



11.9.2011

ERITREA Refugees face imminent repatriation from Egypt and high risk of persecution on return

A group of 118 Eritrean refugees are facing deportation from a detention center in Aswan, Egypt, either today or tomorrow, according to Italian NGO Agenzia Habeshia, after detention centre officials issued notifications of imminent deportation in the past week.

While all the refugees risk severe persecution if returned to Eritrea, ten of them occupied key positions within the Eritrean regime before they fled the country, and their lives would be in extreme danger should they be returned.

According to Agenzia Habeshia, some of the men in the group were badly beaten about a week ago, and have now received medical attention.

The continuing exodus of Eritrean citizens from their country, conservatively estimated at 1000 people per month, is testament to the on-going human rights crisis in the country. Those who escape Eritrea generally receive inadequate protection from neighboring African countries. Hundreds of Eritrean refugees, including many women and children, continue to be held hostage by human traffickers in camps in the Sinai Desert. There they face harassment, sexual abuse and torture until their relatives make an exorbitant payment to the captors to secure their release. A recent CNN report confirmed that many have had organs removed from their bodies for sale, before being left to die.

CSW Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "CSW joins Agenzia Habeshia in calling for swift action from the international community to halt the imminent deportation of the Eritrean refugees in Aswan. The Egyptian government must be urged to take seriously its duty to protect vulnerable refugees and end these deportations, which violate the 1951 UN Refugee Convention to which Egypt is party. Moreover, it is appalling that nearly a year after the Sinai hostage camps were brought to light, these camps continue to exist. The trafficking of human organs for profit and the inhumane treatment of these refugees amounts to murder and is an affront to humanity. We urge the Egyptian authorities to act decisively to combat the rampant human trafficking within their borders, and to ensure that perpetrators of atrocities are brought to justice."