[Template:Redirect](/wiki/Template:Redirect" \o "Template:Redirect) [Template:Distinguish](/wiki/Template:Distinguish) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Eritrea** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) or [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en)[[1]](#cite_note-1)) officially the **State of Eritrea**,[[2]](#cite_note-2) is a country in [East Africa](/wiki/East_Africa). With its capital at [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara), it is bordered by [Sudan](/wiki/Sudan) in the west, [Ethiopia](/wiki/Ethiopia) in the south, and [Djibouti](/wiki/Djibouti) in the southeast. The northeastern and eastern parts of Eritrea have an extensive coastline along the [Red Sea](/wiki/Red_Sea). The nation has a total area of approximately [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), and includes the [Dahlak Archipelago](/wiki/Dahlak_Archipelago) and several of the [Hanish Islands](/wiki/Hanish_Islands). Its name *Eritrea* is based on the [Greek](/wiki/Greek_language) name for the Red Sea ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)), which was first adopted for [Italian Eritrea](/wiki/Italian_Eritrea) in 1890.

Eritrea is a multi-ethnic country, with nine recognized ethnic groups in its population of around six million. Most residents speak [Afroasiatic languages](/wiki/Afroasiatic_languages), either of the [Ethiopian Semitic languages](/wiki/Ethiopian_Semitic_languages) or [Cushitic](/wiki/Cushitic_languages) branches. Among these communities, the [Tigrinya](/wiki/Tigray-Tigrinya_people) make up about 55% of the population, with the [Tigre people](/wiki/Tigre_people) constituting around 30% of inhabitants. In addition, there are a number of [Nilo-Saharan](/wiki/Nilo-Saharan_languages)-speaking [Nilotic](/wiki/Nilotic) ethnic minorities. Most people in the territory adhere to [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) or [Islam](/wiki/Islam).[[3]](#cite_note-3) The [Kingdom of Aksum](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Aksum), covering much of modern-day Eritrea and [northern Ethiopia](/wiki/Tigray_Region), rose somewhere around the first or second centuries[[4]](#cite_note-4)[[5]](#cite_note-5) and adopted [Christianity](/wiki/Eritrean_Orthodox_Church) around the time Islam had spread through Egypt and the Levant.[[6]](#cite_note-6) In medieval times much of Eritrea fell under the [Medri Bahri](/wiki/Medri_Bahri) kingdom, with a smaller region being part of [Hamasien](/wiki/Hamasien).

The creation of modern-day Eritrea is a result of the incorporation of independent, distinct kingdoms and sultanates (for example, [Medri Bahri](/wiki/Medri_Bahri) and the [Sultanate of Aussa](/wiki/Sultanate_of_Aussa)) eventually resulting in the formation of [Italian Eritrea](/wiki/Italian_Eritrea). In 1947 Eritrea became part of a federation with Ethiopia, the [Federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea](/wiki/Federation_of_Ethiopia_and_Eritrea). Subsequent [annexation](/wiki/Annexation) into Ethiopia led to the [Eritrean War of Independence](/wiki/Eritrean_War_of_Independence), ending with Eritrean independence following a [referendum](/wiki/Eritrean_independence_referendum,_1993) in April 1993. Hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia persisted, leading to the [Eritrean–Ethiopian War](/wiki/Eritrean–Ethiopian_War) of 1998–2000 and further skirmishes with both [Djibouti](/wiki/Djiboutian–Eritrean_border_conflict) and [Ethiopia](/wiki/2010_Eritrean–Ethiopian_border_skirmish).

Eritrea is a member of the [African Union](/wiki/African_Union), the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations), and [IGAD](/wiki/IGAD), and is an observer in the [Arab League](/wiki/Arab_League) alongside [Brazil](/wiki/Brazil), [Venezuela](/wiki/Venezuela), [India](/wiki/India) and [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey).[[7]](#cite_note-7)

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## Name[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

During the Middle Ages, the Eritrea region was known as [*Medri Bahri*](/wiki/Medri_Bahri) ("sea-land"). The name *Eritrea* is derived from the ancient Greek name for [Red Sea](/wiki/Red_Sea) ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), based on the adjective [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang) "red"). It was first formally adopted in 1890, with the formation of [Italian Eritrea](/wiki/Italian_Eritrea) (*Colonia Eritrea*).[[8]](#cite_note-8) The territory became the [Eritrea Governorate](/wiki/Eritrea_Governorate) within [Italian East Africa](/wiki/Italian_East_Africa) in 1936. Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia in 1953 (nominally within a [federation](/wiki/Federation_of_Ethiopia_and_Eritrea) until 1962) and an [Eritrean Liberation Front](/wiki/Eritrean_Liberation_Front) formed in 1960. Eritrea gained independence following the [1993 referendum](/wiki/Eritrean_independence_referendum,_1993), and the name of the new state was defined as *State of Eritrea* in the [1997 constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Eritrea).[[9]](#cite_note-9)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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## Modern History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

### Italian Eritrea[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|right|African civilizations map pre-colonial. The](/wiki/File:African-civilizations-map-pre-colonial.svg) [Kingdom of Aksum's](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Aksum) realm [thumb|right|Map of Eritrea in 1896](/wiki/File:Eritrea_1896.jpg) [thumb|150px|Italian Eritrean coat of arms](/wiki/File:Eritrea-COA.PNG) [thumb|right|An Asmara station on the](/wiki/File:AsmaraStazione.jpg) [Eritrean Railway](/wiki/Eritrean_Railway) (1938).

The boundaries of the present-day Eritrea nation state were established during the [Scramble for Africa](/wiki/Scramble_for_Africa). In 1869<ref name=Ully>[Ullendorff, Edward](/wiki/Edward_Ullendorff). *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People* 2nd ed., p. 90. [Oxford University Press](/wiki/Oxford_University_Press) (London), 1965. ISBN 0-19-285061-X.</ref> or ’70, the ruling Sultan of [Raheita](/wiki/Raheita) sold lands surrounding the Bay of [Assab](/wiki/Assab) to the Rubattino Shipping Company.<ref name=EBAb>"[Assab](/wiki/S:1911_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Assab)" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* 11th ed, Vol. 2. 1911. Hosted at [Wikisource](/wiki/S:Main_Page).</ref> The area served as a [coaling station](/wiki/Coaling_station) along the [shipping lanes](/wiki/Shipping_lane) introduced by the recently completed [Suez Canal](/wiki/Suez_Canal). It had long been part of the [Ottoman](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) [Habesh Eyalet](/wiki/Habesh_Eyalet) centered in [Egypt](/wiki/Khedivate_of_Egypt).[[10]](#cite_note-10) The first Italian settlers arrived in 1880.<ref name=EBAb/>

