



9.20.2011

## ERITREA NGOs call for robust UN action in face of human rights violations

---

Human Rights Concern Eritrea (HRCE), Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) today called upon the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) to conduct a thorough investigation into the wide-ranging human rights violations committed in Eritrea.

The call was issued during a side-meeting at the HRC's 18th Session, where HRCE, CSW and EHAHRDP were joined by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in condemning the severe human rights crisis currently underway in Eritrea. The NGOs urged diplomats and the wider HRC to take robust action in response to the findings of any investigation into the flagrant abuses committed by the Eritrean regime against its own people, including the appointment of a Special Rapporteur to address the situation if necessary.

In their contributions, the panelists covered a variety of grave issues, including the detention of the "G-11", a group of Eritrean officials including Parliamentarians, government ministers and ambassadors who were arbitrarily arrested ten years ago on September 18, 2001 for advocating for domestic reform and the implementation of the ratified Constitution. Six of the original 11 officials have subsequently died in detention as a result of torture and deliberate privations.

In addition, private media was shut down on September 18, 2001, and at least ten journalists were detained. Most are still incarcerated; however, it is believed that at least four of the journalists may have died in detention. Since that time, tens of thousands of Eritreans have been arrested, including around 3,000 Christians, most of whom remain confined in the country's myriad detention facilities, where they face mistreatment and deprivation of food and medical treatment, pending renunciation of their faith.

Panellist Elsa Chyrum, Director for HRCE and Focal Person for Eritrea at the EHAHRDP said, "Eritrea's government has been conducting its domestic policy through nothing else but terror... In light of all the evidence presented here, we urge the HRC and Member States of the United Nations to consider a full investigation into this state of affairs, to arrange a fact-finding mission to Eritrea and to act upon its findings."

Hassan Shire, Executive Director of EHAHRDP, said, "Eritrea's human rights record can only be compared to the North Korean situation, and I appeal to HRC to appoint a Special Rapporteur to investigate."

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "We continue to be deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in Eritrea. The numerous shocking stories that we have received from Eritreans over many years testify to the cruelty of a regime that has received only limited attention from the international community for its domestic human rights violations. This appalling abuse of its own citizens must be brought to an end, and we call on the HRC to take steps to bring this about as a matter of urgency. "