

**Human Rights Council, 52<sup>nd</sup> Session**

**6<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**Item 2: Enhanced interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights in Eritrea.**

**Oral statement delivered by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.**

Mr. Vice President,

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) thanks all the speakers for their presentations<sup>1</sup> and expresses serious concerns regarding the situation of human rights in Eritrea.

The ongoing conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region is increasing the alarm once more on human rights violations by Eritrean forces, as recently reported by Human Rights Watch<sup>2</sup>: mass roundups and repression in the context of an intensive forced conscription campaign. Relatives of draft evaders or deserters have been punished and arrested.<sup>3</sup>

We also restate the concern regarding Eritrean migrants and refugees who often flee from the system of an indefinite National Service which presents practices that in many cases amount to forced labour.

We call on the international community to protect refugees and to withdraw from practices which reinforce such a system.

We are also concerned about the persecution of religious leaders such as the Eritrean Catholic Bishop Fikremariam Hagos, arrested at the Asmara airport last October.<sup>4</sup> More recently Human Rights Concerns - Eritrea reported that the Eritrean monk Yeneta Ezra, has been found dead at his monastery residence in February.<sup>5</sup>

We urge this Council to ensure the protection of human rights in Eritrea, including the human right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion within which is also inherent the human right to conscientious objection to military service.<sup>6</sup> And facilitate the engagement of Eritrea with the OHCHR.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Deputy High Commissioner, Special Rapporteur Moahamed Abdelsalam Babiker and civil society representative.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/eritrea>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/09/eritrea-crackdown-draft-evaders-families>

<sup>4</sup> October 15<sup>th</sup> 2022. [https://www.change.org/p/ohchr-save-incarcerated-eritrean-catholic-bishop-fikremariam?recruiter=776025982&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=twitter&utm\\_campaign=psf\\_c\\_ombo\\_share\\_initial&utm\\_term=share\\_for\\_starters\\_page&recruited\\_by\\_id=30946760-9284-11e7-ad3b-07e9a903e6e4&share\\_bandit\\_exp=initial-34808921-en-GB](https://www.change.org/p/ohchr-save-incarcerated-eritrean-catholic-bishop-fikremariam?recruiter=776025982&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=psf_c_ombo_share_initial&utm_term=share_for_starters_page&recruited_by_id=30946760-9284-11e7-ad3b-07e9a903e6e4&share_bandit_exp=initial-34808921-en-GB)

<https://www.persecution.org/2022/09/03/eritrean-government-takes-religious-college/>

<sup>5</sup> Monastery residence in Mendefera, on February 15<sup>th</sup> 2023. <https://hrc-eritrea.org/after-years-of-persecution-by-the-eritrean-government-a-courageous-eritrean-monk-has-been-found-dead-in-his-monastery-residence-with-multiple-stab-wounds/>

<sup>6</sup> UN Human Rights Council resolution 24/17, September 2013. UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 22 on Article 18, 1993.