In the vacuum that followed the [1889 death](/wiki/Battle_of_Gallabat) of [Emperor](/wiki/Emperor_of_Ethiopia) [Yohannes II](/wiki/Yohannes_IV), Gen. [Oreste Baratieri](/wiki/Oreste_Baratieri) occupied the highlands along the Eritrean coast and Italy proclaimed the establishment of the new colony of [Italian Eritrea](/wiki/Italian_Eritrea), a colony of the [Kingdom of Italy](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Italy). In the [Treaty of Wuchale](/wiki/Treaty_of_Wuchale) (It. *Uccialli*) signed the same year, [King Menelik](/wiki/Menelik_II) of [Shewa](/wiki/Shewa), a southern Ethiopian kingdom, recognized the Italian occupation of his rivals' lands of [Bogos](/wiki/Bogos), [Hamasien](/wiki/Hamasien), [Akkele Guzay](/wiki/Akkele_Guzay), and [Serae](/wiki/Serae) in exchange for guarantees of financial assistance and continuing access to European arms and ammunition. His subsequent victory over his rival kings and enthronement as [Emperor](/wiki/Emperor_of_Ethiopia) [Menelek II](/wiki/Menelik_II_of_Ethiopia) (r. 1889–1913) made the treaty formally binding upon the entire territory.<ref name=EBA>[Abyssinia](/wiki/S:1911_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Abyssinia)" i.e., [Ethiopia](/wiki/Ethiopian_Empire)</ref>

In 1888, the Italian administration launched its first development projects in the new colony. The [Eritrean Railway](/wiki/Eritrean_Railway) was completed to [Saati](/wiki/Saati) in 1888,[[11]](#cite_note-11) and reached [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara) in the highlands in 1911.<ref name=f1>"[Eritrean Railway](http://www.ferroviaeritrea.it/contenuti.htm)" at *Ferrovia Eritrea*. [Template:It icon](/wiki/Template:It_icon)</ref> The [Asmara–Massawa Cableway](/wiki/Asmara-Massawa_Cableway) was the longest line in the world during its time, but was later dismantled by the British in World War II. Besides major infrastructural projects, the colonial authorities invested significantly in the agricultural sector. It also oversaw the provision of urban amenities in Asmara and Massawa, and employed many Eritreans in public service, particularly in the police and public works departments.<ref name=f1/> Thousands of Eritreans were concurrently enlisted in the army, serving during the [Italo-Turkish War](/wiki/Italo-Turkish_War) in Libya as well as the [First](/wiki/First_Italo-Ethiopian_War) and [second](/wiki/Second_Italo-Ethiopian_War) Italo-Abyssinian Wars.

Additionally, the Italian Eritrea administration opened a number of new factories, which produced buttons, cooking oil, pasta, construction materials, packing meat, tobacco, hide and other household commodities. In 1939, there were around 2,198 factories and most of the employees were Eritrean citizens. The establishment of industries also made an increase in the number of both Italians and Eritreans residing in the cities. The number of Italians residing in the territory increased from 4,600 to 75,000 in five years; and with the involvement of Eritreans in the industries, trade and fruit plantation was expanded across the nation, while some of the plantations were owned by Eritreans.[[12]](#cite_note-12) In 1922, [Benito Mussolini's](/wiki/Benito_Mussolini) rise to power in Italy brought profound changes to the colonial government in Italian Eritrea. After [*il Duce*](/wiki/Il_Duce) declared the birth of the [Italian Empire](/wiki/Italian_Empire) in May 1936, Italian Eritrea (enlarged with northern Ethiopia's regions) and [Italian Somaliland](/wiki/Italian_Somaliland) were merged with the just conquered Ethiopia in the new [Italian East Africa](/wiki/Italian_East_Africa) (*Africa Orientale Italiana*) administrative territory. This [Fascist](/wiki/Fascists) period was characterized by imperial expansion in the name of a "new Roman Empire". Eritrea was chosen by the Italian government to be the industrial center of Italian East Africa.[[13]](#cite_note-13)

### British administration[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

Through the 1941 [Battle of Keren](/wiki/Battle_of_Keren), the British expelled the Italians,[[14]](#cite_note-14) and took over the administration of the country.

The British placed Eritrea under British military administration until [Allied forces](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II) could determine its fate.

In the absence of agreement amongst the Allies concerning the status of Eritrea, British administration continued for the remainder of World War II and until 1950. During the immediate postwar years, the British proposed that Eritrea be divided along religious lines and annexed to Sudan and Ethiopia.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union), anticipating a [communist](/wiki/Communist) victory in the Italian polls, initially supported returning Eritrea to Italy under trusteeship or as a colony.

### Federation with Ethiopia[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

In the 1950s, the Ethiopian feudal administration under Emperor [Haile Selassie](/wiki/Haile_Selassie_of_Ethiopia) sought to annex Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. He laid claim to both territories in a letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Paris Peace Conference and at the First Session of the United Nations.[[15]](#cite_note-15) In the United Nations, the debate over the fate of the former Italian colonies continued. The British and Americans preferred to cede all of Eritrea except the Western province to the Ethiopians as a reward for their support during [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II).[[16]](#cite_note-16) The Independence Bloc of Eritrean parties consistently requested from the UN General Assembly that a referendum be held immediately to settle the Eritrean question of sovereignty.

Following the adoption of [UN Resolution 390A(V)](/wiki/S:United_Nations_General_Assembly_Resolution_390) in December 1950, Eritrea was [federated](/wiki/Federation) with Ethiopia under the prompting of the United States.<ref name=UNGA390>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The resolution called for Eritrea and Ethiopia to be linked through a loose federal structure under the sovereignty of the Emperor. Eritrea was to have its own administrative and judicial structure, its own flag, and control over its domestic affairs, including police, local administration, and taxation.[[15]](#cite_note-15) The federal government, which for all intents and purposes was the existing imperial government, was to control foreign affairs (including commerce), defense, finance, and transportation. The resolution ignored the wishes of Eritreans for independence, but guaranteed the population democratic rights and a measure of autonomy.

### Independence[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|right|The wreath with the upright olive-branch symbol derived from the 1952 flag, which had a light blue background to honour the United Nations. The green color in the flag stands for the agriculture and livestock of the country, the blue stands for the sea, and the red for the blood lost in the fight for freedom](/wiki/File:Flag_of_Eritrea.svg) In 1958, a group of Eritreans founded the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM). The organization mainly consisted of Eritrean students, professionals and intellectuals. Under the leadership of [Hamid Idris Awate](/wiki/Hamid_Idris_Awate), it engaged in clandestine political activities intended to cultivate resistance to the centralizing policies of the imperial Ethiopian state.[[17]](#cite_note-17) However, by 1962, the ELM had been discovered and destroyed by imperial authorities.

When Emperor [Haile Selassie](/wiki/Haile_Selassie) unilaterally dissolved the Eritrean parliament and annexed the country in 1962, the [Eritrean Liberation Front](/wiki/Eritrean_Liberation_Front) (ELF) waged an armed struggle for independence. The ensuing [Eritrean War for Independence](/wiki/Eritrean_War_for_Independence) went on for 30 years against successive Ethiopian governments until 1991, when the [Eritrean People's Liberation Front](/wiki/Eritrean_People's_Liberation_Front) (EPLF), a successor of the [ELF](/wiki/Eritrean_Liberation_Front), defeated the Ethiopian forces in Eritrea and helped a coalition of [Ethiopian rebel forces](/wiki/Ethiopian_People's_Revolutionary_Democratic_Front) take control of the Ethiopian Capital [Addis Ababa](/wiki/Addis_Ababa).

