# ERITREA
# REPORT

## OCTOBER 2004

## Country Information and Policy Unit

## IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY DIRECTORATE
## HOME OFFICE, UNITED KINGDOM

# CONTENTS


| | |
|---|---|
| **1 Scope of Document** | 1.1 |
| **2 Geography** | 2.1 |
| **3 Economy** | 3.1 |
| Drought & Famine | 3.2 |
| **4 History** | |
| Foundations of Eritrea | 4.1 |
| Resistance to Ethiopian Rule 1952-1991 | 4.2 |
| Independence 1993 & Transitional Government | 4.4 |
| The PFDJ and Constitutional Developments | 4.7 |
| Border Conflict with Ethiopia 1998-2000 | 4.13 |
| Unresolved Border Demarcation | 4.18 |
| **5 State Structures** | |
| The Constitution | 5.1 |
| - Citizenship and Nationality | 5.2 |
| - Three Witnesses | 5.10 |
| - The 1993 Referendum | 5.16 |
| - Mixed Marriage & Mixed Birth | 5.18 |
| The Political System | 5.22 |
| The Judiciary | 5.27 |
| - Special Courts | 5.35 |
| Legal Rights/Detention | 5.38 |
| - Death Penalty | 5.43 |
| Internal Security | 5.44 |
| Prisons and Prison Conditions | 5.46 |
| The Military | 5.52 |
| - Military Round-ups & Draft Evaders | 5.57 |
| - Military Service | 5.63 |
| - Demobilisation | 5.69 |
| - Prisoners of War | 5.74 |
| Medical Services | |
| - General | 5.75 |
| - Specialist Facilities | 5.82 |
| - HIV/AIDS | 5.85 |
| - The Disabled | 5.96 |
| Educational System | 5.98 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **6 Human Rights** | |
| 6.A Human Rights - issues | |
| General | 6.1 |
| Freedom of Speech and of the Media | |
| - The Media | 6.7 |
| - Non Media Criticism | 6.14 |
| Freedom of Religion | 6.17 |
| - Religious Groups | 6.22 |
| - Non-Sanctioned Religious Groups | |
| - Jehovah's Witnesses | 6.36 |
| - Muslims | 6.47 |
| Freedom of Assembly and Association | 6.51 |
| - Political Activists | |
| - Political Opposition | 6.59 |
| - Democratic Elections | 6.64 |
| - The G15 Group | 6.67 |
| - Supporters of the Ethiopian Derg Regime | 6.74 |
| - Supporters of the ELF and ELF-RC | 6.75 |
| - Supporters of the EIJ | 6.79 |
| Employment Rights | 6.81 |
| People Trafficking | 6.84 |
| Freedom of Movement | 6.85 |
| 6B Human Rights – Specific Groups | |
| Ethnic Groups | 6.90 |
| - Languages | 6.92 |
| - Afar/Danakils | 6.94 |
| - Baria/Nara | 6.97 |
| - Hedareb/Beja/Beni Amber/Beni Amer | 6.98 |
| - Bilen/Bogos | 6.100 |
| - Kunama – Cultural | 6.102 |
| - Kunama - Treatment | 6.112 |
| - Rasha'ida | 6.126 |
| - Saho | 6.128 |
| - Tigrinya | 6.130 |
| - Tigre/Tegre | 6.132 |
| Returning Eritreans | 6.134 |
| - Eritreans from Sudan | 6.139 |
| - Eritreans from Ethiopia | 6.146 |
| Ethiopians in Eritrea | |
| - General | 6.149 |
| - Treatment | 6.156 |
| - Deportations | 6.159 |
| Women | |
| - General Situation | 6.166 |
| - Female Genital Mutilation | 6.171 |
| - Domestic & Sexual Violence | 6.179 |
| - Women's Organisations | 6.181 |
| Children | |
| - General | 6.182 |
| - Childcare Provisions for Orphans | 6.185 |
| - Abuse & Trafficking of Children | 6.192 |
| Homosexuals | 6.196 |
| 6C Human Rights – Other issues | |
| Use of Torture | 6.197 |
| Refugees in Eritrea | 6.203 |
| Internally Displaced Persons | 6.208 |
| Treatment of Returned Failed Asylum Seekers | 6.210 |
| Human Rights Organisations in Eritrea | 6.219 |

| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| **Annexes**<br>**Chronology of Major Events**<br>**Political Organisations**<br>**Prominent People**<br>**List of Source Material** | <br>**Annex A**<br>**Annex B**<br>**Annex C**<br>**Annex D** |

# 1 Scope of Document

**1.1** This Country Report has been produced by Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. It includes information available up to 1 September 2004.

**1.2** The Country Report is compiled wholly from material produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources and does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to the original source material, which is made available to those working in the asylum / human rights determination process.

**1.3** The Report aims to provide a brief summary of the source material identified, focusing on the main issues raised in asylum and human rights applications. It is not intended to be a detailed or comprehensive survey. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.

**1.4** The structure and format of the Country Report reflects the way it is used by Home Office caseworkers and appeals presenting officers, who require quick electronic access to information on specific issues and use the contents page to go directly to the subject required. Key issues are usually covered in some depth within a dedicated section, but may also be referred to briefly in several other sections. Some repetition is therefore inherent in the structure of the Report.

**1.5** The information included in this Country Report is limited to that which can be identified from source documents. While every effort is made to cover all relevant aspects of a particular topic, it is not always possible to obtain the information concerned. For this reason, it is important to note that information included in the Report should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated. For example, if it is stated that a particular law has been passed, this should not be taken to imply that it has been effectively implemented; rather that information regarding implementation has not been found.

**1.6** As noted above, the Country Report is a collation of material produced by a number of reliable information sources. In compiling the Report, no attempt has been made to resolve discrepancies between information provided in different source documents. For example, different source documents often contain different versions of names and spellings of individuals, places and political parties etc. Country Reports do not aim to bring consistency of spelling, but to reflect faithfully the spellings used in the orginal source documents. Similarly, figures given in different source documents sometimes vary and these are simply quoted as per the original text.

**1.7** The Country Report is based substantially upon source documents issued during the previous two years. However, some older source documents may have been included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents. All sources contain information considered relevant at the time this Report was issued.

**1.8** This Country Report and the accompanying source material are public documents. All Country Reports are published on the IND section of the Home Office website and the great majority of the source material for the Report is readily available in the public domain. Where the source documents identified in the Report are available in electronic form, the relevant web link has been included, together with the date that the link was accessed. Copies of less accessible source documents, such as those provided by government offices or subscription services, are available from the Home Office upon request.

**1.9** Country Reports are published every six months on the top 20 asylum producing countries and on those countries for which there is deemed to be a specific operational need. Inevitably, information contained in Country Reports is sometimes overtaken by events that occur between publication dates. Home Office officials are informed of any significant changes in country conditions by means of Country Information Bulletins, which are also published on the IND website. They also have constant access to an information request service for specific enquiries.

**1.10** In producing this Country Report, the Home Office has sought to provide an accurate, balanced summary of the available source material. Any comments regarding this Report or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

**Country Information & Policy Unit**
**Home Office**
Apollo House
36 Wellesley Road
Croydon CR9 3RR
**Email:** CIPU@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
**Website:** http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/0/country_information.html?

