



AI INDEX: AFR 64/7779/2024
29 FEBRUARY 2024

ORAL STATEMENT

Item 2: ENHANCED INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ERITREA

Eritrea must urgently implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur

UN Human Rights Council
Fifty-fifth session

26 FEBRUARY TO 5 APRIL 2024

Mr. President,

The human rights situation in Eritrea has shown no signs of progress. Eritrea continues to be one of the region's worst jailers of journalists, politicians and those who dare to dissent. The whereabouts of 11 politicians and at least 16 journalists, who were forcibly disappeared by the government for decades after merely speaking against President Isaias Afewerki, remain unknown.

Young people in Eritrea face arbitrary detention and other forms of punishment if they avoid military service, mandatory for citizens after finishing high school. Upon joining, they are subjected to an indefinite term of compulsory national military service, where allegations of forced labour, torture, and sexual violence have been documented. Every year, thousands of citizens flee their country via dangerous routes to avoid forced conscription.

Followers of religions that the Eritrean government labels as "unrecognized" continue to face arbitrary detention. Last year in April, Pastor Tesfaye Seyoum, the founder and leader of Meserete Kirstos Church, died while in detention, where he had been held for 10 years for belonging to a "unrecognized" religion.

Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) also continue to be present in parts of Tigray, Ethiopia's northern region. Our findings and those by others indicate that crimes under international law may have been committed by Eritrean forces in this region. It is critical that the Special Rapporteur is able to look into these violations committed by Eritrean forces in Ethiopia.

Amnesty International urges Eritrea to urgently implement recommendations set out in the consecutive reports of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea and to release thousands of people who have been arbitrarily detained in the country.

Mr. Special Rapporteur, can you elaborate on justice options to ensure the accountability of Eritrean Forces and authorities suspected of crimes under international law in the Tigray region?

Thank you, Mr. President