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## ERITREA | UN Establishes Commission of Inquiry

Human Rights Concern Eritrea (HRCE) and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) warmly welcome the establishment of an UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the human rights situation in Eritrea. The creation of a COI has been mandated by a consensus resolution of the UN's Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva.

In the historic move that will significantly increase the international exposure of the situation in Eritrea, the HRC decided to mandate a COI for a one-year period and requested it be comprised of three commissioners, including the current UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea, Sheila Keetharuth.

Eritrea's human rights record has risen up the UN's agenda in recent years as the result of strong African leadership at UN Member State level and the encouragement and advocacy of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Earlier this week, a statement drafted by CSW and HRCE and signed by 33 other NGOs called on the HRC to take firmer action on Eritrea. The statement argued that establishing a COI was the most appropriate course of action given the ongoing gross and systematic human rights violations occurring in Eritrea, and the continuing non-cooperation of the Eritrean government with existing international mechanisms.

Elsa Chyrum, Director of HRCE, said, "This is an historic moment in the fight for the rights and freedoms of the Eritrean people, and in calling to account those who have been complicit in grave human rights violations in Eritrea over many years. I particularly congratulate H.E. Mr. Yusuf Mohamed Ismail, the Somali Ambassador to the UN in Geneva. He has proved himself a true friend of the Eritrean people through his tireless and courageous work to raise the situation in Eritrea at the UN level. We hope that the international community will now empower and encourage the COI in seeking to expose the real situation in Eritrea to the widest possible audience."

Dr. Khataza Gondwe, CSW's Team Leader for Africa and the Middle East, said: "We congratulate the Human Rights Council in establishing a Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea, and particularly commend Somalia, France, Nigeria and other UN Member States that acted with courage to ensure the resolution was tabled and passed. It is our hope that this COI will not only expose the gross human rights violations underway in Eritrea, but would also contribute towards ending the appalling suffering of the Eritrean people. The COI will have our full support in this endeavor."