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## ERITREA | CSW Welcomes Resolution Adoption

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes the adoption on July 2 of a resolution by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), which extends the mandates of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Eritrea and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea for one year, to ensure “full accountability, including where these violations may amount to crimes against humanity.”

The resolution, which was adopted by consensus, welcomes the Commission’s report on Eritrea and the Special Rapporteurs’ third report focusing on forced evictions and the demolition of houses. It goes on to “strongly condemn the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations” committed by the Eritrea government “in a climate of generalized impunity”, including extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, torture, and “severe restrictions” on the freedoms of expression and of thought, conscience and religion. It also highlights these violations “in the context of indefinite national service including those involving forced labor, forced military conscription of children and sexual violence.”

The resolution draws attention to “the detention of journalists, human rights defenders, political actors, religious leaders and practitioners in Eritrea.” A side-event at the HRC in support of the COI report and the resolution organized by CSW, Human Rights Concern-Eritrea (HRC-E) and other NGOs, included testimonies from the brother of Eritrea’s longest serving prisoner of conscience, who is currently facing his 24th year of incommunicado detention. Other testimonies included two children of political prisoners held incommunicado since 2001, one of whom was detained in appalling conditions and tortured after attempting to flee the country, a female national service conscript who had also suffered detention and torture, and a church leader who endured eight rounds of imprisonment and torture before fleeing the country.

The COI report identifies the Eritrean Armed Forces, the National Security Office, the Eritrean Police Forces; the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defense, the ruling party, the Office of the President; and the President himself as the main sources of human rights violations. By directing the Commission to “ensure accountability,” the resolution raises the possibility of international prosecutions for identified perpetrators.

Eritrea’s Ambassador to Geneva dismissed the resolution as biased and reiterated his country’s objection to what he described as “politically motivated mechanisms.” Government supporters, who gathered in Geneva for an anti-COI demonstration June 22, allegedly have harassed and threatened Commission members. On June 23, he Council President, Joachim Ruecker, informed the Council that the Commissioners had been subjected to “various threats and acts of intimidation in their hotels and in the streets since their arrival in Geneva,” and had

subsequently received police protection. He added that steps had been taken to ensure the Council meeting would not be disrupted.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We warmly welcome the renewal of the mandates of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea and the Special Rapporteur on human rights in the country, ensuring that the vital work of uncovering those responsible for the deplorable human rights violations in the country can occur. What we long to see and continue to campaign for is an end to appalling suffering of the Eritrean people and for those responsible to be brought to justice. This resolution is an important step along the road towards justice. We will continue to support Eritreans in their quest for liberation from tyranny, the release of all prisoners of conscience and the full enjoyment of their hard-won rights and freedoms."