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ERITREA | UN Human Rights Council Renews, Strengthens Special Rapporteur's Mandate

The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution on Eritrea, increasing the scope of the mandate for the UN Special Rapporteur, who will now also present her groundbreaking report on the human rights situation in Eritrea to the UN General Assembly in New York.

The tough new resolution, spearheaded by Somalia, Nigeria and Djibouti and supported by dozens of other states, was adopted by consensus at the 23rd session of the HRC on June 14.

The resolution condemned "the continued widespread and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms committed by the Eritrean authorities, including cases of arbitrary and extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, the use of torture, arbitrary and incommunicado detention without recourse to justice, and detention in inhumane and degrading conditions; [and] the forced conscription of citizens for indefinite periods of national service, a system that amounts to forced labor, the compulsory practice of all children undertaking the final year of schooling in a military training camp as well as the intimidation and detention of family members of those suspected of evading national service in Eritrea."

The resolution also highlighted "the severe restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including the detention of journalists, human rights defenders, political actors, religious leaders and practitioners in Eritrea."

Elsa Chyrum, Director of Human Rights Concern Eritrea, said, "We are glad that we have come this far in raising the dire human rights situation in Eritrea. We welcome the Special Rapporteur's report which has confirmed what has been reported by Eritrean and international human rights organizations for years. We are also pleased with the adoption of the new resolution to extend the mandate, and the opportunity given to the Special Rapporteur to present her report in New York at the General Assembly, and therefore to put more pressure on

the Eritrean government. We thank all the delegations that played a positive role in ensuring that this resolution was adopted by the HRC and that the Eritrean people's suffering is highlighted."

Matthew Jones, Senior Advocate at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "Continued campaigning at the UN is resulting in far greater exposure of Eritrea's appalling domestic human rights situation. It is to the Human Rights Council's credit that it is not only growing in its understanding of the situation in Eritrea but is also increasing its subsequent action. Our biggest hope is that such action will encourage the Eritrean government itself to take action to relieve the suffering of the Eritrean people."