

Social equality and justice in Eritrea Down with the dictatorial regime!

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Tens of thousands of young people are fleeing the militarization of the economy and society in Eritrea. Every day there are arbitrary detentions, secret procedures and disappearances without trace by the suppression system of Isayas Afewerki and the PFDJ.

In 27 years of independence, Eritrea has transformed from a model of liberation into a model of oppression and a large prison. Even trips through the country usually end in roadblocks ten kilometers outside the major cities. The freedom of movement and travel is greatly impaired by the security organs of the regime. You have to apply for a kind of domestic visa to move from one place to another. Foreign travel is only allowed for Eritrean men and women between the ages of 16 and 47 with state special permission, so that no one evades military service.

Expressing one's opinion publicly is dangerous in Eritrea. In 1994, the then transitional government of Ato Isayas Afewerki announced that no other parties would be allowed. In 2001, the right to freedom of expression was severely curtailed and criticism of the government suppressed. Independent journalism, unincorporated religious communities and any civil society activism are highly limited. Anyone who is considered a critic of the government can remain imprisoned without trial, for life.

On September 18th, 2001, the "G-15" [High Members of the Government] were arrested, the all private media was closed and 30 journalists were imprisoned; one of them is Dawit Isaak from Sweden.

More than 20,000 political prisoners are detained for their political opinions. Many prisoners are imprisoned for their beliefs and held without charge or trial; Abune Antonios, Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, is one of them.

In addition, schools and hospital facilities of registered religious communities that benefited the population have been systematically closed. Recently, the last 21 sanitary facilities of the

Catholic Church have been closed by force - regardless of the patients - after the Catholic bishops in Eritrea have published an open letter at Easter, in which they circumvent the censorship of violence and injustice in the country, describe the current situation and demand reforms. The University of Asmara was closed in 2005 and replaced by technical colleges. The higher education system is highly militarized. Introduced in 2003, the 12th secondary school graduation class is taught as part of the National Service at War-say-Yekaelo High School in Sawa Military Training Camp. The militarization of Eritrean society has increased alarmingly.

About 75% of the population work in agriculture.



Nevertheless, foodstuffs need to be imported, as about 50% of people are conscripted into military service and are therefore absent as workers in all sectors of the economy, especially in craft and agriculture.

The state of emergency was announced in May 1998 and the associated unlimited duration of national service, (compulsory military service) will be

maintained. The obligation to perform the national service applies today to men up to 67 and women up to 57 years.

For women, the conditions in the training camps are particularly harsh: they are there, among other things also exposed to various forms of sexual violence.

The servants are being exploited as cheap forced laborers, as construction workers for government projects and in the state gold mines - with a monthly wage of 400 Nakfa, which is equivalent to about eight EUR. There is no constitutional right to conscientious objection in Eritrea. Those who escape military service are threatened with imprisonment. Deserters and those evading convocation are harassed, imprisoned and mistreated. This applies not only to them, but sometimes to their families as well. There are reports of torture of detained conscientious objectors and deserters in unofficial and often built underground prisons. Arrested women have to go through rape and sexual assault repeatedly, and as it is said, Detainees are locked in too narrow, overheated metal containers.

A particularly perfidious method of torture is to keep prisoners hand and foot tied behind their backs and face the earth for days naked or barely clothed, exposed to the brooding sun and nighttime cold.

The only possible solution for many Eritreans to these threats is to flee. Many of them - especially young people - have already fled to Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan. Tens of thousands are trying to bring themselves to Europe with unseaworthy boats across the Mediterranean to safety. Countless have drowned in the Mediterranean. Many are also abused and robbed by criminal traffickers on their escape. Despite the "shoot to kill" order at the border, tens of thousands have left the country in recent years.

Here in Germany, the Eritrean Security Service operates a close-meshed surveillance network, which is also owned by the embassy in Berlin and the consulate in Frankfurt am Main.

The German security authorities know that the Eritrean intelligence is actively spying on exiles is trying to subvert the scene, but they do not do much about it.

Many asylum seekers are not safe because their relatives and parents live in Eritrea. Family members of dissidents, conscripts, and deserters living abroad are questioned by the security authorities and placed in detention in order to disclose the whereabouts of the wanted person. Often the detainees are released only after paying a heavy fine. The Eritrean regime demands "compensation payments" of up to 50,000 nakfa (US \$ 3,300) from families of those who fled abroad, and threatens expropriation.

Eritrea also levies two percent income tax on all persons abroad, including refugees, who have German citizenship now and sometimes even their family members. If the payment is not made, or ID card extensions are often (illegally) refused. However, the German authorities are often unwilling to extend or grant residence and work permits without current papers.

We demand that the granting of a residence and work permit must not be made dependent on the income tax that was unlawfully imposed by the dictatorship.

We are in solidarity with the people of Sudan and Yemen. We call for an immediate end to the military aggression of Saudi Arabia & the United Arab Emirates and the transfer of power in Sudan from the military to a civilian government.

We call on the German Federal Government and the EU to intervene with the Eritrean government

- against the imprisonment of family members because their children allegedly fled to neighboring countries,
- against the imprisonment of innumerable political and religious citizens who are unfounded in jail for several years without trial,
- against any human rights violations in Eritrea.
- That EU aid to Eritrea be stopped because it supports a regime that despises human rights we demand the granting of political asylum for all refugees from Eritrea!
We demand the resignation of the Eritrean rulers and the transfer of power to civil society!

We struggle for a peaceful, democratic and socially equitable Eritrea
Eritrean National Congress for Democratic Change - Karlsruhe (ENCfDC)







