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To Permanent Representatives of
Members and Observer States of the
UN Human Rights Council

Geneva, 5 June 2017

RE: Renewing the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea

Your Excellencies,

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, write to urge your delegation to co-sponsor a resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea at the forthcoming 35th Session of the UN Human Rights Council. In view of the ongoing crimes under international law, including torture, enslavement and enforced disappearances, and violations of fundamental freedoms committed in Eritrea, the Special Rapporteur’s mandate remains an indispensable mechanism to advance the protection and promotion of human rights in Eritrea.

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur was established at the 20th UN Human Rights Council Session in 2012 to monitor the human rights situation in Eritrea. From June 2014-June 2016, the mandate was also represented on the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea

(CoI). The mandate of the Special Rapporteur was extended in July 2016 to follow-up on the recommendations of the CoI. It has been instrumental in monitoring the dire situation on the ground, highlighting on-going violations and the failure to implement the recommendations of the CoI and in providing a crucial platform to help amplify the voices and concerns of victims.

The findings of the CoI and UN Special Rapporteur reveal that the Eritrean authorities have continued to impose a broad range of unwarranted restrictions on fundamental human rights, precipitating mass migration, including of unaccompanied children. Despite commitments by the State to reduce national service to 18 months, indefinite national service and forced labor persist throughout the country. [1] Persons who attempt to avoid military conscription, take refuge abroad, practice an unsanctioned religion, or who criticise government officials continue to be arrested and imprisoned for lengthy periods. [2]

The absence of an independent judiciary means that victims of these human rights violations have no recourse to justice at home. As a result, in Eritrea impunity persists and those who have been subjected to enforced disappearances remain unaccounted for.

In light of these concerns, we respectfully request your delegation to co-sponsor a resolution during the 35th UN HRC session that renews the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, provides the mandate holder with all necessary support, and urges the Government of Eritrea to cooperate with the mandate holder including allowing unencumbered access to the country.

Sincerely,

1. Africa Monitors
2. Amnesty International
3. ARTICLE 19
4. Citizens for Democratic Rights in Eritrea
5. CIVICUS
6. Connection e.V
7. DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
8. Eritrean Diaspora in East Africa
9. Eritrean Lowland League
10. Eritrean Law Society
11. Eritrea Focus
12. Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights
13. Eritreans for Human and Democratic Rights - UK
14. FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights)
15. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
16. Human Rights Concern – Eritrea
17. Human Rights Watch
18. Information Forum For Eritrea
19. International Fellowship of Reconciliation

20. International Service for Human Rights
21. Network of Eritrean Women
22. PEN Eritrea
23. People for Peace in Africa
24. Release Eritrea
25. Reporters Without Borders
26. Stop Slavery in Eritrea Campaign
27. War Resisters International

[1] Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea at the 31th session of the Human Rights Council Agenda item 4 14 March 2016, Geneva

[2] IBID