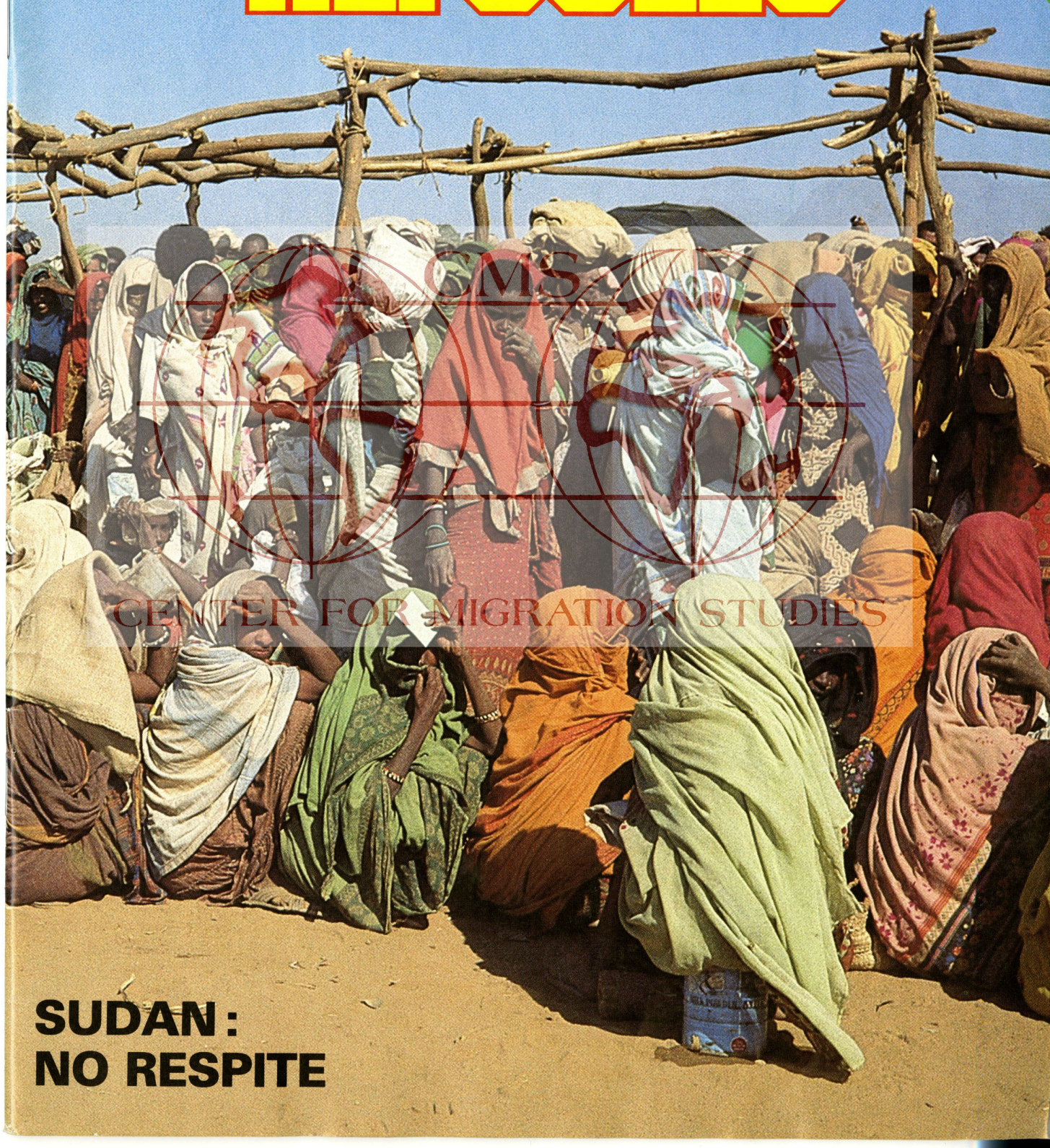




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REFUGEES

ASYLUM
IN SWEDEN



**SUDAN:
NO RESPITE**

History in the making

A humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented scale is unfolding in Africa. Future historians will haggle over the number of victims involved. Millions to be sure. Drought, desertification, war are combining to produce what undoubtedly will be seen as one of the central events of our time.

In spite of appearances, nothing like this has ever happened before – not in 20 countries at once; not to the extent experienced in almost each one of them today. In Sudan, to take a striking example, 4.5 million Sudanese and nearly one million refugees out of a population of perhaps 18 million are said to be immediately at risk. Not just of hard times, not even of famine – those are their lot already. At risk of death. Today, tomorrow, next month. For countless ones – leave how many to the historians – it is already too late.

