

GENERAL SCENARIO

Canada is struck by serious drought and conflict. Sporadic fighting has been present for over 20 years. Now a drought has been declared in 3 provinces (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario) destroying people's livelihoods and causing 120,000 of individuals to find refuge within Canada and another 94,000 who crossed the border into neighbouring Australia.

Some of those who crossed the border into Australia had familial ties to the communities already established in the camps of Mandurah, Bunbury and Manjimup and have been able to move into these camps (7000 households; 35,0000 individuals). Due to poor contingency planning, however, these new arrivals in the established camps caught the Australian government by surprise, with the result that the additional numbers have put pressure on existing services. This has consequently caused tensions, and forced different ethnic groups to cluster into separate blocks.

As with many displacements, the vast majority of refugees were women and children, as many of the men have stayed behind to tend to whatever land they had left or to fight in the conflict. With the loss of the traditional familial protection mechanisms, many children have reportedly been separated from their families, both voluntarily and involuntarily; however, the extent to which it is happening and its causes remain unclear. Additionally, the risk of increased recruitment of children is a major concern in light of the on-going conflict. There are unconfirmed reports of a significant increase of sexual violence, especially in camps. Historically, most sexual violence was perpetrated by youth within militant groups. There are also reports of landmines killing displaced population along the route to Australia and Ottawatown.

Due to strained relations with Canada, Australian government does not want to give a high profile to this new wave of the emergency. Therefore, NGOs and UN agencies are not allowed to publish alarming reports without running them by government officials. However, the Australian government has been rather welcoming of the Canadian refugees. The existing Canadian refugees (displaced due to previous rounds of fighting in Canada) and the large number of displaced people crossing everyday into Australia, has overwhelmed the Australian authorities. Therefore, they have called upon the international community for help.