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## ERITREA Refugees left stranded in Venezuelan airport face threats of deportation

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Eight Eritrean refugees deported from Ecuador to Venezuela's international airport may now have been deported to Dubai or Iran, facing threats of further deportation.

One female refugee in the group is suffering from a kidney complaint, while another has fallen ill due to the cold temperatures. The group was initially forced to spend several days at Guayaquil airport in Ecuador before being deposited in Caracas' International Airport where they were initially separated from their luggage and told to fend for themselves. On the evening of 22 February Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) was informed that the group faced imminent deportation. Their whereabouts are now unknown.

In a few short years following independence from Ethiopia in 1991, Eritrea has deteriorated from a promising young democracy into one of the most repressive regimes in Africa, where thousands are alleged to be detained arbitrarily in inadequate facilities where conditions are life threatening and torture is rife. According to United Nations estimates 63,000 Eritreans sought asylum abroad during 2009, with around 1,800 people a month braving the shoot-to-kill policy to cross into Sudan. United Nations (UN) sanctions have recently been placed on Eritrea for its part in arming Somali Islamist rebels.

CSW's Advocacy Director, Tina Lambert said: "It is worrying that at least two nations may have failed to provide vulnerable refugees with the protection due to them under international law. There is clearly an urgent need to remind signatory nations to international refugee conventions to respect the non-return advisory issued by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees regarding Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers, since refugees who are forcibly returned to Eritrea face lengthy imprisonment, possible torture and even death. It is vital that all nations begin to treat Eritrean refugees in accordance with their international obligations."