

**Human Rights Council, 46th Session
Geneva, 24th February 2021**

**Item 2: Interactive dialogue on oral update by the Special Rapporteur
on the situation of human rights in Eritrea**

Oral statement delivered by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Madam President,

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation thanks the Special Rapporteur for his oral update.

The current situation in the region is dramatic, as reported also from our local partner organizations.

Refugee camps under international protection in the Tigray region, including schools, clinics and residential areas, have been systematically targeted and destroyed with the purpose of hindering their future usage¹. In particular, the Hitsats and Shimelba refugee camps, which hosted refugees coming from Eritrea, have been under attack. The UNHCR acknowledges that 20,000 refugees are unaccounted for. Only around 3,000 refugees from Shimelba and Hitsats camps found their way to the other two refugee camps in the South of Tigray, Mai-Aini, and Adi-Harush, with an estimated 10.000 refouled to Eritrea. UNHCR warns that thousands of Eritrean refugees are still in need of urgent assistance².

We 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.

Thank you.

¹ <https://www.vice.com/en/article/93wmbz/refugee-camps-in-ethiopia-appear-to-have-been-systematically-destroyed>

² <https://www.voanews.com/africa/un-eritrean-refugees-tigray-face-humanitarian-crisis>

Statement attributable to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi on the situation of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia's Tigray region: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/1/600052064/statement-attributable-un-high-commissioner-refugees-filippo-grandi-situation.html>