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## ERITREA Refugees in Uganda are pressured to petition against UN sanctions

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Eritrea refugees living in Kampala, Uganda are being pressured by the recently opened Eritrean Consulate to sign a petition opposing the imposition of United Nations (UN) sanctions on their country.

Notices have been posted in businesses regularly visited by Eritreans asking them to visit certain locations in order to receive urgent information. Once there, refugees are asked for their opinion on the UN sanctions and given a petition to sign opposing them. This announcement requests the order must be complied with by February 15.

Eritreans in Uganda have felt increasingly vulnerable since the Consulate officially opened in May 2009. Eritrean government agents are reported to have infiltrated the refugee community, and several local sources informed Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) that refugees now feel they “have no protection”. One added that most are now signing the petition under duress, but worry their refugee status may be withdrawn if the Ugandan government finds out: “The government can do anything, and many people are signing out of fear”.

The UN imposed sanctions on Eritrea in December 2009 following a call by the African Union and the East African Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for Eritrea to be punished for backing Somali Islamist rebels. The Ugandan Government drafted the text of the resolution.

CSW’s Advocacy Director, Tina Lambert said: “Since the opening of an Eritrean Consulate, Uganda is no longer as safe as it once was for Eritrean refugees. CSW has been informed that the Eritrean Government is now actively pursuing ‘black listed’ Eritreans in Kampala, and follows other refugee movements very closely. We call on the Ugandan government to closely monitor the activities of Eritrean officials, and to take strong action against those that are found to be abusing diplomatic privileges by intimidating and harassing refugees in order to undermine sanctions.”

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