Following a UN-supervised [referendum in Eritrea](/wiki/Eritrean_independence_referendum,_1993) (dubbed [UNOVER](/wiki/UNOVER)) in which the Eritrean people overwhelmingly voted for independence, Eritrea declared its independence and gained international recognition in 1993.[[18]](#cite_note-18) The EPLF seized power, established a one-party state along nationalist lines and banned further political activity. There have been no elections since.

(see [Government and Politics](/wiki/#Government_and_politics))

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|right|Map of Eritrea](/wiki/File:Un-eritrea.png) [thumb|left|Eritrea and its location in](/wiki/File:Map-Africa-Regions.svg) [East Africa](/wiki/East_Africa) (East Africa in red colors)

### Location and habitat[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

Eritrea is located in [East Africa](/wiki/East_Africa). It is bordered to the northeast and east by the [Red Sea](/wiki/Red_Sea), [Sudan](/wiki/Sudan) to the west, [Ethiopia](/wiki/Ethiopia) to the south, and [Djibouti](/wiki/Djibouti) to the southeast. Eritrea lies between latitudes [12°](/wiki/12th_parallel_north) and [18°N](/wiki/18th_parallel_north), and longitudes [36°](/wiki/36th_meridian_east) and [44°E](/wiki/44th_meridian_east).

The country is virtually bisected by a branch of the [East African Rift](/wiki/East_African_Rift). It has fertile lands to the west, descending to desert in the east. Eritrea, at the southern end of the Red Sea, is the home of the fork in the rift. The [Dahlak Archipelago](/wiki/Dahlak_Archipelago) and its fishing grounds are situated off the sandy and arid coastline.

Eritrea can be split into three ecoregions. To the east of the highlands are the hot, arid coastal plains stretching down to the southeast of the country. The cooler, more fertile highlands, reaching up to 3000m has a different habitat. Habitats here vary from the [sub-tropical rainforest](/wiki/Tropical_and_subtropical_moist_broadleaf_forests) at Filfil Solomona to the precipitous cliffs and [canyons](/wiki/Canyon) of the southern highlands.[[19]](#cite_note-19)The [Afar Triangle](/wiki/Afar_Triangle) or Danakil Depression of Eritrea is the probable location of a [triple junction](/wiki/Triple_junction) where three tectonic plates are pulling away from one another.The highest point of the country, [Emba Soira](/wiki/Emba_Soira), is located in the center of Eritrea, at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) [above sea level](/wiki/Above_mean_sea_level).

The main cities of the country are the capital city of [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara) and the port town of [Asseb](/wiki/Asseb) in the southeast, as well as the towns of [Massawa](/wiki/Massawa) to the east, the northern town of [Keren](/wiki/Keren,_Eritrea), and the central town [Mendefera](/wiki/Mendefera).

In 2006, Eritrea announced it would become the first country in the world to turn its entire coast into an environmentally protected zone. The [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) coastline, along with another [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of coast around its more than 350 islands, will come under governmental protection. [Template:Wide image](/wiki/Template:Wide_image) [Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

### Wildlife[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|right|250px|An](/wiki/File:Leopard_on_tree_stump.jpg) [african leopard](/wiki/African_leopard) on a tree stump. *See also:* [*List of mammals in Eritrea*](/wiki/List_of_mammals_in_Eritrea) *and* [*List of birds of Eritrea*](/wiki/List_of_birds_of_Eritrea)

Eritrea has several species of mammals and a rich avifauna of 560 species of birds.[[20]](#cite_note-20)[250px|thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Eritrean_birds_-_pelicans_in_Asmara_pound.jpg)[Pelicans](/wiki/Pelicans) in a pound near [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara). [thumb|250px|right|Grazing antelope in gash barka](/wiki/File:Grazin_antilope_in_Eritrea,_near_gash_barka.jpg) [thumb|250px|Eritrean landscape near road to Massawa](/wiki/File:Eri_landscape.jpg)

Eritrea is home to an abundant amount of big game species. Enforced regulations have helped in steadily increasing their numbers throughout Eritrea.[[21]](#cite_note-21)Mammals commonly seen today include the [Abyssinian hare](/wiki/Abyssinian_hare), [African wild cat](/wiki/African_wild_cat), [Black-backed jackal](/wiki/Black-backed_jackal), [African golden wolf](/wiki/African_golden_wolf), Genet, [Ground squirrel](/wiki/Ground_squirrel), [pale fox](/wiki/Pale_fox), [Soemmerring's gazelle](/wiki/Soemmerring's_gazelle), [warthog](/wiki/Warthog). [Dorcas gazelle](/wiki/Dorcas_gazelle) are common on the coastal plains and in Gash Barka.

[Lions](/wiki/Lions) are said to inhabit the mountains of the Gash-Barka Region. There is also a small population of [African bush elephants](/wiki/Elephant) that roam in some parts of the country. [Dik-diks](/wiki/Dik-diks) can also be found in many areas. The endangered [African wild ass](/wiki/African_wild_ass) can be seen in Denakalia Region. Other local wildlife include [bushbuck](/wiki/Bushbuck), [duikers](/wiki/Duikers), [greater kudu](/wiki/Greater_kudu), [Klipspringer](/wiki/Klipspringer), [African leopards](/wiki/African_leopards), [oryx](/wiki/Oryx) and [crocodiles](/wiki/Crocodiles).,[[22]](#cite_note-22)[[23]](#cite_note-23) The [spotted hyena](/wiki/Spotted_hyena) is widespread and fairly common. Between 1955 and 2001 there were no reported sightings of elephant herds, and they are thought to have fallen victim to the war of independence. In December 2001 a herd of about 30, including 10 juveniles, was observed in the vicinity of the [Gash River](/wiki/Gash_River). The elephants seemed to have formed a [symbiotic](/wiki/Symbiosis) relationship with [olive baboons](/wiki/Olive_baboon), with the baboons using the water holes dug by the elephants, while the elephants use the tree-top baboons as an early warning system.

It is estimated that there are around 100 [African bush elephant](/wiki/Elephants) left in Eritrea, the most northerly of East Africa's elephants.[[24]](#cite_note-24) The [endangered](/wiki/Endangered) [African wild dog](/wiki/African_wild_dog) ([*Lycaon pictus*](/wiki/Lycaon_pictus)) was previously found in Eritrea, but is now deemed extirpated from the entire country.[[25]](#cite_note-25) In Gash Barka, deadly snakes like [saw-scaled viper](/wiki/Echis_pyramidum) are common. [Puff adder](/wiki/Bitis_arietans) and [red spitting cobra](/wiki/Red_spitting_cobra) are widespread and can be found even in the highlands. In the coastal areas marine species that are common include [dolphin](/wiki/Dolphin), [dugong](/wiki/Dugong), [whale shark](/wiki/Whale_shark), [turtles](/wiki/Turtles), [marlin](/wiki/Marlin), [swordfish](/wiki/Swordfish), and [manta ray](/wiki/Manta_ray).[[23]](#cite_note-23)

### Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

Floods, droughts, increased variability in rainfall patterns and/or reduced precipitation, soil erosion, desertification and land degradation do occur.[[26]](#cite_note-26) Eritrea is a member of a constituency comprising the following 14 countries: Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda in battling environmental issues.