On 11 March 1985, on the day this issue of REFUGEES goes to press, the "Conference on the Emergency Situation in Africa" opens in Geneva. On the agenda are a myriad needs crying out for action. What will be the price tag? How much will it cost to keep millions of people alive until the next rains, until the next harvest? The figure of US\$ 1.5 billion has been cited. US\$ 1.5 billion! A colossal sum – but is it really? You could not buy a nuclear submarine for that amount, even at a bargain.

And what about food? Can enough be found, now, immediately, to feed Africa's hungry masses?

The United Nations Office for Emergency Operations in Africa currently estimates needs at some 6 million metric

tonnes of grain. But there is no shortage of grain around the world, quite the contrary. The surplus worldwide is thought to be greater than 150 million tonnes. Thanks to the generosity of the donors, the problem is not finding the food. The problem is finding the money to move it, to store it, to distribute it efficiently and in time where it is needed.

UNHCR for its part has appealed for a total of US\$ 96.4 million for five emergency programmes: for Ethiopians in Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia itself (returnees in the Hararge region), for Chadians in Sudan and the Central African Republic. As of 1 March, total contributions and donations received – in-

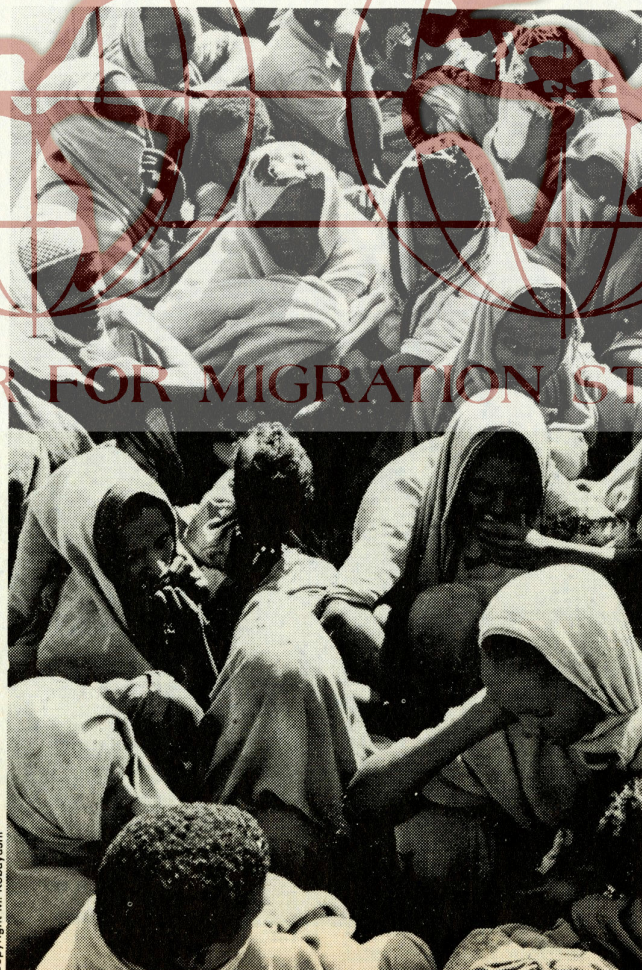
cluding the value of food contributions in kind – amounted to US\$ 42.8 million.

This is a very generous response for which UNHCR is deeply grateful – particularly for the considerable improvement in the availability of food contributions compared with the situation in February of this year. Major pledges in the food sector (especially for eastern Sudan) have been received from the USA, the European Economic Communities and the World Food Programme.

On the other hand, the availability of resources or contributions other than basic food is alarmingly low. The total contributions available for needs other than basic food amount only to some US\$ 20.15 million against the requirement of US\$ 52.7 million.

While the provision of food is a basic necessity and concern, it is equally important and urgent that UNHCR should receive the cash resources to carry out other elements of the programmes such as health assistance, water supply, the provision of shelter and the logistical and transportation costs involved. UNHCR has already exhausted all the cash resources available and is financing the implementation of the emergency programmes, particularly in eastern Sudan, on a day-to-day basis depending on the receipt of new contributions.

The emergency is not over, far from it. It will take time, pain and great efforts before it can be consigned to the history books. Our children then will be able to learn what happened, why, and what we, who were there, managed to do about it. ●



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