

Chargé d'Affaires a.i Mr Yonas Manna Bairu
Embassy of the State of Eritrea
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Sverige

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the imprisonments and arbitrary detentions of members of religious groups in Eritrea. Their imprisonment is particularly worrying because of the overly crowded prisons in the time of the global pandemic COVID-19. Many of the imprisoned are prisoners of conscience and have done nothing wrong but practicing their faith peacefully.

The Eritrean Constitution of 1997 guarantees the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief. However, the Eritrean government has only recognised four religious communities since the 2002 legislation requiring organisations to register. Unregistered religious communities are subjected to arrest and detention for peacefully trying to exercise their right to freedom of religion or belief. Even members of registered religious groups are subjected to arrests if they protest against the government interfering in their activities. This is a violation of both the Eritrean constitution and international conventions.

Together with the rest of the world, Eritrea is now facing a health crisis. Tens of thousands of Eritreans are currently detained without charge or trial, many of whom have done nothing wrong but peacefully practicing their faith. The prisons are overcrowded and the consequences of the spread of COVID-19 may be fatal. I therefore humbly petition your intervention to ensure that:

- the detainment and imprisonment of members of religious organisation for their participation in peaceful religious activity is ended;
- political prisoners and prisoners of conscience must be released immediately in order to ensure the safety and health of prisoners in Eritrea;
- rule of law is respected, and human rights protected in the implementation of the measures to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19.

I thank you in advance for using your influence as ambassador and conveying this message to the relevant authorities in your home country.

Yours sincerely,