Return to Contents

# 2. Geography

**2.1** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that, "The State of Eritrea, which formally acceded to independence on 24 May 1993, covers an area of 121,144 sq km (46,774 sq miles)….Eritrea, which has a coastline on the Red Sea extending for almost 1,000 km, is bounded to the north-west by Sudan, to the south and west by Ethiopia, and to the south-east by Djibouti….At mid 2001, according to UN estimates, Eritrea's population totalled 3,816,000. The population is fairly evenly divided between Tigrinya-

speaking Christians, the traditional inhabitants of the highlands, and the Muslim communities of the western lowlands, northern highlands and east coast". **[1a] (p387)** Lonely Planet in its guide to Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti published November 2000 noted that the capital is Asmara and the main port cities are Massawa and Assab. Several languages are spoken, including Tigrinya, Tigre and Amharic. Arabic and English are also widely spoken. **[36]**

**2.2** The Ethnologue report 'Languages of Eritrea' states that the national or official language is English. **[2]**

Return to Contents

# 3. Economy

**3.1** The CIA World Factbook updated 1 January 2004, noted that "Like the economies of many African nations, the economy is largely based on subsistence agriculture, with 80% of the population involved in farming and herding… Since the war ended, the government has maintained a firm grip on the economy, expanding the use of the military and party-owned businesses to complete Eritrea's development agenda. Erratic rainfall and the delayed demobilization of agriculturalists from the military kept cereal production well below normal, holding down growth in 2002". **[31]**

## Drought & Famine

**3.2** IRIN News reported on 19 March 2003 that

> "With the world's attention focused elsewhere, aid officials in Eritrea say this tiny nation in Africa's 'Horn is quietly approaching a humanitarian disaster. More than two thirds of Eritrea's 3.3 million people are facing the spectre of famine as the country confronts its worst drought since it officially gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993. Appeals for international assistance began last summer, but the response so far has not been as swift as aid officials had hoped. Only 24 percent of the estimated food aid needed has been pledged, while only a fraction of that aid has been received. Tens of thousands of livestock have died, and the price of those that remain plummets daily. Meanwhile, the price of grain and other foodstuffs has doubled in local markets. 'Generally speaking, the drought is very serious in our region,' says Weldemichael Ghebretsna, the director of regional infrastructure for the province of Debub, where more than 80 percent of the 750,000 population face severe food shortages. This, despite the fact that the province is normally the country's second most productive breadbasket". **[21l] (p1)**

**3.3** BBC News in an article dated 18 November 2003 reported that:

> "Earlier this year – in the wake of yet another drought there were dire predictions of a human catastrophe in Eritrea. Nearly 90% of the country's food needs had been appealed for – and response rates were

> disappointingly poor. Yet there have been no reports of starvation. Some $160m was needed to feed the 2.1 million said to be at risk. A special envoy was despatched by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the former Finland President Marti Ahtisaari, charged with raising awareness in the international community….Of course no-one is disappointed that a humanitarian disaster has not occurred – but behind the scenes some diplomats are questioning whether all the figures added up. UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator Simon Nhongo denies that aid agencies exaggerated the problem….'You don't have to see people starving on the streets or dying – it's the damage that happens because of the nutrition deficiencies'….In fact the 2004 appeal is just being launched. There has been rain this year but the harvest has still been disappointing….One theory is that a lack of manpower to tend the fields has perpetuated the problem – Eritrea's sstanding army amounts to about 10% of the total population. Eritrean Minister of Agriculture Arefaine Berhe says he feels the main problem is that 'there is no lasting peace here and there is not the right environment for people to do their jobs'…."

**3.4** United Press International in an article dated June 2004 reported that:-The U.N. Mission in Ethiopia was working with two non-governmental organisations to build a road leading to the site of a future water reservoir that will supply 2,000 people in Ashiti. Germany's GTZ was doing feasibility studies on repairing water supply systems in Agordat, Barentu, Hakikota and Tessenei. **[34]**

**3.5** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 further noted that, "The rural poor as being particularly vulnerable in view of the fact that they have few assets of their own. The source expressed the view that this section of the population that would become at increasing risk as a result of the drought that is expected to have increasing consequences for the country, at least up until the next harvest which is due in late 2003". **[5] (p23)**

**3.6** On 17 March 2004 IRIN News reported that,

> "About two thirds of the population live below the poverty line, and in some small rural towns the figure leaps up to 80 percent due to the dislocation of the population and the return of hundreds of thousands of Eritreans from Sudan….A recent nutritional survey, carried out by the government, UN and NGOs, found that the regions of Gash Barka and Northern Red Sea had the highest prevalence of malnutrition at 15.6 percent and 16.9 percent respectively. Mothers were particularly affected, suffering 40 percent malnutrition rates….He added that the situation was slowly moving from emergency to development. The Eritrean government has recently approved a three-year Integrated Recovery Programme – a transitional plan aimed at providing an economic foundation for longer-term development. But the ongoing 'no-war, no-peace' situation meant a continuing shortage of human resources in both the private and public sectors". **[21k] (p1)**

Return to Contents

# 4. History

Refer to Africa South of the Sahara (source **[1a]**) for more detailed history of events prior to 1991

## Foundations of Eritrea

**4.1** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that,

> "Modern Eritrea dates from the establishment of an Italian colony in the late 19th century. From a small concession gained near Assab in 1869, the Italians extended their control to Massawa in 1885 and to most of Eritrea by 1889. In the same year the Ethiopian emperor, Menelik, and the Italian government signed the treaty of Uccialli, which effectively recognized Italian control over Eritrea…The period of Italian rule (1889-1941) and the subsequent years under British military administration (1941-52) created a society, economy and polity more advanced than in the semi-feudal Ethiopian empire. Following the Second World War, Ethiopia, which historically regarded Eritrea as an integral part of its territory, intensified its claims to sovereignty.…In 1962 Eritrea was reconstituted as a province of Ethiopia". **[1a] (p387)**

## Resistance to Ethiopian Rule 1952-1991

**4.2** The same report stated that,

> "The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF).…began an armed struggle in 1961. Organizational and ideological differences erupted into violence within the ELF in the mid-1960s.…A reformist group separated from the ELF and formed the Popular Liberation Forces (renamed the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, EPLF, in 1977). A major consequence of the split was the civil war of 1972-74. Some reformists remained within the ELF, although most of these eventually left in two stages, the first group breaking away in 1977-78 and the second (the Sagem group joining the EPLF) in 1985, following a second civil war. These desertions destroyed the ELF as a coherent military organization.…The EPLF leadership consolidated a highly centralized and disciplined political and military organization". **[1a] (p387)**

**4.3** The same report said that, "The 1974 revolution in Ethiopia and its violent aftermath brought thousands of new recruits into the resistance groups. Even greater number of recruits joined the EPLF after the Mengistu regime launched its 'red terror' campaign in Asmara, and following its capture of smaller cities such as Keren and Decamhare in 1977"… The EPLF captured Massawa in 1990 and Asmara in May 1991. **[1a] (p387)**

## Independence 1993 & Transitional Government

**4.4** Africa South of the Sahara 2004 stated that, "The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front [were] now in control of Ethiopia and sympathetic to Eritrean nationalist aspirations. Both the USA and the Ethiopian delegation accepted the EPLF as the provisional Government, and the latter agreed to hold a referendum on independence in 1993". **[1a] (p388)**

