



Palestinian camp in Lebanon © Andre Vltchek

Nobody knows exactly how many Congolese lives have been lost or shattered (estimated number is 6 to 10 million deaths, between 1995 and now), so cheap coltan can be inserted into the smart phones and tablets sold like hot cakes in the rich world, or for uranium to be supplied to the West military industrial complex... or how many Somali fishermen had to flee their own coast, so the European Union could continue dumping its toxic waste in the sea (all that is said is that "*Somalis suddenly became pirates*").

I saw places that most Westerners know nothing about, cannot even imagine: horrendous refugee camps based in Uganda and Rwanda, housing absolutely ruined families or what is left of them, pouring from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I also saw the refugee camps inside the DRC itself, in East Kivu, camps where, as I was told, all women are victims of rape and torture. And, some time ago, I filmed the biggest camp on earth, Dadaab, built in Kenya and designated for refugees fleeing completely decimated Somalia.

All this is not happening "*because those countries cannot govern themselves*." On the

contrary!

Western companies and governments are benefiting.

And in the West, there will never be any acknowledgement of the suffering of the Congolese or Somali people.

Somali peace agreements were torpedoed. Kenyan forces on behalf of the West invaded it and millions fled.

When filming in Dabaab camp, I heard stories about women entering Kenya from Somalia, being strip-searched, raped in front of their children, robbed by Kenyan border guards, and then forced to walk dozens of miles to the camp through the desert. Many were eaten alive by wild animals. Others died from dehydration. In Dadaab and other Kenyan camps for Somali refugees, people lived in a dry desert for one entire generation, without ever seeing the sea, the mountains, rivers and greenery. Children were born in those repulsive camps; they grew up there, reaching adulthood basically locked in a prison.

The victims of Western geopolitical games in the DRC, Somalia, Papua, and so many other places on earth... Who will ever at least acknowledge those shattered lives?



Somali refugees in Djibuti © Andre Vltchek

Some of the people escaping from Libya, Syria, Mali, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, are now at least able to make it in front of the cameras, to tell their stories, to force their way (at least a few of them are succeeding) into those countries that have destroyed theirs. Not that too many people in the West are really willing to listen and to understand, but still, at least there is some chance.

However, in so many other places that are destroyed by the commercial and political interests of the Empire, people are trapped by dire circumstances; they are killed, or starve to death, silently conveniently far from the West's cold gaze.

*"What are we going to do with them?"* I listened to the repeated laments in a the French city of Calais, where hundreds of refugees are staying in a horrific makeshift camp nicknamed the Jungle, jumping on international lorries and running into the Eurotunnel, trying to make it by any desperate means to the UK. I heard the same questions in Greece and Germany. As if the refugees were coming from thin air, not from horrific wars and conflicts triggered by the West.

In its recent editorial, a major Argentinian daily newspaper *El Clarin* argued that many refugees and migrants are not actually fleeing misery, but Western geopolitical ambitions in the Middle East.

It is correct. Refugees are not always poor, but they are, almost without exception, forced to act through desperation.

Many refugees come from formerly rich countries that were attacked, destabilized and in some cases destroyed by the West: Iraq, Libya and Syria.



The Jungle, Calais © Andre Vltchek

There are also countries that are “*exporting refugees*” because of the collapse of their economic and social fabric, mainly due to inhuman sanctions imposed on them by the West, such as Eritrea and Iran. Others come from destitute or relatively poor countries that were also destabilized or just destroyed by North American and European geopolitical and economic interests: Afghanistan, Pakistan, several states in central Africa, Yemen and Somalia, to name just a few.

Recently I wrote:

When one looted country after another begins to sink, when there is nothing left there, when children begin dying from hunger and when men commence fighting each other over tiny boulders and dirty pieces of turf, pathetic boats, or dinghies, begin crossing the waterways, bringing half starved, half-mad refugees to the European sea-fronts decorated with marble. What a horrifying sight! As if a woman, her hair waving in disarray, her lips broken, comes begging a man who raped her after killing her husband – begging for shelter and at least some work and a piece of bread. She decided to abandon all her pride, because her children are sick and starving, because it is either this, or death. That is what you reduced the world to, Europe – you, and your huge, insatiable offspring – North America!

I saw the camps on the Turkish-Syrian border, near the city of Hatai, being used by NATO as training and recruitment facilities for Islamic State (IS, formerly known as ISIS/ISIL/DAESH). But I also saw real refugee camps on Turkish turf. They were well managed and clean. “*We want to act as a mini-empire in the Middle East,*” I was told by a Turkish intellectual in Istanbul, “*Well... then we have to pay for it.*”

But Europe does not want to pay. As in the colonial days, it wants booty, in exchange for... nothing.

I talked to several refugees from South Asia, at the bus terminal in the city of Bodrum. Most of them admitted that Turkey has been treating them much better than Greece or the rest of the EU. But their mind was set on Germany and the UK: they were conditioned. It was all totally irrational, but that’s how it was.



Syrian refugee in Bekaa Valley © Andre Vltchek

In Kos, a horrific provisory camp was not helping the refugees and migrants at all – just a couple of volunteers and one part-time doctor to take care of hundreds. Local activists told me about extreme right-wing groups like Golden Dawn, and about the pogroms against the refugees, periodically. To make things worse, the island now has a right-wing mayor. The Greek economy and the social system have almost collapsed, but European holidaymakers kept coming. While the refugees from several desperate nations were sleeping all over the streets and in the parks, German and Scandinavian tourists were stuffing themselves on fresh seafood, downing liters of wine, just a few steps away.

The Greek coast guard was periodically beating up refugees, sometimes extorting money. Many died, trying to cross from Turkey to Greece. Others died crossing from Africa to Italy or Malta. Those who made it were humiliated, mistreated, and even cheated.

However, refugees keep coming. It is because for many, there is no home, anymore. In their own countries, they are left with nothing. What they used to have was grabbed and transferred to Europe.

In Prague, a Czech philosopher and renowned political performer and a friend of mine, Milan Kohout, has organized several actions in support of asylum seekers: *"It is immoral. Europe took everything from so many countries, and now it wants to wash its hands of any responsibility!"*

As a result of such statements, Mr Kohout is facing constant death treats, and physical attacks, in an increasingly xenophobic Europe.

In Latin America, before the revolutions, people used to say: *"We are poor because they are rich!"* Some refugees and migrants coming to Europe are beginning to see it this way, too.

In Calais, a 25-years-old Syrian man, Hassan, half jokingly, half seriously shouted at me: *"Many of us are not really emigrating. We are just chasing a thief! We want to go where they took our possessions!"*

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Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. His latest books are: "Exposing Lies Of The Empire" and "Fighting Against Western Imperialism". Discussion with Noam Chomsky: On Western Terrorism. Point of No Return is his critically acclaimed political novel. Oceania - a book on Western imperialism in the South Pacific. His provocative book

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