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ERITREA Hundreds demonstrate for seven hours outside embassy in London

An estimated three hundred Eritreans took part in a seven-hour protest against human rights violations in Eritrea outside the Eritrean embassy in London today. The demonstration was organized by Eritrean youths, who also formed the majority of participants.

The protestors, some of whom arrived in busloads from Birmingham and elsewhere around the country, chanted for seven hours, calling on Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki to leave office, and for freedom, dignity, justice and an end to human rights abuses in Eritrea. These sentiments were echoed on the many banners held aloft by the crowd, some of which declared "The day of dignity for Eritreans is NOW!" and demanded "Justice, Freedom, Equality and Peace".

It was significant that 90 percent of participants were young Eritreans, who are the primary victims of the country's indefinite military service regime. Officially, military service should last for a year and a half, but in reality it can last thirteen years or more, with conscripts receiving negligible pay and facing harsh treatment, including forced labor in government development programs.

Commenting on the number of young Eritreans attending the protest, Elsa Chyrum of Human Rights Concern-Eritrea told Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), "This is unprecedented. The youths are moving and expressing their anger at what is occurring in Eritrea. We have never seen a protest like this."

CSW's National Director Stuart Windsor said, "CSW congratulates the organizers and participants in today's demonstration for freedom, dignity and justice for the people of Eritrea. We are committed to working and standing with all Eritrean citizens who are striving to see an end to human rights abuses in their country, and will continue to do so until every Eritrean is able to enjoy the rights and freedoms enshrined in the nation's constitution."