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

The climate of Eritrea is shaped by its diverse topographical features and its location within the tropics. The diversity in landscape and topography in the highlands and lowlands of Eritrea result in the diversity of climate across the country. The highlands have temperate climate troughout out the year. The climate of most lowland zones is arid and semiarid. The distribution of rainfall and vegetation types varies markedly throughout the country. Eritrean climate varies on the basis of seasonal and altitudinal differences.

Based on variations in temperature, Eritrea can be broadly divided into three major climate zones:

* Temperate zone,
* Subtropical climate zone
* Tropical climate zone.[[27]](#cite_note-27)[Template:Weather box](/wiki/Template:Weather_box)

## Government and politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The [People's Front for Democracy and Justice](/wiki/People's_Front_for_Democracy_and_Justice) (PFDJ) is the ruling party in Eritrea.[[28]](#cite_note-28) Other political groups are not allowed to organize, although the unimplemented Constitution of 1997 provides for the existence of multi-party politics. The National Assembly has 150 seats, of which 75 are occupied by the PFDJ. National elections have been periodically scheduled and cancelled; none have ever been held in the country.<ref name=CIA/> The president, [Isaias Afwerki](/wiki/Isaias_Afwerki), has been in office since independence in 1993.

### National elections[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

Eritrean National elections were set for 2001 but it was then decided that because 20% of Eritrea's land was under occupation, elections would be postponed until the resolution of the conflict with Ethiopia. However, local elections have continued in Eritrea. The most recent round of local government elections were held in 2010 and 2011. On further elections, the President's Chief of Staff, Yemane Gebremeskel said,[[29]](#cite_note-29)[Template:Cquote](/wiki/Template:Cquote) As yet, no national elections have been held since independence.[[3]](#cite_note-3)

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

The [Eritrean Defence Forces](/wiki/Eritrean_Defence_Forces) are now the official [armed forces](/wiki/Armed_forces) of the State of Eritrea. Eritrea's military is one of the largest in Africa.

Compulsory military service was instituted in 1995. Officially, conscripts, male and female, must serve for 18 months (although a human rights inquiry stated that it lasts for decades, and sometimes life[[30]](#cite_note-30)), which includes 6 months of military training and 12 months doing "national reconstruction". Thus around 5% of Eritreans live in barracks in the desert doing projects such as road building as part of their service. After regular service, reservists with skills, such as teachers, may be forced to work as professionals anywhere.

National service enlistment times may be extended during times of "national crisis"; since 1998, everyone under the age of 50 is enlisted in national service for an indefinite period until released, which may depend on the arbitrary decision of a commander. In a study of 200 escaped conscripts, the average service was 6.5 years, and some had served more than 12 years.[[31]](#cite_note-31)

## Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

### General[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|President](/wiki/File:Defense.gov_News_Photo_021210-D-2987S-057.jpg) [Isaias Afewerki](/wiki/Isaias_Afewerki) with U.S. Secretary of Defense [Donald Rumsfeld](/wiki/Donald_Rumsfeld), December 2002 Eritrea is a member of the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations), the [African Union](/wiki/African_Union), and is an [observing member](/wiki/Arab–Eritrean_relations) of the [Arab League](/wiki/Arab_League) alongside [Brazil](/wiki/Brazil), [Venezuela](/wiki/Venezuela), [India](/wiki/India) and [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey).[[7]](#cite_note-7) The nation holds a seat on the United Nations' Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). Eritrea also holds memberships in the [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development](/wiki/International_Bank_for_Reconstruction_and_Development), [International Finance Corporation](/wiki/International_Finance_Corporation), [International Criminal Police Organization](/wiki/International_Criminal_Police_Organization) (INTERPOL), [Non-Aligned Movement](/wiki/Non-Aligned_Movement), [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](/wiki/Organization_for_the_Prohibition_of_Chemical_Weapons), [Permanent Court of Arbitration](/wiki/Permanent_Court_of_Arbitration), and the [World Customs Organization](/wiki/World_Customs_Organization).

The Eritrean government previously withdrew its representative to the African Union to protest the AU's alleged lack of leadership in facilitating the implementation of a binding border decision demarcating the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Eritrean government has since January 2011 appointed an envoy, Tesfa-Alem Tekle, to the AU.[[32]](#cite_note-32) Eritrea maintains diplomatic ties with a number of other countries, including [China](/wiki/People's_Republic_of_China–Eritrea_relations), [Denmark](/wiki/Denmark–Eritrea_relations), [Djibouti](/wiki/Djibouti–Eritrea_relations), [Israel](/wiki/Eritrea–Israel_relations), the [United States](/wiki/Eritrea–United_States_relations) and [Yemen](/wiki/Eritrea–Yemen_relations). There are approximately 60,000 [African refugees](/wiki/Illegal_immigration_from_Africa_to_Israel) in Israel, mostly from Sudan and Eritrea.[[33]](#cite_note-33) Its relations with Djibouti and Yemen are tense due to territorial disputes over the [Doumeira Islands](/wiki/Doumeira_Islands) and [Hanish Islands](/wiki/Hanish_Islands), respectively.

### Relations with Ethiopia[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) The undemarcated border with Ethiopia is the primary external issue currently facing Eritrea. Eritrea's relations with Ethiopia turned from that of cautious mutual tolerance, following the 30-year war for Eritrean independence, to a deadly rivalry that led to the outbreak of hostilities from May 1998 to June 2000 which claimed approximately 70,000 casualties from both sides.[[34]](#cite_note-34) The border conflict cost hundreds of millions of dollars.[[35]](#cite_note-35) Disagreements following the war have resulted in stalemate punctuated by periods of elevated tension and renewed threats of war.[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[37]](#cite_note-37)[[38]](#cite_note-38) The stalemate led the President of Eritrea to urge the UN to take action on Ethiopia with the [Eleven Letters](/wiki/S:Eleven_Letters) penned by the President to the United Nations Security Council. The situation has been further escalated by the continued efforts of the Eritrean and Ethiopian leaders in supporting opposition in one another's countries.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) In 2011, Ethiopia accused Eritrea of planting bombs at an [African Union](/wiki/African_Union) summit in [Addis Ababa](/wiki/Addis_Ababa), which was later supported by a UN report. Eritrea denied the claims.[[39]](#cite_note-39)

## Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|300px|left|Administrative regions of Eritrea](/wiki/File:Pizap.com14540992240031.jpg) [thumb|250px|A street in capital](/wiki/File:Asmara,_beirut_street.JPG) [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara) [thumb|250px|right|Eritrean village houses](/wiki/File:Gash_Barkahouses.jpg)

Eritrea is divided into 6 administrative [regions](/wiki/Regions_of_Eritrea). These areas are further divided into 58 [districts](/wiki/Districts_of_Eritrea). [Template:Columns](/wiki/Template:Columns)