**4.5** This report continued, "In advance of the referendum, the EPLF formed a Government and established ministries, most of whose key personnel were drawn from the EPLF….In April a UN-supervised referendum took place in an atmosphere of national celebration. Of the 1,102,410 Eritreans who voted, 99.8% endorsed national independence. The anniversary of the liberation of Asmara, 24 May [1993] was proclaimed Independence Day, and on 28 May the State of Eritrea formally attained international recognition". **[1a] (p388)**

**4.6** It also said:

> "Following Eritrea's accession to independence, a four-year transitional period was declared, during which preparations were to proceed for establishing a constitutional and pluralistic political system. At the apex of the transitional Government were three state institutions: the Consultative Council (the executive authority formed from the ministers, provincial governors and heads of government commissions); the National Assembly (the legislative authority formed from the Central Committee of the EPLF, together with 30 members from the Provincial Assemblies and 30 members appointed by the Central Committee); and the judiciary. One of the National Assembly's first acts was the election of the Head of State. To little surprise, Issaias Afewerki, the Secretary-General of the EPLF, was elected, by a margin of 99 votes to five". **[1a] (p388)**

## The PFDJ and Constitutional Developments

**4.7** Africa South of the Sahara (2004 report) stated that:

> "President Afewerki, appointed a new Consultative Council in June 1993, comprising 14 ministers (all members of the EPLF politburo) and 10 regional governors. The third congress of the EPLF was convened at Nafka, in Sahel province, in February 1994. There the EPLF formally transformed itself from a military front into a national movement (the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, PFDJ) hoping to embrace all Eritreans (except those accused of collaboration during the liberation struggle). The party congress also confirmed its support for a plural political system, which was to be included in the final draft of a new constitution, which (together with legislation to regulate the formation of political parties) was to be submitted for approval by a national referendum". **[1a] (p388)**

**4.8** Furthermore that:

> "In March 1994 the National Assembly adopted a series of resolutions whereby the former executive body, the Consultative Council, was formally superseded by a State Council. Other measures adopted by resolutions of the Assembly included the creation of a 50 member Constitutional Commission and the establishment of a committee charged with the reorganization of the country's administrative divisions. It was decided that the National Assembly would henceforth comprise 75 members of the PFDJ Central Committee, and 75 directly elected members. However no mechanism was announced for their election. All but eight of the 50-member Constitutional Commission were government appointees, and there was no provision for any opposition participation in the interim system". **[1a] (p388)**

**4.9** Also that, "International conferences on the draft constitution were held in the capital in July 1994 and in January 1995. The symposia were presided over by Dr Bereket Habteselassie, the Chairman of the draft Constitutional Commission. Many foreign constitutional experts were invited to attend and discuss the draft document, and there was extensive popular consultation, with more than 1,000 meetings throughout the country, attended by some 500,000 Eritreans. However, no opposition parties or opponents of the regime were invited to contribute". **[1a] (p388)**

**4.10** It continued that:

> "In May [1995] Afewerki announced that the 30,000-strong civil service was to be reduced by one third. All ministries (with the exceptions of interior and defence) would be subject to the rationalization programme, and 6,500 civil servants who had not been combatant members of the EPLF were made redundant immediately. In the same month the National Assembly approved a law reducing the previous 10 administrative regions to six, each with regional, sub-regional and village administrations". **[1a] (p388)**

**4.11** The same report also said:

> "In early 1997 a Constituent Assembly was established to discuss and ratify the draft Constitution. The Constituent Assembly comprised 527 members, of whom 150 were from the National Assembly, and the remainder selected from representatives of Eritreans residing abroad or elected by regional assemblies (adhering to a 30% quota for women). On 23 May the Constituent Assembly unanimously adopted the Constitution, instituting a presidential regime, with a President elected for a maximum of two five-year terms. According to the Constitution, the President, as Head of State, was empowered to appoint, with the approval of the National Assembly, the ministers, the commissioners, the Auditor-General, the President of the central bank, and judges of the Supreme Court". **[1a] (p389)**

**4.12** It similarly continued:

"'Conditional' political pluralism was authorized. Following the adoption of the new Constitution, the Constituent Assembly was disbanded, having empowered a Transitional National Assembly (comprising the 75 members of the PFDJ, 60 members of the Constituent Assembly and 15 representatives of Eritreans resident abroad) to act as the legislative body until the holding of national elections. The outbreak of war in 1998 delayed the implementation of the Constitution, although government officials continued to insist that it would be implemented gradually, once peace returned. In October 2000 it was announced that Eritrea's first post independence elections, which were scheduled to have been held in 1998, but were postponed following the outbreak of hostilities with Ethiopia would take place in December 2001 but these were postponed indefinitely by the National Assembly when it met in January 2002. In 2003 local elections began to be held in villages throughout Eritrea; in most cases previously appointed administrators were elected to their existing positions". **[1a] (p389)**

## Border Conflict with Ethiopia 1998-2000

**4.13** Africa South of the Sahara (2004 report) stated that, "Relations with Ethiopia deteriorated in late 1997 as disagreements arose following Eritrea's introduction of a new currency, the Nafka. In late December there was a military confrontation around an Eritrean army post on the frontier in northern Dankalia, an area where Ethiopian rebels were reported to be operating. In May 1998 fighting erupted between Eritrean and Ethiopian troops in the border region after both countries accused the other of having invaded their territory". **[1a] (p392)**

**4.14** The same report said that, "The war was a major issue at the OAU [Organisation of African Unity] Heads of State summit held in Algiers in July 1999 where both sides confirmed their commitment to the OAU's framework agreement. President Afewerki announced that Eritrean troops would be withdrawn from all territory captured from Ethiopia since 6 May 1998". **[1a] (p392)**

**4.15** However the source noted that:

"There were reports of numerous clashes between Eritrean and Ethiopian troops throughout late 1999 and early 2000….On 31 May [2000] the prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, announced that the war with Eritrea was over and that his troops had withdrawn from most of the territory that they had captured from Eritrea. Nevertheless, fighting continued to take place while discussions were ongoing in Algiers, with each side accusing the other of resuming hostilities….On 18 June [2000] a peace agreement was signed, which provided for an immediate cease-fire and the deployment of a UN peace-keeping force in a 25-km buffer zone until the disputed 966-km border had been demarcated". **[1a] (p392-393)**

**4.16** The report added that, "In mid-September 2000 the UN Security Council approved the deployment of a 4,200-strong UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) peace-keeping force. UNMEE, which was placed under the charge of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, was charged with monitoring and ensuring that both Eritrea and Ethiopia comply with the agreement". **[1a] (p393)**

**4.17** In the same volume it also said that:

> "A definitive peace agreement, formally bringing the war to an end, was signed in Algiers on 12 December [2000]. Both sides agreed to a permanent cessation of all hostilities and the release and repatriation of all prisoners of war. The UN pledged to establish two separate independent commissions to delineate the border and assess compensation claims. The border commission was to demarcate the border in accordance with colonial maps". **[1a] (p393)**

