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## ERITREA UN Human Rights Council adopts first resolution

The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) today adopted its first resolution on Eritrea, approving the mandate for a Special Rapporteur who will report to the HRC and the UN General Assembly on the human rights situation in Eritrea.

The groundbreaking resolution, submitted by Somalia, Nigeria and Djibouti and supported by a number of African and other states, was adopted by consensus at the 20th session of the HRC and was greeted with applause and ululation from Elsa Chyrum, Director of Human Rights Concern-Eritrea, who thanked all present on behalf of the Eritrean people. Significantly, this is the first time that African states have spearheaded a resolution on another African state.

Eritrea is one of the world's most repressive regimes, often likened to North Korea. It is a single party state dominated by a dictatorial president. The military pervades every aspect of society, including education and the economy. Military conscription, which can last indefinitely, is mandatory for all citizens aged between 18 and 48, and conscripts are often used as forced labor in development projects and farms.

Tens of thousands of Eritreans languish in the country's maze of detention centers without having received, and with no hope of receiving due process. Thousands more flee their country every year, risking a government shoot-to-kill border policy, with many falling prey to extortion and torture by people traffickers.

However, when responding to the text of the resolution, the head of the Eritrean delegation denied the prevalence of forced labor and claimed there were "no gross human rights violations in Eritrea."

Khataza Gondwe, CSW's Team Leader for Africa and the Middle East, said, "The adoption of this resolution on Eritrea is the culmination of years of joint advocacy and campaigning and a truly historic occasion. It is our hope that the appointment of a Special Rapporteur will finally focus attention on the egregious abuses of human rights in Eritrea and expose the full extent of the regime's crimes against its citizens, which are among the most severe and under-reported in the world. We commend the Africa Group for its leadership on this issue and for its bold decision to stand in solidarity with the oppressed."