The regions of Eritrea are the primary geographical divisions through which Eritrea is administered. Six in total, they include the Maekel/Central, Anseba, Gash-Barka, Debub/Southern, Northern Red Sea and Southern Red Sea regions.At the time of independence in 1993 Eritrea was arranged into ten provinces. These provinces were similar to the nine provinces operating during the colonial period. In 1996, these were consolidated into six regions (zobas). The boundaries of these new regions are based on catchment basins.   
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## Largest cities[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Largest cities of Eritrea](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Eritrea)

## Transportation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|250px|right|Eritrea mountain road](/wiki/File:Eritrean_mountai_road_archietcture.jpg)

Transport in Eritrea includes highways, airports and seaports, in addition to various forms of public and private vehicular, maritime and aerial transportation

As of 1999, there was a total of 317 kilometres of 950 mm (3 ft 1 3⁄8 in) (narrow gauge) rail line in Eritrea. The railway links Agordat and Asmara with the port of Massawa; however, it was nonoperational since 1978 except for about a 5 kilometre stretch that was reopened in Massawa in 1994. Rehabilitation of the remainder and of the rolling stock has occurred in recent years. By 2003, the line had been restored from Massawa all the way through to Asmara.

The Eritrean highway system is named according to the road classification. The three levels of classification are: primary (P), secondary (S), and tertiary (T). The lowest level road is tertiary and serves local interests. Typically they are improved earth roads which are occasionally paved. During the wet seasons these roads typically become impassable.

The next higher level road is a secondary road and typically is a single-layered asphalt road that connects district capitals together and those to the regional capitals. Roads that are considered primary roads are those that are fully asphalted (throughout their entire length) and in general they carry traffic between all the major cities and towns in Eritrea. [Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[thumb|350px|Eritrea's main exports, 2013.](/wiki/File:En_visualize_explore_tree_map_hs92_export_eri_all_show_2013_(4).png) [thumb|280px|An](/wiki/File:Eritrean_Airlines_Boeing_767-300ER_E3-AAO_FCO_2005-6-7.png) [Eritrean Airlines](/wiki/Eritrean_Airlines) Boeing 767-366/ER aircraft. The national carrier is based in [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara). The economy of Eritrea has experienced considerable growth in recent years, indicated by an improvement in gross domestic product (GDP) in October 2012 of 7.5 percent over 2011.[[40]](#cite_note-40) A big reason for the recent growth of the Eritrean economy is the commencement of full operations in the gold and silver Bisha mine and the production of cement from the cement factory in Massawa.[[41]](#cite_note-41) The real GDP (2009 est.): $4.4 billion, and the annual growth rate (2011 est.):14%.[[42]](#cite_note-42)[[43]](#cite_note-43) Worker [remittances](/wiki/Remittance) from abroad are estimated to account for 32 percent of gross domestic product.[[1]](#cite_note-1) Eritrea has an extensive amount of resources such as copper, gold, granite, marble, and potash. The Eritrean economy has undergone extreme changes due to the War of Independence. In 2011, Eritrea's GDP grew by 8.7 percent making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world.[[44]](#cite_note-44) 80% of the Eritrean workforce [are employed in agriculture](/wiki/Agriculture_in_Eritrea).[[45]](#cite_note-45) Eritrea's main agricultural products include [sorghum](/wiki/Sorghum), [millet](/wiki/Millet), [barley](/wiki/Barley), [wheat](/wiki/Wheat), [legumes](/wiki/Legume), [vegetables](/wiki/Vegetable), [fruits](/wiki/Fruit), [sesame](/wiki/Sesame), [linseed](/wiki/Linseed), [cattle](/wiki/Cattle), [sheep](/wiki/Sheep), [goats](/wiki/Goats) and [camels](/wiki/Camels).[[46]](#cite_note-46) The [Eritrean–Ethiopian War](/wiki/Eritrean–Ethiopian_War) severely hurt Eritrea's economy. [GDP](/wiki/Gross_Domestic_Product) growth in 1999 fell to less than 1%, and GDP decreased by 8.2% in 2000. In May 2000, the war resulted in some $600 million in property damage and loss, including losses of $225 million in [livestock](/wiki/Livestock) and 55,000 homes.

Even during the war, Eritrea developed its [transportation infrastructure](/wiki/Transport_in_Eritrea) by asphalting new roads, improving its ports, and repairing war-damaged roads and bridges as a part of the [Warsay Yika'alo Program](/wiki/Wefri_Warsay_Yika'alo). The most significant of these projects was the construction of a coastal highway of more than 500 km connecting [Massawa](/wiki/Massawa) with [Asseb](/wiki/Asseb), as well as the rehabilitation of the [Eritrean Railway](/wiki/Eritrean_Railway). The rail line has been restored between the port of Massawa and the capital Asmara, although services are sporadic. Steam locomotives are sometimes used for groups of enthusiasts.

In theory, Eritrea has a national carrier, [Eritrean Airlines](/wiki/Eritrean_Airlines), but services are intermittent.

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## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|upright|Eritrean women performing a traditional](/wiki/File:Traditional_Eritrean_dance.jpg) [Tigrinya](/wiki/Tigray-Tigrinya_people) dance. Eritrea's population increased from 3.2 million to 6.4 million between 1990 and 2014.[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[47]](#cite_note-47) The average number of children born to Eritrean mothers is 4.7.[[48]](#cite_note-48)

### Ethnic composition[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

There are nine recognized ethnic groups according to the government of Eritrea.[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[49]](#cite_note-49) Eritrean society is ethnically [heterogeneous](/wiki/Homogeneity_and_heterogeneity). An independent census has yet to be conducted, but the [Tigrinya people](/wiki/Tigrinyas) make up about 55% and [Tigre people](/wiki/Tigre_people) make up about 30% of the population. A majority of these ethnic groups belong to [Afroasiatic](/wiki/Afroasiatic_languages)-speaking communities of the [Cushitic](/wiki/Cushitic_languages) branch, such as the [Saho](/wiki/Saho_people), [Hedareb](/wiki/Hedareb_people), [Afar](/wiki/Afar_people) and [Bilen](/wiki/Bilen_people). There are also a number of [Nilotic](/wiki/Nilotic_peoples) [ethnic minorities](/wiki/Ethnic_minority), who are represented in Eritrea by the [Kunama](/wiki/Kunama_people) and [Nara](/wiki/Nara_people). Each ethnicity speaks a different native tongue but, typically, many of the minorities speak more than one language. The [Rashaida](/wiki/Rashaida_people) represent about 2% of Eritrea's population.[[50]](#cite_note-50) They reside in the northern coastal lowlands of Eritrea as well as the eastern coasts of Sudan. The Rashaida first came to Eritrea in the 19th century from the [Hejaz](/wiki/Hejaz) region.[[51]](#cite_note-51) In addition, there exist [Italian Eritrean](/wiki/Italian_Eritreans) (concentrated in Asmara) and Ethiopian Tigrayan communities. Neither is generally given citizenship unless through marriage or, more rarely, by having it conferred upon them by the State. Eritrea had about 760,000 inhabitants, including 70,000 Italians, in 1941.[[52]](#cite_note-52) Most Italians left after Eritrea became independent from Italy.

