

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 64/004/2008

13 August 2008

UA 225/08 Arbitrary detention/ Fear of torture and other ill treatment

ERITREA/ EGYPT Up to 1,200 forcibly returned asylum seekers

Between 12 and 19 June, up to 1,200 Eritrean asylum-seekers were forcibly returned from Egypt to Eritrea. While almost all of the returned women with children and those who were pregnant were released after some weeks in detention, the majority of the male and single female Eritreans that were returned are held without charge.

Those in detention have been transferred to military camps and prisons, including 740 reportedly at the Halhal camp within Wia military camp, approximately 40 km south of Massawa. Wia military camp is in a desert location where temperatures reach up to 40 degrees Celsius during the day. Amnesty International is seriously concerned with the well-being and detention conditions of at least 740 Eritreans still in arbitrary detention in Eritrea following their forcible return from Egypt in June 2008.

Amnesty International is also concerned that those who remain in arbitrary detention are at grave risk of torture, and other ill-treatment. Torture is regularly used against detainees in Eritrea, including at military camps such as Wia. Methods of torture Amnesty International has previously documented in Eritrea include prolonged beatings with whips and kicking, tying detainees in stress positions such as the helicopter position and the figure eight position, and leaving them in the sun for periods of hours.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic or in your own language:

To the Eritrean authorities:

- urging the authorities to disclose the names and whereabouts of all the Eritreans who have been forcibly returned from Egypt since 11 June;
- urging the authorities not to detain, torture or ill-treat those who have been returned;
- reminding the authorities that enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment are prohibited under international law.

APPEALS TO:

President
His Excellency President Issayas Afewerki
Office of the President
P O Box 257, Asmara, Eritrea
Fax: +2911 123 788 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice
Ms Fawzia Hashim
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 241, Asmara, Eritrea
Fax: +2911 126 422
Salutation: Dear Minister

To the Egyptian authorities:

- calling on the authorities to disclose the names of all the Eritreans they recently forcibly returned to Eritrea;
- calling on the Egyptian government to take all possible diplomatic measures to ensure the Eritreans they returned to Eritrea are released from arbitrary detention, and are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- urging them to respect Egypt's international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the UN Convention against Torture not to forcibly return asylum-seekers to Eritrea, where they would be at risk of torture and other serious human rights violations.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Minister Ahmed Ali Aboul Gheit
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Maspiro
Cairo, Egypt

Fax: +20 22 574 8822

+20 22 390 8159

+20 22 574 9533

E-mail: minexter@idsc1.gov.eg

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Eritrea and Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 September 2008.