## Unresolved Border Demarcation

**4.18** Europa World Year Book in its report of 2004 stated that:

> "In early March 2003 the Boundary Commission [BC] reported to the UN Security Council that Ethiopia's requests for changes to the border ruling, in order to 'take better account of human and physical geography', threatened to undermine the peace process as a whole. Despite Ethiopia's claims that it had been promised that demarcations could be refined, later in March the BC categorically ruled Badme to be Eritrean territory. Meles (Zenawi, the Ethiopian Prime Minister) subsequently complained that the decision was 'wrong and unjust' and vowed to continue to contest the ruling…. The demarcation of the border, which had originally been scheduled to take place in May, was postponed until July, and then delayed again until October; both the MCC [Military Co-ordination Committee] and the U.N. expressed their frustration at the resolution of the matter. In October, in a letter to the Security Council [SC], Meles called for a new body to be established to resolve the crisis and again denounced the Boundary Commission's ruling as 'uncacceptable'. However, the SC stated that Ethiopia had committed itself under the 2000 Algiers agreement to accept the BC's decision as 'final and binding' and urged it to accept and implement the border ruling. Both Legwaila and the Chairman of the BC, Elihu Lauterpacht, were critical of Ethiopia's lack of compliance with its obligations under the terms of the peace accord, and the ongoing impasse was further compounded by the BC's announcement in late October [2003] that the demarcation of the border had been delayed indefinitely…. Eritrea continued, however, to insist that the ruling be fully implemented.
>
> The process suffered a further reverse in mid-November 2003, when Eritrea withdrew its ambassador to the AU [African Union] and accused the organisation of neglecting its responsibilities over the dispute with Ethiopia. However, in the following month both countries agreed to

establish three Sector Military Co-ordination Committees …. in order to improve the mechanism for dealing with incidents in the border areas…. in December Lloyd Axworthy, a former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, was appointed as the U.N's special envoy to the region, tasked with resolving the stalled peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia. While Ethiopia welcomed the appointment and pledged to work closely with Axworthy, the Eritrean Government expressed its opposition to the appointment, as it feared that it would result in amendments to the BC's ruling". **[2] (p1576)**

**4.19** IRIN News in its report of 20 August 2004 said that "The Ethiopian government has allowed the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to operate direct flights between Addis Ababa and Asmara, lifting a ban that was put in place after the border war between the two countries ended in 2000". **[21p]**

**4.20** Another BBC News report dated 8 May 2004 said:

"The UN has delivered an ultimatum to Eritrea after relations between the two sunk to a new low. The UN said Eritrea must cooperate with its peacekeeping force patrolling the border with Ethiopia, or else ask the UN to leave. The UN says its staff have been illegally detained, while Eritrea accuses the peacekeepers of serious crimes including paedophilia. Eritrea also claims the UN is destabilising the region. Eritrea broadcast a statement on Thursday alleging a string of offences committed by Unmee….The Eritrean government said 'The fact that Unmee has to date not taken any concrete actions and shown no co-*operation to correct its modus operandi and clean up its activities,* exposes to grave danger the peace and stability of the people and government of Eritrea, as well as the security and stability of our region'. The UN said it was shocked by the latest accusations. It said Eritrea was making its mission impossible, detaining local staff and restricting the movement of its vehicles….Earlier this week the UN Security Council criticised both Ethiopia and Eritrea for a lack of progress towards peace". **[10g] (p1)**

**4.21** The same report also said "Earlier this month [August], the Eritrean government reopened a supply route to the west of the country, which had been closed to UNMEE since March. The Asmara-Keren-Barentu road was closed following accusations by the Eritrean government that UNMEE forces were using the road to illegally monitor its troop movements." **[21m] (p1)**

**4.22** Human Rights Watch in its annual report covering 2002 stated that:

"In mid-2002, the Government extended mandatory national service obligations for another two years, providing cheap labour for government projects. Widespread enforcement round-ups were carried out around the country, and as a result hundreds of Eritreans fled to neighbouring countries and beyond. In October [2002], Malta deported over two hundred recent refugees. They were arrested upon arrival in

Asmara, taken to a military camp, and held incommunicado". [32a] (p2) In May 2003, Amnesty International reported that they remained in detention. [7d] (p1)

**4.23** BBC News reported on 4 July 2004 that:

> "UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is visiting the Horn of Africa in a new initiative to kick start the stalled Ethiopian Eritrean peace process. Some 4,000 UN peacekeepers patrol the Eritrean-Ethiopian border following the war which ended in 2000….The two sides appear to be no nearer reaching a lasting settlement since they ended hostilities…. Ethiopia's government however refused to implement the [border] commission's decision last year [2003], saying it would not split families and settlements". [10h]

**4.24** It further reported "Eritrea has asked the international community to take some form of action against Ethiopia. 'The international community is very worried and the secretary general himself is worried to see that things are not advancing as he would have liked to see them advance' said the head of UN peacekeeping operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno. Mr Annan met Eritrean President Isayas Afewerki on Saturday before flying on to the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. The UN border operation costs $200m (£109m) a year". [10h]

Return to Contents

# 5. State Structures

## The Constitution

**5.1** The CIA World Factbook, last updated 1 January 2004, stated that, "The transitional constitution, decreed on 19 May 1993, was replaced by a new constitution adopted on 23 May 1997, but not yet implemented". [31] Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that "The outbreak of war in 1998 delayed the implementation of the Constitution, although government officials continued to insist that it would be implemented gradually, once peace returned". [1a] (p389) The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "The Constitution, ratified in 1997, provides for democratic freedoms; however, its provisions were not implemented by year's end [2003]". [6e] (p1)

### Citizenship & Nationality

**5.2** The Eritrean Nationality Proclamation No.21/1992 published in April 1992 details the criteria and law as regarding Eritrean Nationality. [9]

**5.3** The UK Fact Finding report dated 29 April 2003 stated that:

> "Current Eritrean regard to naturalisation takes the year 1933 as the starting point. This is the year in which the Italian colonial government registered the population of the colony and declared those registered as legal residents. Therefore, these persons who have a right to Eritrean citizenship are all those who were themselves or who are the descendants of persons resident in Eritrea prior to 1933". **[5] (p46)**

**5.4** The same report stated that, "The Eritrean Nationality Proclamation specifically mentions two other time periods as well. The first period is from 1934 to 1951, the year Eritrea was incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire. The second period recognised under Eritrean law is from 1952 onwards, the year the Emperor was overthrown and the Dergue took power". **[5] (p46)**

**5.5** The same report stated that, "An applicant may apply for naturalisation through marriage to an Eritrean citizen provided s/he demonstrates three years of legal residence in Eritrea following the marriage and a renunciation of other nationality". **[5] (p46)**

**5.6** On 27 January 2004, the Home Office received a letter from the Eritrean Embassy in London clarifying certain points with regards to obtaining Eritrean nationality. The letter stated that:

(a) "A person who is with an Eritrean father/mother would be eligible for Eritrean nationality as long as the person provides three witnesses.

(b) The political views of the three witnesses are not relevant to establishing the nationality.

(c) The political views of the applicant for nationality are not relevant to establishing eligibility for nationality and obtaining an Eritrean passport.

(d) The voting in the 1993 Referendum is not a necessary precondition to establishing nationality.

(e) Paying a 2% tax on nationals overseas is not a precondition for eligibility for Eritrean nationality and obtaining a passport.

(f) Claiming refugee status overseas does not preclude eligibility for Eritrean nationality or obtaining an Eritrean passport.

