

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/18/un-human-rights-council-interactive-dialogue-special-rapporteur-eritrea>

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Oral Statement Delivered Under Item 4

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Human Rights Watch's research on Eritrea confirms many of the concerns raised in the Special Rapporteur's thorough report. The human rights situation in Eritrea remains dire, with no improvement since the last Universal Periodic Review. Many Eritreans are denied fundamental human rights, including the right to express opinions, form associations and peacefully protest. Scores of people continue to be arbitrarily detained and imprisoned without trial at the whim of commanders and security forces; many are tortured. Freedom to practice the religion of one's choice is denied if the government disapproves of the choice.

The Eritrean government's policy of indefinite military conscription and other patterns of serious human rights violations described above continue to prompt thousands of young Eritreans to flee their country. According to UNHCR, over 313,000 have fled, over 6% of the population. The results have been tragic. Fleeing Eritreans undertake horrific journeys to reach places of refuge and many have fallen victim to traffickers who torture them in order to obtain ransom from their families. Many other Eritreans have been among those drowned trying to reach Lampedusa, Italy, including 366 who died when their boat capsized in October 2013.

The departure of so many has left the country desolate, as described by four Eritrean Catholic bishops ten days ago in an open letter. The letter notes that aged parents are left with no one to care for them and have been spiritually damaged as their offspring are scattered in national service . . . [in] rehabilitation centers [and] prisons or abroad.

The promises that the government made during its first UPR remain unimplemented, including the commitment to ratify the Convention against Torture. In fact, Eritrea showed during its second cycle of the UPR that it was only determined to distort facts and to bluntly reject well-documented allegations of rights abuses. The government also showed that it has no interest to let any independent human rights monitor inside the country including the Special Rapporteur. However, despite the government's efforts to restrict information, the Special Rapporteur has succeeded in documenting the grim human rights situation and in exposing to the world the dire reality of millions of Eritreans. This is the clear demonstration of why her mandate is so much needed and should be renewed and strengthened.

The Council should call on the Eritrean government to implement the recommendations contained in its previous resolutions and unequivocally call upon the authorities to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. We also call on member States to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur's mandate. The Council should weigh the need for further investigation of the patterns of abuse identified by the Special Rapporteur in order to determine whether such abuse amounts to international crimes in order to ensure that those responsible are held into account.

Unlawful Detention and Abuse in Unauthorized Places of Detention in Uganda

Asylum Seekers Abused in the US and Deported to Harm in Cameroon

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