

Joint Statement by WILPF and the Network of Eritrean Women on the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea

Background

WILPF stands in solidarity with the Network of Eritrean women in this statement. Through our work, we campaign for the rights of Eritrean women wherever they may be, but also for all human rights in Eritrea as a whole.

Women in Eritrea have become increasingly marginalised, lacking both political and economic power in the last 23 years. The indefinite military conscription is terrible for all individuals, both men and women. However, they are touched in different ways. First, Eritrean women in the military are forced to do domestic chores by higher ranking officers. More important, they are victims of gender-based and sexual violence as found by The Commission of Inquiry Report on Eritrea.

Indefinite military conscription is also having the effect of disintegrating the family, as children are growing up without their parents. Most of the young people leaving Eritrea do so to avoid the conscription, and therefore run high risks to their personal safety. They are often kidnaped, killed, raped and enslaved by traffickers and armed groups^[1].

Human rights violations of Eritreans are striking, both inside and outside the country. We need to ensure that all women inside Eritrea are able to participate with the commission of inquiry on Eritrea by providing testimony with no fear or repercussion to themselves or their families.

Arms proliferation amongst civilians is also highly concerning in Eritrea, according to Kjetil Tronvoll and Daniel R Mekonnen “The government’s militarisation programme has recently been expanded to include senior citizens”^[2].

The UN Special Rapporteur said that the situation of Human Rights in Eritrea described the challenge as affecting the very fabric of Eritrean society.

We urge the United Nations to take these elements into consideration and to take a series of measures accordingly. Therefore, we call upon the United Nations and the International community to:

- Create an independent body inside Eritrea to monitor human rights abuses;
- Ensure that the recommendations in the Commission of Inquiry report on Eritrea are implemented and enforced;

- Undertake measures that those who have committed crimes against humanity are held accountable and brought to justice, by creating a special judicial body;
- Create a training body to ensure that the police and judiciary are trained and sensitive to gender based crimes;
- Ensure both humanitarian and medical help to Eritreans inside and outside the country;
- Ensure that the rights of all women are promoted and protected and that the Eritrean government implements steps to end gender based violence in accordance with UN Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1960;
- Create a fund so that women who have suffered from sexual violence in the military are compensated, rehabilitated and provided with counselling;
- Ensure that the Arm Trade Treaty (ATT) is ratified by the Eritrean government and that steps are taken to stop the proliferation of weapons;

Participation of Eritrean Women in the Peace Process

- We urge the United Nations to uphold its commitment to implement Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106 and 2122 regarding the status of women in armed conflict.
- The inclusion of women's movement and civil society in negotiations.
- Eritrean women to be involved in the political process in establishing rule of law, constitutionalism and in forming a government and laying the foundations of peace building.
- The inclusion of all refugee women in the peace building process and taking into account their concerns and needs.
- To ensure that Eritrean women are represented in any future transitional government and are part of the democratisation process.
- Ensure that the UN deploys a mediator so that the voice of women's movement and women in civic and political organisations is heard at all levels.
- Appoint a gender advisor to the mediation team to establish channels of communication between the UN Special Envoy and civil society and women's organisations.
- Ensure all those involved in the political process understand and commit to ending gender based violence in accordance with resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2016 and 2122.
- Ensure that all mines inside the country are cleared to ensure the safety of all citizens taking into account the chores of women in terms of collecting water or farming which makes them more vulnerable.

[1] <http://shekortet.com/content/radio-erena-02072015> Personal Testimony of an Eritrean who escaped Duala Islamia in Libya – This was aired on Radio Erena

[2] Kjetil Tronvoll & Daniel R Mekonnen (2014) *The African Garrison State: Human Rights & Political Development in Eritrea*. Published by James Curry on Imprint of Baydell and Brewer Ltd.