(g) All application forms are filled in person by the applicant at the Embassy's consular section and has (sic) to be authorised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Eritrea. No application forms out of the standard provided by the Embassy are accepted". **[16]**

**5.7** The UK Fact Finding report published 29 April 2003 stated that, "If a person's parents or grandparents were born in Eritrea you will certainly be entitled to Eritrean nationality but will have to prove this". It was also

confirmed that applicants would not be asked about their views, political or otherwise. **[5] (p46-48)**

**5.8** The British Embassy in a letter dated 2 July 2001 noted that, "The Political Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs…was quite clear that the 1993 referendum plays no part in whether or not someone is entitled to Eritrean nationality". **[17]**

**5.9** Human Rights Watch in a report dated January 2003 stated that:

> "The legal status of Ethiopian residents in Eritrea who had not sought Eritrean nationality at the time of the war's outbreak does not appear to be in dispute. The Eritrean government as a rule considered them as aliens. It did not automatically issue the Eritrean national identity card or passport to these Ethiopians nor did it recruit them for employment reserved for nationals. Ethiopians were also not called up for military service in Eritrea. For the purposes of residency and departure procedures, the Eritrean government continued to deal with Ethiopian nationals under the normal institutions and procedures governing aliens residing in the country, i.e. they were required to acquire residency permits and obtain exit visas to leave the country". **[32b] (p31)**

**Three Witnesses**

**5.10** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 stated that the three witnesses method is used because it would not always be possible to check a person's identity by use of birth certificate. As this can be rather hard to do the three witnesses identification method is favoured in all cases. **[5] (p48)**

**5.11** The same report stated that, "An applicant can call on any 'three witnesses' to verify that the applicant is an Eritrean national. The 'three witnesses' must be Eritreans who hold an Eritrean identification card or passport". **[5] (p48)**

**5.12** It also noted that, "Though every adult is supposed to have a national ID card and anyone holding an Eritrean passport would be in possession of that card, identity records are not centralised and it is often difficult to find information about an individual….while documentation can help a person to prove nationality the Eritrean government now relies on the 'three witness' rule". **[5] (p48)**

**5.13** Furthermore, it noted that: "They [an applicant] can choose any three Eritreans in the world that they know personally. The person abroad will have to go to the Eritrean embassy of that country in order to answer questions. These are standard questions about how long they have known the person, relationship etc. They sign a piece of paper that is then faxed onwards". **[5] (p48)**

**5.14** Additionally, it stated that: "According to Tewolde [Gebretnsae Tewolde, Operations Chief – Department of Immigration and Nationality for Eritrea] the

profile of the witness does not have a bearing on this [acceptability]. They are not asked for political or any other views. They must be a registered Eritrean citizen and must show that they know the person well. It is a character witness procedure; they must agree to be responsible for the person's application to be a recognised Eritrean citizen". **[5] (p48)**

**5.15** This report also stated that:

> "There are over three million people in Eritrea, as well as hundreds of thousands in the Diaspora (Eritreans abroad).…even if they came from Ethiopia or Sudan they would have known many other Eritreans. It is a matter of history that those in Ethiopia kept close contact with family in Eritrea, even those that stayed in Ethiopia after independence. Most formed 'clubs' to celebrate and remember their culture. Those in the Sudan lived in 'Eritrean communities and camps'….many tens of thousands of those returned from Ethiopia and Sudan had their stay regulated and have Eritrean passports....'not only will we [the authorities] allow witnesses from all over the globe but we will follow up claims. So for example if someone claims to be from a certain village we will send word to that community so that they can get the witnesses to come forward". **[5] (p49)**

**The 1993 Referendum**

**5.16** The UK Fact Finding report published 29 April 2003 noted that:

> "The issue of participation in the 1993 Referendum has no bearing on eligibility for Eritrean nationality. Participation had importance when Eritrea first achieved independence but now over a decade later this is no longer the case. The problem is that many people were not able to vote in the referendum for one reason or other and it would not be reasonable or logical to apply such criteria after a decade of independence. Some had been in inaccessible areas, some had been sick, some out of the country, some were too young". **[5] (p49)**

**5.17** The report further noted that:

> "Over time such a criterion has lessened in importance to the point now where it is of little importance.…the initial vote was conducted largely thanks to the machinery of the Ethiopian government. They held the central records. We [the Eritrean authorities] have most of the information now but since the border war, we can no longer check any discrepancies. Therefore we cannot always verify if a person voted in the referendum or not". **[5] (p49-50)**

**Mixed Marriage and Mixed Birth**

**5.18** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 noted that, "in most cases a mixed marriage will prove to be no problem if both partners

are already in Eritrea. If they are split between Eritrea and Ethiopia then the ICRC arranges visits and temporary reunions". **[5] (p50)**

**5.19** The report further noted that, "if both partners are in Eritrea….the non-Eritrean would apply for a residence permit. This is also the situation if a person is unable to prove nationality. While a person attempts to prove their credentials, a person is given a residence permit, these are renewable every six-months. With most residence permits a person is allowed to work". **[5] (p50)**

**5.20** Moreover the report stated that, "in cases where a person is part of an expelled mixed marriage they will if at all possible be dealt with faster….the Eritrean Government is very sympathetic to such cases". **[5] (p50)**

**5.21** The UK Fact Finding report published 29 April 2003 noted that, "in the case of a mixed birth a person would generally not have too many problems as long as they can prove that they have Eritrean roots. This would make them eligible for Eritrean nationality under the normal procedures of the nationality proclamation". **[5] (p50)**

## Political System

**5.22** The CIA World Factbook, last updated 21 September 2004, stated that the Eritrean government is a transitional government.

> "Following a successful referendum for the Autonomous Region of Eritrea on 23-25 April 1993, a National Assembly composed entirely of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice or PFDJ, was established as a transitional legislature; a Constitutional Commission was also established to draft a Constitution; Isaias Afworki was elected President by the transitional legislature; the constitution, ratified in May 1997, did not enter into effect, pending parliamentary and presidential elections; parliamentary elections had been scheduled in December 2001, but were postponed indefinitely; currently the sole legal party is the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)." **[31]**

**5.23** The US Human Rights Report 2003, released on 25 February 2004, noted that, "The PFDJ has not transitioned to a democratically elected government and national elections, originally scheduled for 1997, were never held. The only authorized political party was the PFDJ, and there were no opposition parties active domestically" **[6e] (p10)** Human Rights Watch in its 2003 report stated that, "The government has refused to implement the 1997 constitution, drafted by a constitutional assembly and ratified by referendum. The constitution contains restraints on the arbitrary use of power. It provides for writs of habeas corpus, the rights of prisoners to have the validity of their detention decided by a court, and fair and public trials. The constitution protects freedom of the press, speech, and peaceful assembly. It authorizes the right to form political organizations. It allows every Eritrean to practice any religion". **[32c] (p1)**

**5.24** In its 2002 report Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that:

> "In January 2002, the Government reconvened an interim 'National Assembly' that had not met since September 2000. The assembly consisted of seventy-five PFDJ central committee members and seventy-five party members selected by the leadership in 1993. The assembly approved the Government's arrests and press closings. It accused those arrested of having committed 'grave crimes'. A resolution claimed that the closed newspapers had been 'foreign-funded' and had 'engaged in defamation and rumour-mongering'". **[32a] (p1)**

