

## **Saudi Arabia Deports Thousands of Ethiopian Workers**

Welcome back to As It Is from VOA Learning English.

I'm Kelly Jean Kelly in Washington.

Today on the program, we report on Saudi Arabia's decision to send tens of thousands of Ethiopian workers back to their country.

"The government tells us that they are expecting another 35,000 and probably more. Because nobody really knows how many Ethiopian migrants, undocumented, are in Saudi Arabia and facing expulsion."

In the past month, Ethiopia brought home more than 120,000 of its citizens. They were working without government documents in Saudi Arabia. Saudi officials ordered the undocumented workers to leave the country.

As Christopher Cruise reports, many more Ethiopian migrants are expected to leave Saudi Arabia soon.

The International Organization for Migration is helping the Ethiopian migrants once they return home. Christiane Berthiaume works for the group.

“At the beginning in November, the Ethiopian government asked IOM to help 30,000 migrants. That was the figure they were expecting that people will come back, but since then the figures have been skyrocketing.”

She says many more will arrive soon.

“The government tells us that they are expecting another 35,000 and probably more. Because nobody really knows how many Ethiopian migrants, undocumented, are in Saudi Arabia and facing expulsion.”

The Ethiopian government sends planes to Saudi Arabia every day to bring back more workers. The project has been called one of the biggest human airlifts in recent history.

The International Organization for Migration says it needs 11.5 million dollars to complete the operation. The IOM says it has received some donations, but not nearly enough to pay for all that is needed.

“When they arrive in Ethiopia we’re there. We’re helping them, transporting them. We’re giving them medical assistance. We are also giving them some psycho-social first aid. We give them meals, water, high energy biscuits. We give those who arrive at night temporary accommodation. And also we do transport them to their places of origin and give them a little bit [of] money. Help them to reintegrate.”

Ms. Berthiaume says the IOM has also helped 160 young people who were traveling without their parents.

Three other large United Nations agencies are also giving aid to people in Ethiopia to try to help them support themselves: The World Food Program, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

I'm Christopher Cruise.

Joe De Capua in Washington and Marthe Van Der Wolf in Addis Ababa contributed to this report.

If you would like to contact us, email [learningenglish@voanews.com](mailto:learningenglish@voanews.com).