

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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**UN Human Rights Council  
Twenty-ninth session, 15 June – 3 July 2015**

**Item 4:  
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea**

Mr. President,

Thousands of prisoners of conscience continue to be held in secret detention in Eritrea, without charge or trial, for their speech, their writing, their religious beliefs, their suspected political opinions, for trying to escape national service, flee the country or in place of others who have fled. Hundreds of families have not been informed of the arrests or whereabouts of their relatives; have never heard from them since their arrest and do not know if they are alive or dead.

As has frequently been described to the Council, torture and other ill-treatment are widely used for punishment, interrogation and coercion. Common methods reported include tying prisoners in painful positions for long periods and prolonged solitary confinement. Positive steps taken by Eritrea, such as its accession to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), must be translated into genuine action to end torture on the ground, such investigating allegations of torture and prosecuting those suspected of criminal responsibility.

Eritrea has been invited to accept technical assistance to implement recommendations on human rights, including from the UPR. So as not to defeat its very purpose, any such assistance must be accompanied by access to Eritrea by the Special Rapporteur and other independent observers to monitor, document and report on the situation.

The son of two of the G15 detained in September 2001 said recently of his parents: “I don’t know their physical condition, medical needs and psychological state. But they are very much alive in my heart and in my mind.” There are simple steps that the Government of Eritrea can take immediately towards improving the human rights situation in the country. As a bare minimum the government must release its political prisoners, or where this is not possible, at least inform families of their relatives’ fate.

Thank you.