**5.25** The report further noted that:

> "The assembly approved an election law designed to preserve the PFDJ's monopoly on power. Under the law, no political party other than the PFDJ would be allowed to operate. The assembly resolution criticized previous attempts to permit political pluralism. The election law disenfranchised anyone who commits treason or 'crimes against the nation'. It permitted members of the armed forces to be candidates for office. Although President Isayas appointed a five-person electoral commission at the end of January 2002, no elections had been scheduled as of October [2002]". **[32a] (p2)**

**5.26** Moreover HRW in a report dated 26 January 2004 noted that "No elections have been held". **[32c] (p1)**

## The Judiciary

**5.27** Global Edge, quoting the US Department of State Country Background Notes dated April 2003, noted that, "Nominally, the judiciary operates independently of both the legislative and executive bodies, with a court system that extends from the village through to the district, provincial, and national levels. However, in practice, the independence of the judiciary is limited. In 2001, the president of the High Court was detained after criticizing the government for judicial interference". **[13]**

**5.28** The US State Department report 2003 noted that:

> "The Constitution, which has not been implemented, provides for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was weak and subject to executive control. For example, during the year [2003], the executive controlled special courts issued directives to other courts regarding administrative matters, whereas their domain was supposed to be restricted to criminal cases. In addition, the judiciary relied on the Ministry of Justice for logistical and budgetary support, which further limited its independence". **[6e] (p4)**

**5.29** The report continued:

"The judicial system had three parts: civilian, military, and special courts. The civilian court system consisted of village courts, sub-regional courts, regional courts, and the High Court, which also served as an appellate court. Appeals may be made in the civilian courts all the way up to the High Court. Not all appeals are accepted for a hearing at the High Court level and the High Court takes an average of approximately 2 months to decide if it will hear an appeal or not. Under the legal system, minor infractions were brought to village courts and sub-regional courts. More serious offenses were argued before regional courts, but a significant proportion of cases involving murder, rape, and other felonies were heard by the High Court. All cases, except those argued before the High Court, were heard by a single judge; on the High Court, panels of three judges heard cases". **[6e] (p4-5)**

**5.30** Moreover it noted that:

"The judicial system suffered from a lack of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure that, in practice, limited the Government's ability to grant accused persons a speedy trial. At independence the Government chose to retain the Ethiopian legal system but since then has drafted new commercial, penal, and criminal codes, which have not yet been promulgated. A new civil code was drafted during 2001; however, it was not promulgated by year's end [2003]". **[6e] (p5)**

**5.31** The USSD report further stated that:

"Detainees did not always have access to legal counsel. Defendants could hire a legal representative at their own expense; however, not all detainees could afford to do so. Although there was no formal public defender's office, the Government frequently assigned attorneys to represent defendants accused of serious crimes punishable by more than 10 years in prison who could not afford legal counsel. Defendants could appeal verdicts to a High Court panel, which was composed of the High Court president and four other judges". **[6e] (p5)**

**5.32** Furthermore:

"Most citizens only had contact with the legal system through the traditional village courts. Village judges, who were appointed by a panel composed of heads of regional courts, the regional prosecutor, and the regional governor, heard civil cases. Magistrates versed in criminal law heard criminal cases. Local elders adjudicated many local problems--for example, property disputes and most petty crimes--according to customary law. The Ministry of Justice also offered training in alternative dispute resolution to handle some civil and petty criminal cases". **[6e] (p5)**

**5.33** And, "Where both litigants were Muslims, civil cases were heard under Shari'a law. Traditional courts cannot impose sentences involving physical punishment". **[6e] (p5)**

**5.34** Also:

> "The drafting of many civilians, including court administrators, defendants, judges, lawyers, and others involved in the legal system, into national service continued to have a significant negative impact on the judiciary. The High Court was reduced from 7 benches to 3, and regional, sub-regional, and village court personnel were reduced by 40 percent in 2002. Case backlogs accumulated in 2002 were reduced during the year. For example, the average waiting period before a case was heard at the High Court level was reduced from about 7 months to about 5 months". **[6e] (p4)**

**Special Courts**

**5.35** The same USSD report noted that:

> "The special court system ostensibly was created to reduce a growing backlog in the civilian court system; however, in practice special courts, which banned defense counsel and the right of appeal, allowed the executive branch to mete out punishment without respect for due process. Judges in the special courts were senior military officers, most of whom had little or no legal experience. They based their decisions on 'conscience', without reference to the law. There was no limitation on punishment". **[6e] (p5)**

**5.36** The report further noted that:

> "The special courts had jurisdiction over many criminal cases, such as capital offenses, felonies, some misdemeanors, cases of tax evasion involving large sums, and cases of embezzlement by senior officials. The office of the Attorney General decided which cases were to be tried by a special court. The Attorney General also allowed special courts to retry civilian court cases, including those decided by the High Court, thereby subjecting defendants to double jeopardy". **[6e] (p5)**

**5.37** The report further noted that:

> "Special courts also handled crimes involving corruption, theft, and misuse of government authority allegedly committed by former members of the EPLF during the war for independence. Senior former fighters and members of the PFDJ often were held to a stringent unwritten code of conduct, and violations of this code were handled by special courts outside the normal judicial process. Those accused of violating this circle of trust were arrested and held without formal charge or tried in special courts". **[6e] (p5)**

## Legal Rights/Detention

**5.38** The USSD report noted that:

> "The Constitution, which has not been implemented, and the law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention; however, arbitrary arrest and detention were serious problems….The Penal Code stipulates that detainees may be held for a maximum of 30 days without being charged with a crime. In practice, authorities often detained persons suspected of crimes for much longer periods. The Government held numerous pretrial detainees during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p3)**

**5.39** The same report noted that, "In addition to the high-profile arrests in 2001, the Government arrested at least 80 additional individuals, many of them with known or suspected ties to political dissidents, and detained them without charge and without access to visitors at year's end [2003]. There were numerous unconfirmed reports that the number of such persons detained may be several hundred". **[6e] (p3)**

**5.40** It further stated that, "There were reports that the Government continued to hold numerous members of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), an armed opposition group that fought against Ethiopia during the struggle for independence. Authorities sometimes arbitrarily arrested and detained former combatants or members of the PFDJ who violated an unwritten code of conduct". **[6e] (p4)**

**5.41** And it continued that:

> "At year's end [2003], an estimated 11 members of Jehovah's Witnesses reportedly remained in detention without charge, including 6 allegedly detained during the year, for failing to participate in national service. Although the maximum penalty for refusing to perform national service is 3 years' imprisonment, three of the individuals have been detained for more than 9 years. Of the members of Jehovah's Witnesses detained, 10 were reportedly held at Sawa Military camp and 1 in prison in Asmara". **[6e] (p8)**

**5.42** The report noted that, "There continued to be reports of prolonged detentions of Sudanese nonpolitical prisoners during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p3)**

### Death Penalty

**5.43** The Free Glossary 2004 states that Eritrea retains the death penalty as a legal form of punishment. **[37] (p1)**

## Internal Security

**5.44** The US Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "….Police were officially responsible for maintaining internal security and the army was responsible for external security; however, the Government could call on the armed forces, the reserves, and demobilized soldiers in response to both domestic and external security requirements. The civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. In addition to conflicts with Ethiopia, the army was engaged in a low-intensity conflict with the Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ), a small, Sudan-based insurgent group that has mounted attacks in the north and west since 1993. Some members of the security forces committed serious human rights abuses". **[6e] (p1)**