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Eritrea is a multilingual country. The nation has no official language, as the Constitution establishes the "equality of all Eritrean languages".[[53]](#cite_note-53) However, [Tigrinya](/wiki/Tigrinya_language) serves as the de facto language of national identity. With 2,540,000 total speakers of a population of 5,254,000 in 2006, [Tigrinya](/wiki/Tigrinya_language) is the most widely spoken language, particularly in the southern and central parts of Eritrea. Other major national languages include [Tigre](/wiki/Tigre_language), [Kunama](/wiki/Kunama_language), [Saho](/wiki/Saho_language), [Beja](/wiki/Beja_language), [Bilen](/wiki/Bilen_language), [Nara](/wiki/Nara_language), [Afar](/wiki/Afar_language), .[[54]](#cite_note-54)[[55]](#cite_note-55) [Tigrinya](/wiki/Tigrinya_language) alongside [Modern Standard Arabic](/wiki/Modern_Standard_Arabic) and [English](/wiki/English_language) serve as de facto working languages, with the latter used in university education and many technical fields. [Italian](/wiki/Italian_language), the former colonial language, is widely used in commerce, with a few elderly monolinguals.<ref name=Ethner>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Most of the languages spoken in Eritrea stem from the [Afroasiatic](/wiki/Afroasiatic_languages) family and [Ethiopian Semitic language](/wiki/Ethiopian_Semitic_languages) branch.[[56]](#cite_note-56) Other Afroasiatic languages belonging to the [Cushitic](/wiki/Cushitic_languages) branch are also widely spoken in the country.[[56]](#cite_note-56) The latter include [Afar](/wiki/Afar_language), [Beja](/wiki/Beja_language), [Blin](/wiki/Blin_language) and [Saho](/wiki/Saho_language). In addition, [Nilo-Saharan languages](/wiki/Nilo-Saharan_languages) ([Kunama](/wiki/Kunama_language) and [Nara](/wiki/Nara_language)) are also spoken as a [native language](/wiki/Native_language) by the Nilotic Kunama and Nara ethnic minority groups that live in the northern and northwestern part of the country.[[56]](#cite_note-56) Other smaller groups speak the newly recognized [Dahlik](/wiki/Dahlik_language) and Arabic (the [Hejazi](/wiki/Hejazi_Arabic) and [Hadhrami](/wiki/Hadhrami_Arabic) [dialects](/wiki/Varieties_of_Arabic) spoken by the Rashaida and Hadhrami, respectively)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Eritrea religious groups | |
| **U.S Department of State 2011**[**[57]**](#cite_note-57) | **Pew Research 2009**[**[58]**](#cite_note-58) |
| [Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box) | [Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box) |

According to recent estimates, 50% of the population adheres to [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity), 48% to [Islam](/wiki/Islam), and 2% of the population follows other [religions](/wiki/Religion) including [traditional African religion](/wiki/Traditional_African_religion) and [animism](/wiki/Animism).[[57]](#cite_note-57) According to a study made by [Pew Research Center](/wiki/Pew_Research_Center), 63% adheres to Christianity and 36% adheres to Islam.[[58]](#cite_note-58) Since May 2002, the government of Eritrea has officially recognized the [Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church](/wiki/Eritrean_Orthodox_Tewahedo_Church) ([Oriental Orthodox](/wiki/Oriental_Orthodoxy)), [Sunni Islam](/wiki/Sunni_Islam), the [Eritrean Catholic Church](/wiki/Eritrean_Catholic_Church) (a Metropolitanate sui juris) and the Evangelical [Lutheran](/wiki/Lutheranism) church. All other faiths and denominations are required to undergo a registration process.[[59]](#cite_note-59) Among other things, the government's registration system requires religious groups to submit personal information on their membership to be allowed to [worship](/wiki/Worship).[[59]](#cite_note-59)[thumb|250px|](/wiki/File:Catholic_Cathedral.jpg)[St. Joseph's Cathedral](/wiki/St._Joseph's_Cathedral,_Asmara) church in the capital [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara). [thumb|left|250px|The 15th century Sheikh Hanafi Mosque in](/wiki/File:Sheikh_Hanafi_Mosque_(8529064326).jpg) [Massawa](/wiki/Massawa). The Eritrean government is against reformed or radical versions of its established religions. Therefore, radical forms of Islam and Christianity, [Jehovah's Witnesses](/wiki/Jehovah's_Witnesses), the [Bahá'í Faith](/wiki/Bahá'í_Faith) (though the Bahá'í Faith is neither Islamic nor Christian), the [Seventh-day Adventist Church](/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventist_Church), and numerous other non-Protestant Evangelical denominations are not registered and cannot worship freely. Three named Jehovah's Witnesses are known to have been imprisoned since 1994 along with 51 others.[[60]](#cite_note-60)[[61]](#cite_note-61)[[62]](#cite_note-62) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), there was only one native adherent of [Judaism](/wiki/Judaism), Sami Cohen, remaining in Eritrea.[[63]](#cite_note-63) In its 2006 religious freedom report, the U.S. State Department named Eritrea a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) for the third year in a row.[[64]](#cite_note-64)[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## Human rights[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|right|220px|Building of regional administration in](/wiki/File:Asmara,_amministrazione_della_regione_di_makeel_00.JPG) [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara). Eritrea is a [one-party state](/wiki/One-party_state) in which national legislative elections have been repeatedly postponed.[[65]](#cite_note-65) According to [Human Rights Watch](/wiki/Human_Rights_Watch), the government's [human rights](/wiki/Human_rights) record is considered among the worst in the world.[[66]](#cite_note-66) Most Western countries have accused the Eritrean authorities of arbitrary arrest and detentions, and of detaining an unknown number of people without charge for their political activism. However, the Eritrean government has continually dismissed the accusations as politically motivated.[[67]](#cite_note-67) In June 2015, a 500-page [United Nations Human Rights Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Human_Rights_Council) report accused Eritrea's government of extrajudicial executions, torture, indefinitely prolonged national service and forced labour, and indicated that sexual harassment, rape and sexual servitude by state officials are also widespread.[[68]](#cite_note-68)<ref name= guard>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

[Template:Cquote](/wiki/Template:Cquote)

