

attacked or caught in cross-fire, or otherwise involved in physically insecure environments, such as landmine fields. Aside from the immediate physical danger in which this places refugees, if camps are close to the border, refugee combatants are more easily able to mobilize and conduct guerilla forays across the border. It is argued that camps and settlements must be located (and if necessary relocated) more than 50km from the border, or away from conflict zones.

There are several problems with this line of argument. First, it is not always the case that camps close to the border are insecure. In Malawi, for example, the Mozambican camps were right on the border, but never suffered direct attack. Location itself is not the cause of insecurity (but clearly does aggravate it). Second, it is not always possible to locate camps in a deliberate way; refugees often spontaneously set up their own camps close to the border in order to facilitate return or monitor the situation in their home region, and then it is difficult to relocate them.²⁷ Relocation is difficult and expensive, and refugees are often reluctant to be relocated. This was clearly manifest in the case of Guinea in 1998, when Sierra Leonean refugees crossed the border and settled in areas that were very difficult to access. Efforts by UNHCR to relocate the refugees were fruitless, and the situation was resolved only when the refugees themselves chose to relocate because food was not reaching them. Third, host governments may also prefer to have camps close to border if this facilitates return, reduces the chances of refugees becoming integrated into the local community, and reduces national security problems.

Poor camp location can aggravate insecurity, but it does not fully explain security problems. The Malawian case is of interest because it raises the question of why these camps were relatively safe from attack, and illustrates the importance of understanding the wider political and security context.

3) *Camps as the source of security problems*

Camps themselves can be sources of instability and insecurity for the RPA.²⁸ Camps are largely undefended repositories of resources, including food, vehicles and relief supplies, as well as people, who can be forcibly recruited for military or sex or labor purposes, or taken hostage as a way to get international media publicity. Camps can become integrated into the local political (war) economy and viewed as a war resource. Governments involved in internal or regional conflicts have also deliberately targeted or used refugees and camps as part of a military strategy to weaken and demoralize opponents, to promote ethnic cleansing, or to encourage or discourage repatriation. This occurred most recently in Kosovo, where Serbian president Milosevic pursued such tactics,²⁹ but also occurs in Sudan and elsewhere, as part of a larger pattern of conflict in which civilians are targeted for military purposes.

The culture of camps, particularly in the emergency phase, contributes to problems of law and order. The anomic, alienated environment of camps coupled with the absence or breakdown of the rule of law in the camps, often creates a climate of violence and intimidation. In the emergency phase, camp populations consist of uprooted, often traumatized or destabilized people. Many refugees are rural people with little education, who have lost their ties to families and villages and who find themselves cast adrift in an alien,

²⁷ See Jeff Crisp and Karen Jacobsen. 1998. "Refugee camps reconsidered," *Forced Migration Review*, forthcoming.

²⁸ This approach encompasses the broader critique of camps in general, which argues that camps are themselves inherently problematic and cannot be rendered safe or free of human rights abuse (see recent debate on camps in *Forced Migration Review*, Vols. 1 and 2 1998-9)

²⁹ W. Hayden, "The Conflict in Kosovo and Forced Migration: The Strategic Use of Displacement and the Obstacles to International Protection," *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*. <http://www-jha.sps.cam.ac.uk/b/b396.htm> posted on 20 December 1998.