**5.45** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "The police force was weak and corruption was not prevalent. During the year, the police force was reorganized and active duty military officers were placed in charge of key police divisions. The military has the power to arrest and detain persons, and internal security forces and the military detained many persons during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p3)**

## Prisons and Prison Conditions

**5.46** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "Prison conditions remained Spartan. The Government generally permitted three visits per week by family members. There were no confirmed reports that any prisoners died due to lack of adequate medical care. Women and men were held in separate facilities. There were no juvenile detention centers or correction facilities, and juvenile offenders often were incarcerated with adults. Pretrial detainees generally were not held separately from convicted prisoners; however, in some cases, detainees were held separately. For example, the 'Group of 15' political detainees and others detained on national security grounds in 2001 were thought to be held separately, although their whereabouts remained unknown. These political detainees continued to be denied visitors during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p2-3)**

**5.47** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "The Government allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit and register Ethiopian civilian detainees in police stations and prisons; however, the ICRC was not permitted to visit the unknown number of Ethiopian soldiers who the Government claimed were deserters from the Ethiopian army. Neither the ICRC nor local groups were permitted to monitor prison conditions". **[6e] (p3)** Human Rights Watch in its 2003 report also noted that, "Prison visits by international human rights organizations are prohibited". **[32c] (p2)**

**5.48** Human Rights Watch in its 2003 report further noted that:

> "Because of the volume of arrests, prisoners are often held in improvised cargo containers. At Aderser, near Sawa, prisoners are held in underground cells. At least six high school students were also

reported incarcerated in solitary confinement in underground cells at Sawa. In addition to psychological abuse, escapees report the use of physical torture at some prisons. Prisoners have been suspended from trees, arms tied behind their backs, a technique known as almaz (diamond). Prisoners have also been placed face down, hands tied to feet, a torture known as the 'helicopter'". **[32c] (p2)**

**5.49** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 states that Amnesty International believes that "certain people, who in the past were considered to be missing, may actually be languishing in Eritrean jails". **[5] (p18)**

**5.50** Human Rights Watch in its 2003 report stated that:

> "The government sometimes uses national service as retribution for perceived criticism of government policies. An Eritrean reporting for the Voice of America (VOA) had his press credentials withdrawn on July 8, 2003, and was sent to Sawa for national service after he cast doubt on the government's reports that family members had 'celebrated' when the government finally released the name of war dead almost three years after the end of hostilities. VOA claimed that the reporter had previously completed national service and was exempt from further call-up for medical reasons". **[32c] (p2)**

**5.51** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "There were substantial but unconfirmed reports that hundreds of draft evaders and national service escapees were being held in makeshift prisons around the country. Multiple observers reported up to 1,500 detainees at a prison adjacent to the offices of the Commanding General who oversees Military Operational Area #5 (Central Zone and surrounding areas)". **[6e] (p3)**

## The Military

**5.52** The US Department of State country report on human rights practices – 2001 published in March 2002 stated that:

> "All citizens (men and women) between the ages of 18 and 40 are required to participate in the National Service Programme, which includes military training as well as civic action programmes. In addition some national service inductees have been released back to their civilian jobs, while nominally kept in the military, because their skills are deemed critical to the functioning of the Government or the economy. These individuals are required to forfeit to the Government earning in excess of the national service salary and are also required to perform farm labour". **[5] (p56)**

**5.53** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "Although the maximum penalty for refusing to perform national service is 3 years' imprisonment, three of the individuals have been detained for more than 9 years". **[6e] (p8)**

**5.54** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that, "In August 2002 Eritrea's active armed forces included an army of about 170,000, a navy of 1,400 and an air force of about 800". **[1a] (p405)**

**5.55** The UK Fact Finding report published 29 April 2003 noted that regardless of official edict, there "now seems to be no real time limit [for national service], many are now believed to have been in the army for six or even seven years with no end in sight for demobilisation.…Parents wanted young people to return after 18 months service". **[5] (p56-57)**

**5.56** The report also noted that, "where as the official proclamation stated that military service was for persons aged between 18 and 40, during the war people as young as 15 or as old as 60 were allegedly taken into service". **[5] (p57)**

**Military Round-Ups and Draft Evaders**

**5.57** The US Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "The military police detained persons who had not completed their national service requirement, and those who had evaded previous drafts". **[6e] (p3)** The report goes on to note that, "The Government deployed military police throughout the country using roadblocks, street sweeps, and house-to-house searches to find deserters and draft evaders, although less intensively than last year". **[6e] (p5)** However the report noted that, "During the year [2003], efforts to detain women draft evaders and deserters decreased. According to some reports, women drafted for national service were subject to sexual harassment and abuse". **[6e] (p11)**

**5.58** The UK Fact Finding report published 29 April 2003 noted that unconfirmed reports state that people try to evade service in a number of different ways. "Some go in to hiding, some work as maids and never leave the home of their employer, some get married and/or pregnant, some obtain fake ID documents and others attempt to leave the country."**[5] (p61)**

**5.59** An AI report of May 2004 stated:

> "The legal penalty for evading conscription or assisting evasion is two years' imprisonment…. In practice, offenders are punished administratively by local commanders without any form of trial, legal recourse or opportunity for appeal or redress. The forms of punishment consist of torture and arbitrary detention for an indefinite period. Although these punishments are unlawful and abuses of human rights, they are well-known to government and military officials and the public, and no army officer has ever been punished for employing them". **[7h] (p18)**

**5.60** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 further noted that, "There were particular problems with the call up of Muslim women.…once a Muslim has undertaken her service her chances of being able to marry are considered to be reduced; this was given as a reason why this section of

society in particular, though by no means exclusively, try to evade service". **[5] (p61)**

**5.61** Moreover the UK Fact Finding Mission report noted that:

> "The practice of pulling young people off public busses (sic) was a common practice and on some routes such as Asmara to Barentu this approach was used to such an extent that few young people would even make the trip. The [UK] delegation travelled this route by private vehicle and noted that there were checkpoints outside almost every town and village between Keren and Barentu. Check points were less frequent between Keren and Asmara or on the road from Asmara to Massawa, which was also travelled by the delegation, although occasional checkpoints were observed on both these routes". **[5] (p61)**

**5.62** The report noted that:

> "In October 2002 every youngster who had completed secondary education was ordered to report [for military service]…. after final exams, students are called up and taken to the Sawa military training camp. Those that had been accepted to Asmara University return [home], the rest start their military service. However, recently even graduates from Asmara University have been called up after graduation". **[5] (p57-58)**

**Military Service**

**5.63** An Amnesty International report dated 19 May 2004 noted that "In November 1991 the new EPLF government issued regulations to make national service compulsory for all citizens. The first intake of national service was in 1994 and it continued in staged phases since then. Under the revised national service regulations of 23 October 1995 (19), national service is compulsory for all citizens aged between 18 and 40 years, male and female". **[7h] (p19)**

**5.64** The USSD report 2003 noted that, "The Government does not excuse individuals who object to national service for religious reasons or reasons of conscience, nor does the Government allow for alternative service. The Government continued to harass, detain, and discriminate against the small community of members of Jehovah's Witnesses because of their refusal, on religious grounds, to vote in the independence referendum or the refusal of some to perform national service". **[6e] (p8)** Furthermore the report stated that, "the Government restricted academic freedom. The University of Asmara refused to give diplomas to graduates unless they had completed their national service obligations, and the Ministry of Education did not release transcripts or exam results for those who were not released from national service". **[6e] (p7)**