The Eritrean Foreign Ministry responded by describing the Commission's report as "wild allegations" which were "totally unfounded and devoid of all merit".[[69]](#cite_note-69) Barbara Lochbihler, of the [European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights](/wiki/European_Parliament_Subcommittee_on_Human_Rights) said the report detailed 'very serious human rights violations', and said that EU funding for development would not continue as at present without change in Eritrea.<ref name=DWelle>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Since Eritrea's conflict with [Ethiopia](/wiki/Ethiopia) in 1998–2001, the nation's human rights record has come under criticism at the United Nations.<ref name=Guardian>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> Human rights violations are allegedly frequently committed by the government or on behalf of the government. [Freedom of speech](/wiki/Freedom_of_speech), [press](/wiki/News_media), [assembly](/wiki/Freedom_of_assembly), and [association](/wiki/Interpersonal_relationship) are limited. Those who practice "unregistered" religions, try to flee the nation, or escape military duty are arrested and put into [prison](/wiki/Prison).[[70]](#cite_note-70) All Eritreans between the ages of 18–40 must complete a mandatory national service, which includes military service. This national service was implemented after Eritrea gained its [independence](/wiki/Independence) from Ethiopia, as a precautionary means to be protected against any threats on Eritrea’s [sovereignty](/wiki/Sovereignty), to instill national pride, and to create a disciplined populace.[[31]](#cite_note-31) Eritrea’s national service requires lengthy, indefinite conscription periods, which some Eritreans leave the country in order to avoid.[[31]](#cite_note-31)[[71]](#cite_note-71)[[72]](#cite_note-72) In an attempt at reform, Eritrean government officials and NGO representatives have participated in numerous public meetings and dialogues. In these sessions they have answered questions as fundamental as, "What are human rights?", "Who determines what are human rights?", and "What should take precedence, human or communal rights?"[[73]](#cite_note-73) In 2007, the Eritrean government also banned [female genital mutilation](/wiki/Female_genital_mutilation).[[74]](#cite_note-74) In Regional Assemblies and religious circles, Eritreans themselves speak out continuously against the use of female circumcision. They cite health concerns and individual freedom as being of primary concern when they say this. Furthermore, they implore rural peoples to cast away this ancient cultural practice.[[75]](#cite_note-75)[[76]](#cite_note-76) Additionally, a new movement called Citizens for Democratic Rights in Eritrea aimed at bringing about dialogue between the government and opposition was formed in early 2009. The group consists of ordinary citizens and some people close to the government.[[77]](#cite_note-77)

### Media freedom[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

In its 2014 Press Freedom Index, [Reporters Without Borders](/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders) ranked the media environment in Eritrea at the very bottom of a list of 178 countries, just below totalitarian [North Korea](/wiki/North_Korea).[[78]](#cite_note-78) According to the [BBC](/wiki/BBC), "Eritrea is the only African country to have no privately owned news media",[[79]](#cite_note-79) and Reporters Without Borders said of the public media, "[they] do nothing but relay the regime's belligerent and ultra-nationalist discourse. ... Not a single [foreign correspondent] now lives in Asmara."[[80]](#cite_note-80) The state-owned news agency censors news about external events.[[81]](#cite_note-81) Independent media have been banned since 2001.[[81]](#cite_note-81) In 2015, *The Guardian* published an opinion piece claiming, [Template:Cquote](/wiki/Template:Cquote)

### G-15 group[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

The G-15 are a prominent group of fifteen Eritreans, including three cabinet members, who were arrested in September 2001 after publishing an open letter to the government and President Isaias Afewerki calling for democratic dialogue. These group and other thousands who were alleged to be affiliated with them are imprisoned without legal charges, hearing, trial and judgment.[[82]](#cite_note-82)[[83]](#cite_note-83)

## Health care[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Eritrea has achieved significant improvements in health care and is one of the few countries to be on target to meet its [Millennium Development Goal](/wiki/Millennium_Development_Goal) (MDG) targets in health, in particular child health.<ref name=ODI1>Rodríguez Pose, Romina and Samuels, Fiona (2010) [Progress in health in Eritrea: Cost-effective inter-sectoral interventions and a long-term perspective](http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=5179&title=progress-health-eritrea-cost-effective-inter-sectoral-interventions-long-term-perspective). London: [Overseas Development Institute](/wiki/Overseas_Development_Institute)</ref> [Life expectancy](/wiki/Life_expectancy) at birth has increased from 39.1 in 1960 to 59.5 years in 2008, maternal and [child mortality](/wiki/Child_mortality) rates have dropped dramatically and the health infrastructure has been expanded.<ref name=ODI1/> Due to Eritrea's relative isolation, information and resources are extremely limited and according to the [World Health Organisation](/wiki/World_Health_Organization) (WHO) found in 2008 average life expectancy to be slightly less than 63 years. [Immunisation](/wiki/Immunization) and child nutrition has been tackled by working closely with schools in a multi-sectoral approach; the number of children vaccinated against measles almost doubled in seven years, from 40.7% to 78.5% and the underweight prevalence among children decreased by 12% in 1995–2002 (severe underweight prevalence by 28%).<ref name=ODI1/> The National Malaria Protection Unit of the Ministry of Health has registered tremendous improvements in reducing malarial mortality by as much as 85% and the number of cases by 92% between 1998 and 2006.<ref name=ODI1/> The Eritrean government has banned [female genital mutilation](/wiki/Female_genital_mutilation) (FGM), saying the practice was painful and put women at risk of life-threatening health problems.[[84]](#cite_note-84) However, Eritrea still faces many challenges. Despite number of physicians increasing from only 0.2 in 1993 to 0.5 in 2004 per 1000 population, this is still very low.<ref name=ODI1/> [Malaria](/wiki/Malaria) and [tuberculosis](/wiki/Tuberculosis) are common in Eritrea.[[85]](#cite_note-85) HIV prevalence among the 15–49 group exceeds 2%.[[85]](#cite_note-85) The fertility rate is at about 5 births per woman.[[85]](#cite_note-85) Maternal mortality dropped by more than half from 1995 to 2002, although the figure is still high.<ref name=ODI1/> Similarly, between 1995 and 2002, the number of births attended by skilled health personnel has doubled but still is only 28.3%.<ref name=ODI1/> A major cause of death in neonates is by severe [infection](/wiki/Infection).[[85]](#cite_note-85) Per capita expenditure on health is low in Eritrea.[[85]](#cite_note-85)

## Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) There are five levels of education in Eritrea: [pre-primary](/wiki/Preschool_education), [primary](/wiki/Primary_education), [middle](/wiki/Middle_school), [secondary](/wiki/Secondary_education), and [post-secondary](/wiki/Higher_education). There are nearly 238,000 students in the primary, middle, and secondary levels of education. There are approximately 824 schools[[86]](#cite_note-86) in Eritrea and two universities (the [University of Asmara](/wiki/University_of_Asmara) and the [Eritrea Institute of Technology](/wiki/Eritrea_Institute_of_Technology)) as well as several smaller colleges and technical schools.

Education in Eritrea is officially compulsory between seven and 13 years of age. However, the education infrastructure is inadequate to meet current needs. Statistics vary at the elementary level, suggesting that between 65 and 70% of school-aged children attend primary school; Approximately 61% attend secondary school. Student-teacher ratios are high: 45 to 1 at the elementary level and 54 to 1 at the secondary level. There are an average 63 students per classroom at the elementary level and 97 per classroom at the secondary level. Learning hours at school are often less than six hours per day. The literacy rate in Eritrea is high. For men in the age 18–24 the literacy rate is 92.6% in (2008–2012), for women in the age 18–24 the literacy rate is 87.7% (2008–2012)[[87]](#cite_note-87) The literacy rate for the total population is 81%,.[[88]](#cite_note-88) Barriers to education in Eritrea include traditional [taboos](/wiki/Taboos), school fees (for registration and materials), and the [opportunity costs](/wiki/Opportunity_costs) of [low-income](/wiki/Low-income) households.[[89]](#cite_note-89)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|An Eritrean](/wiki/File:Coffee_pot_at_eritrean_restaurant.jpg) [jebena](/wiki/Jebena) coffee pot. One of the most recognizable parts of Eritrean culture is the [coffee ceremony](/wiki/Coffee_ceremony).[[90]](#cite_note-90) Coffee ([Ge'ez](/wiki/Ge'ez_alphabet) ቡን *būn*) is offered when visiting friends, during festivities, or as a daily staple of life. During the coffee ceremony, there are traditions that are upheld. The coffee is served in three rounds: the first brew or round is called awel in Tigrinya meaning first, the second round is called kalaay meaning second, and the third round is called bereka meaning "to be blessed".

