

ORAL STATEMENT TO UNHRC:

ERITREA

AGENDA ITEM 4

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ERITREA

JUNE 2017

Topic: Human Rights in Eritrea

Organisation: Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Speaker: Sini Maria Heikkilä

Thank you Mr Vice-President

Christian Solidarity Worldwide thanks the special rapporteur for her report, but notes the continuing refusal of the Eritrean government to engage with the mandate holder, and a concomitant lack of progress in addressing the grave violations highlighted by the Commission of Inquiry, some of which constitute crimes against humanity.

We believe constructive engagement with the special rapporteur and other special procedures would illustrate a genuine desire to improve the human rights situation. We therefore call for the renewal of the special rapporteur's mandate in order to ensure continued monitoring, to follow up on implementation of recommendations, and to assist in the formulation of accountability mechanisms. We also call for renewed efforts by member states towards holding perpetrators of international crimes accountable.

As indicated in the special rapporteur's report, fundamental freedoms are still violated comprehensively. With regard to freedom of religion or belief, CSW has learned that during May 2017, 122 Christians from non-sanctioned churches were detained in a campaign that has been ongoing since the 2002 church closures. Forty-five were arrested in Adi Quala, including entire families, the elderly and a disabled woman. The arrests left 23 children without their parents. Fifteen people were rounded up in Gindae, while in Asmara, 45 people were arrested during one raid and 17 during another, with more arrests said to be imminent. In addition, Orthodox patriarch, Abune Antonios, who entered his tenth year under incommunicado house arrest in May, is alleged to be gravely ill after being injected during an unsolicited medical examination.

The unremitting, comprehensive and severe human rights violations are the root causes of the Eritrean exodus, which is said to number 5000 per month. Particularly alarming are the numbers of unaccompanied minors fleeing to Ethiopia, Sudan and even further afield, some of them as young as eight. Disturbing information is emerging of the extreme vulnerability of unaccompanied minors in Alexandria, Egypt, some of whom have been groomed or otherwise lured into the sex trade.

Mr Vice-President, Eritreans are fleeing systematic repression, pervasive control and endemic impunity. We urge member states to respect the principle of non-refoulement, to offer sanctuary and protection, and to prioritise urgently the safety of children and other vulnerable persons.

Thank you.



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