



Human Rights Concern Eritrea
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EveryOne
Group



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NGOs issue joint appeal on behalf of refugees held hostage in Sinai Desert

Agenzia Habeshia, EveryOne Group, Human Rights Concern Eritrea and Christian Solidarity Worldwide today sent a joint appeal to the UN, the EU, the British, the Italian and the Egyptian governments for urgent intervention in the plight of refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia who are currently held hostage in the Sinai Desert by Bedouin people traffickers.

Hundreds of refugees from the Horn of Africa have been held for months on the outskirts of a town in Sinai in purpose-built containers, where people traffickers are demanding payment of up to US\$8,000 per person for their release, though the hostages had already paid US\$2,000 for passage to Israel.

The appeal says that the refugees are being treated in an extremely degrading and inhumane manner. “They are bound by chains around their ankles, have been deprived of adequate food, are given salty water to drink, and have been tortured using extreme methods, including electric shocks, to force friends and families abroad to make the payments. The women in the group, who have been separated from the rest, are particularly vulnerable to severe abuse.”

The NGOs have been in direct contact with the group, whose situation has deteriorated markedly. Today nine people are reported to have suffered life-threatening injuries after receiving severe beatings, while ten others are seriously ill. The wounded are not receiving treatment, and the group has not eaten for three days. Over the weekend the refugees were branded like cattle, and on 28 November three Eritrean men were reportedly shot dead after their families confirmed to the kidnappers that they were unable to make the ransom payment. Three more hostages were reported to have died on 30 November following a severe assault administered by the traffickers in the aftermath of an escape attempt by a group of 12 refugees.

The appeal continues, “The lives of hundreds of refugees currently appear to hang in the balance. It is vital that key members of the international community make immediate and urgent representations to the Egyptian government to ensure that these refugees are rescued, and that every refugee in Egypt is afforded full protection and assistance.”

For a full transcript of the joint agency appeal [click here](#) or contact the press office