Traditional Eritrean attire is quite varied among the ethnic groups of Eritrea. In the larger cities, most people dress in Western casual dress such as jeans and shirts. In offices, both men and women often dress in suits. A common traditional clothing for [Christian](/wiki/Christian) Tigrinya-speaking highlanders consists of bright white gowns called [*zurias*](/wiki/Zuria) for the women, and a white shirts accompanied by white pants for the men. In Muslim communities in the Eritrean lowland, the women traditionally dress in brightly colored clothes. Besides convergent culinary tastes, Eritreans share an appreciation for similar music and lyrics, jewelry and fragrances, and tapestry and fabrics as many other populations in the Horn region.[[91]](#cite_note-91)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[thumb|upright|200px|Eritrean injera with various stews](/wiki/File:Eritrean_Injera_with_stews.jpg) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) A typical traditional Eritrean dish consists of [injera](/wiki/Injera) accompanied by a spicy stew, which frequently includes beef, chicken, lamb or fish.[[92]](#cite_note-92) Overall, Eritrean cuisine strongly resembles those of neighboring [Ethiopia](/wiki/Ethiopian_cuisine),[[92]](#cite_note-92)[[93]](#cite_note-93) Eritrean cooking tend to feature more [seafood](/wiki/Seafood) than Ethiopian cuisine on account of their coastal location.[[92]](#cite_note-92) Eritrean dishes are also frequently "lighter" in texture than Ethiopian meals. They likewise tend to employ less [seasoned butter](/wiki/Niter_kibbeh) and spices and more [tomatoes](/wiki/Tomato), as in the [*tsebhi*](/wiki/Tsebhi) *dorho* delicacy.

Additionally, owing to its colonial history, cuisine in Eritrea features more [Italian](/wiki/Italy) influences than are present in Ethiopian cooking, including more [pasta](/wiki/Pasta) and greater use of [curry](/wiki/Curry) powders and [cumin](/wiki/Cumin).The Italian Eritrean cuisine started to be practiced during the colonial times of the [Kingdom of Italy](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Italy), when a large number of Italians moved to Eritrea. They brought the use of "pasta" to [Italian Eritrea](/wiki/Italian_Eritrea), and it is one of the main food eaten in present-day [Asmara](/wiki/Asmara). An [Italian Eritrean cuisine](/wiki/Italian_Eritrean_cuisine) emerged, and dishes common dishes are 'Pasta al Sugo e Berbere', which means "Pasta with tomato sauce and berbere" (spice), but there are many more like "lasagna" and "cotoletta alla milanese" (milano cutlet).[[94]](#cite_note-94) Alongside *sowa*, people in Eritrea also tend to drink coffee.[[92]](#cite_note-92) *Mies* is another popular local alcoholic beverage, made out of honey.[[95]](#cite_note-95)

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image) Eritrea's ethnic groups each have their own styles of music and accompanying dances. Amongst the Tigrinya, the best known traditional musical genre is the guaila. Traditional instruments of Eritrean folk music include the stringed [krar](/wiki/Krar), [kebero](/wiki/Kebero), [begena](/wiki/Begena), [masenqo](/wiki/Masenqo) and the [wata](/wiki/Wata) (a distant/rudimentary cousin of the violin). A popular Eritrean artist is the Tigrinya singer [Helen Meles](/wiki/Helen_Meles), who is noted for her powerful voice and wide singing range.[[96]](#cite_note-96) Other prominent local musicians include the Kunama singer [Dehab Faytinga](/wiki/Dehab_Faytinga), [Ruth Abraha](/wiki/Ruth_Abraha), [Bereket Mengisteab](/wiki/Bereket_Mengisteab), the late [Yemane Baria](/wiki/Yemane_Baria), and the late [Abraham Afewerki](/wiki/Abraham_Afewerki).

### Sport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image)

[Football](/wiki/Association_football) and [cycling](/wiki/Tour_of_Eritrea) are the most popular sports in Eritrea. In recent years, Eritrean athletes have also seen increasing success in the international arena. [Zersenay Tadese](/wiki/Zersenay_Tadese), an Eritrean athlete, currently holds the world record in half marathon distance running.[[97]](#cite_note-97) The [Tour of Eritrea](/wiki/Tour_of_Eritrea), a multi-stage international cycling event, is held annually throughout the country. The Eritrea national cycling team has experienced a lot of success, winning the continental cycling championship several years in a row. Six Eritrean riders have been signed to international cycling teams, including [Natnael Berhane](/wiki/Natnael_Berhane) and [Daniel Teklehaimanot](/wiki/Daniel_Teklehaimanot). Berhane was named African Sportsman of the Year in 2013, ahead of footballers [Yaya Touré](/wiki/Yaya_Touré) and [Didier Drogba](/wiki/Didier_Drogba), while Teklehaimanot became the first Eritrean to ride the [Vuelta a España](/wiki/Vuelta_a_España) in 2012.[[98]](#cite_note-98) In 2015 Teklehaimanot won the King of the Mountains classification in the [Critérium du Dauphine](/wiki/2015_Critérium_du_Dauphiné). Teklehaimanot and fellow Eritrean [Merhawi Kudus](/wiki/Merhawi_Kudus) became the first black African riders to compete in the [Tour de France](/wiki/Tour_de_France) when they were selected by the [Template:Ct](/wiki/Template:Ct) team for the [2015 edition](/wiki/2015_Tour_de_France) of the race,[[99]](#cite_note-99) where, on 9 July, Teklehaimanot became the first African rider to wear the [polkadot jersey](/wiki/Mountains_classification_in_the_Tour_de_France).[[100]](#cite_note-100) The Eritrean Cycling National team of both man and women are ranked first in African. In 2013 the womans team won the gold medal in the African continental championships for the first time, and for the second time in 2015.[[101]](#cite_note-101)[[102]](#cite_note-102)[[103]](#cite_note-103)[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Portal](/wiki/Template:Portal)

* [Index of Eritrea-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Eritrea-related_articles)
* [Outline of Eritrea](/wiki/Outline_of_Eritrea)

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

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Government

* [Ministry of Information of Eritrea](http://www.shabait.com/index.php) (official government website).
* [EriTV News, Music, Movie and Comedy from Eritrea Television](http://www.eritrea-tv.net)
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* [Eritrea profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349078) from [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News).
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Other

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