



Human Rights Concern Eritrea

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Ongoing Human Rights Violations in Eritrea

Despite Eritrean government's egregious human rights violations, Eritrea is a member of the Human Rights Council and still has not allowed the new Special Rapporteur, Ms. Daniela Kravetz, to visit the country.

The Eritrean government flouts the very purposes for which the UN Human Rights Council was created: to **"uphold the highest standards, strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them"**.

Peace Agreement with Ethiopia

Eritrea's human rights record has not changed for the better since the government signed a peace agreement with Ethiopia in July 2018.

One of the joint measures taken by the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea since their peace agreement was the opening of the border between their two countries for people to travel freely across, a measure which indeed must be welcomed, especially for all Eritreans who for decades have been banned from leaving their country without permission.

The border was opened soon after the Peace Agreement in July 2018. However, it was closed in March 2019, triggering tension and uncertainty in the ongoing transition towards normalization of relations between and within the two countries.

Despite the Peace Agreement, there is no end to military conscription, no limit to the time served, and female conscripts continue to be subject to sexual abuse and rape.

The number of Eritreans fleeing their country is on the increase. There are no visible improvements in the lives of Eritrean citizens living in Eritrea.

Despite the end of hostilities, over 10,000 prisoners of conscience are still incarcerated in inhumane conditions without charge or trial, because they supposedly threaten **"national security"**. There is no evidence of an end to the practice of "disappearances" without trace of thousands of Eritreans.

[UN Human Rights Committee expert Christof Heynes](#) has highlighted the case of former Minister of Finance, Berhane Abrehe, and his wife Almaz Habtemariam, who were detained in 2018. He says the Eritrean delegation to the UN was asked directly whether they were still alive, but there was no response. Berhane Abrehe, Eritrea's former Minister of Finance, was imprisoned in September 2018. No charges have yet been issued.

Arrests of Teachers in Asmara

Three secondary school male teachers, Layne Blata, Eyob Okbay and Yohannes Gebrezgy, who were working in Asmara, were arbitrary arrested, and held since the end of May 2019. The reasons for their detention and their whereabouts are unknown.

Religious persecution continues:

Very severe religious persecution continues, for both Muslims and Christians, hundreds of whom are in prison for their faith. The evidence that this persecution of people of faith continues unabated is not difficult to find.

Confiscation of Clinics and Health Centres owned by Catholic Churches in Eritrea

On the 12th June 2019, in a letter to the government, the Catholic Church of Eritrea has confirmed that government soldiers, members of the police and some government medical personnel suddenly demanded that all medical centers that are administered by the Catholic Church in Eritrea be handed over to the government.

The churches were instructed to sign documents to transfer ownership of the properties to the government. When they refused, the government forcibly confiscated over 20 clinics and health centres mostly located in monasteries, and remote villages. Staff and patients were thrown out in the street, and the health centres were closed and sealed. No explanation was given for the government's brutal action. The Catholic church has lost not only its vital humanitarian work but also the very buildings in which its clergy live and work. Since 1995, the Catholic Churches in Eritrea were providing spiritual and social services to citizens. Similarly, in 2018, more than five other health centres were confiscated by the government in the same manner.

On 13th June 2019, four Bishops of the Catholic churches in Eritrea wrote to the government, expressing their concerns and protesting against the government's illegal actions.

By closing the clinics and health centres, the government is denying the poor and those who lives in remote areas of free and affordable health care.

Arrest of Five Orthodox Christian Monks

On 13th June 2019, security guards in Gindae, a town in the Northern Red Sea region of Eritrea arrested five Orthodox Christian monks from the Debre Bizen Monastery, and have detained them at the Gindae Police Station ever since without due process. The five monks are Aba Kibreab Tekie, Aba Gebremedhin, Aba Kidanemariam Tekeste, Aba Gebretensae Zemichael and Aba Gebretensae Tewoldemedhin. Three of them are over 70 years of age.

It was reported that the monks were having difficulties due to their opposition to the government's continued interference in church affairs.

Debre Bizen monastery of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church is located at the top of Debre Bizen mountain, near the town of Nefasit in Eritrea.

Arrests of Evangelical Christians

In May 2019, 30 Evangelical Christians were reportedly arrested during secret prayer meetings, in Godaif, south eastern Asmara.

Earlier in the same month, 141 more, including 14 minors were also arrested in the north eastern Asmara during a private gathering. Some of them have been released, but the majority are still detained.

Faith Missions Church raided

On 23rd June 2019, the Faith Mission Church in Keren, the second-largest city in Eritrea was raided by Eritrean Security agents, during a gathering of members of the church and over 30 people were arrested, including mothers, children and pregnant women.

The Eritrean government continues violating the rights of Evangelical church members in Eritrea. Their churches have been closed since May 2002, and if they are caught gathering to pray or for other social occasions, they are rounded up, imprisoned, tortured and subjected to inhuman and degrading treatments.

Death of a prisoner

Said Mohamed Ali, died on 13th June 2019, due to lack of medical care, and harsh prison conditions. He was arrested after he had participated [in the burial of Hajji Musa Mohammed Nur, the chairman of the Al-Dia School](#), and detained for over a year in Ala' prison without charge. Said was in his early thirties, and according to his former cell mate who managed to escape to a neighbouring country, he was kept in solitary confinement, tortured and denied medical treatment.

When he became very ill, he was transferred to Adi Abieto prison in Asmara, and was subsequently taken to Halibet Hospital. As he was already very weak and ill, he passed away after a few days in hospital. His family was allowed to bury him at the Sheik Al Amin Cemetery in Asmara on the same day.

The death toll in connection to [the Al-Diaa school protest](#) has reached three. Haji Mussa died in the Fifth Police station in Asmara in March 2018, and Haji Ibrahim Younus died on January 2019 in Mai Serwa prison.

Many more of those who were rounded up during the Al-Diaa school protest in October 2017, and after Haji Musa's funeral in Asmara, in March 2018, are still languishing in various prisons in the country.

Nothing has changed in Eritrea

Eritrea has not implemented its 1997 ratified Constitution, neither has it formulated a new one. Independent civil society or human rights organisations are still non-existent. There is no independent judicial system, no freedom of expression, no press freedom, no religious freedom, no freedom of movement.

The Government has not reformed its national service programme in line with international law. Eritreans continue to be subjected to an indefinite term that is arbitrarily extended and amounts to modern-day slavery. The rights of conscripts are not respected. Sexual exploitation and violence

Against female conscripts is rampant.

Cases of arbitrary arrest and detention continue to be reported, with people often being held incommunicado, without charge or trial. They are arrested for attempting to evade military service; for trying to flee the country; for practising their religion; and for suspected opposition to the government.

UN Human Rights Council Special Procedures regarding Eritrea

In view of what has been happening, and the continued, flagrant and widespread human rights violations, it is imperative at this critical stage and given the deteriorating situation, that the UN Human Rights Council, must continue to monitor the human rights situation in Eritrea.

Without doubt the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Eritrea is needed more now than ever. Every member state of the UN must surely recognise the vital necessity of this work and the urgent need to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, maintaining its existence until there is clear evidence of fundamental change in Eritrea.

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