**5.65** It also said that:

> "The Government added an additional grade to secondary school during the year and required that all students attend their final year at a location adjacent to the Sawa military training facility. Students who do not attend this final year of secondary school do not graduate and cannot sit for examinations to be admitted to university. The remote location of this boarding school, concern about security, and societal attitudes resulted in few girl students enrolling for their final year of high school; however, women may earn an alternative secondary school certificate by attending night school after completing national service". **[6e] (p11)**

**5.66** The report added that:

> "During the year [2003], police severely mistreated and beat army deserters, draft evaders, and members of particular religious groups. Police detained deserters and draft evaders and subjected them to various disciplinary actions that included prolonged sun exposure in temperatures of up to 113 degrees Fahrenheit or the binding of the hands, elbows and feet for extended periods". **[6e] (p2)**

**5.67** Amnesty International states in its press release dated 18 September 2003 that following the September 2001 detentions there were further waves of new dissenters particularly in the civil service and the military. "Some had publicly called for change, others apparently were held for criticising the government in private remarks. There have been numerous detentions in the conscript army". **[7e] (p2)**

**5.68** The US Department of State reported on 25 February 2004 that: "There were reports that military officials seized residences belonging to relatives of persons identified with the political opposition and rented the property or used it as housing for senior military officers' families". **[6e] (p5)**

### Demobilisation

**5.69** IRIN News reported on 2 July 2002 that the pilot phase of the national demobilisation and reintegration process (DRP) was completed. "The 5,000 male and female fighters are the first of 200,000 who are due to be discharged over the next two years". **[21e]**

**5.70** The article goes on to note that:

> "Under the DRP…[those demobilised] are due to receive two months' food rations from the UN's World Food Programme when they are discharged. They will also be given money, medical tests and transport home. In an attempt to ease their transition back to civilian life, there were also plans to offer advice about social and health issues such as HIV/AIDS, post-traumatic stress counselling and information about how to find work, continuation of education and learning new skills". **[21e]**

**5.71** The UK Fact Finding Mission report observed that Amnesty International however believed "it to be unclear as to whether demobilisation would go far enough. Despite this pilot scheme to demobilise 5,000 many more are being called up for service. The international community requires Eritrea to remove itself from a 'war-footing' but it is doubtful that this is occurring as required". **[5] (p60)**

**5.72** The US Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "In 2002, most women in the national service were scheduled to be demobilized; however, many were still serving at year's end [2003]. In addition, hundreds were required to continue serving in government ministries". **[6e] (p11)**

**5.73** However more recently, the BBC in a report dated 2 March 2004 noted that, "The Eritrean authorities say they have begun demobilising 65,000 personnel who served during the conflict with neighbouring Ethiopia. Demobilisation commissioner Tekeste Fekadu said this was the first stage of a process to re-integrate former fighters into civilian life". **[10o]**

### Prisoners of War

**5.74** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report on Eritrea stated that:

> "The repatriation of prisoners of war began in December 2000. Despite a number of set-backs, all prisoners of war had been returned to their respective states by the end of November 2002. A total of 1,067 prisoners of war and 5,055 civilian internees were returned to Ethiopia, and 2,067 prisoners of war and 1,086 civilians were returned to Eritrea, under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross". **[1a] (p393)**

### Medical Services

### General

**5.75** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 stated that:

> "By 1999 official figures stated that about 70% of citizens lived within ten kilometres of a health care facility compared to 10% at the time of independence. There have also been notable increases in the number of hospitals (23 as of 2000); health centres (52) and health stations (170) as well as the number of health care workers. However, as of 2000 the ratio of people to a doctor was 1:13,000 and for a nurse it was 1:2,800". **[5] (p84)**

**5.76** The UK Fact Finding report published 29 April 2003 stated that, "As reported by the MLHW [Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare] no cases of polio or diphtheria have been reported in Eritrea since 1997. In addition, all other diseases for which immunisations are available are reported to have declined. On-going programmes include objectives to eliminate neonatal tetanus by 2004 and eradicate poliomyelitis by 2005". **[5] (p83-84)**

**5.77** The report further noted that:

> "The Report on the implementation and convention of the rights of the child published by the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare (MLHW) in October 2002 refers to the Eritrean Demographic Health Survey (EDHS) of 2002. According to this source infant mortality in Eritrea is 48 per 1,000 live births; under-five mortality is 93 per 1,000 live births. The same report also refers to 1999 data from the State of Eritrea Management Information System for Health (SEMISH). This lists the four leading causes of child deaths within Eritrea as being diarrhoea (27%), acute respiratory infections (20%), malnutrition (10%) and malaria (9%)". **[5] (p83)**

**5.78** IRIN News in an article dated 20 July 2004 noted "UNICEF said a recent report by the Eritrean health ministry showed that under-five mortality had risen to 15 children out of 100,000 per day in some parts of the country. In Debub Region, where six out of eight dams had dried up in the past year creating acute water shortages for a large number of people, deaths from diarrhoea had increased". **[21o] (p1)**

**5.79** The UK Fact Finding Mission report further noted that:

> "A different western embassy in Asmara explained to the delegation that limited medical facilities exist within the country and there is no form of social security services. Treatment has to be paid for. However fees are kept very low and the community is supportive towards those individuals who are genuinely unable to pay. The source added that they did not believe that many Eritreans did not have a family member abroad (or know somebody that did) and that consequently, there was definitely scope to import medication such as drugs unavailable within the country". **[5] (p85)**

**5.80** This report further noted that:

> "The source explained that primary health care is available through a network of clinics located in rural areas and observed that these facilities were better than those in several other developing countries. It was added that this network of clinics had been built up since independence before which there were no such facilities and that most rural communities were now served; however the source stressed that this was not to say that every village has a clinic of its own. It was added that facilities had been developed in the countryside before the towns. It was further explained that the clinics are clean and staffed by well-trained paramedics and nurses, but there is a shortage of trained doctors. The delegation were advised that thirty-five Cuban doctors were assisting in the countryside and there are plans to increase this number". **[5] (p85)**

**5.81** According to an article in the Afrocentric Experience dated July 2004, infant mortality in areas where Cuban medical professionals provide assistance has plunged: from 48 to 10.6 per 1,000 live births in Eritrea. **[15] (p1)**

**Specialist Facilities**

**5.82** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 stated that, "Asmara has a number of specialist facilities including a dedicated paediatric hospital and an eye clinic". **[5] (p85)**

**5.83** The report further noted that:

> "….some facilities are lacking within the country; for example laser treatment is not available for treating kidney stones. However, it was explained in many cases it is not a lack of knowledge or inability to undertake procedures but a risk of postoperative infection that is a particular problem. It was explained that people with standing in Eritrean society or with adequate funds might well get referrals to Saudi Arabia for treatment. One western embassy in Asmara also commented that although there is a lack of some forms of specialist treatment, some such treatment is available; for example, cardiac care and treatment". **[5] (p85-86)**

**5.84** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 stated that:

> "There is a single hospital for psychiatric care - the 'St Mary's Neuropsychiatric Hospital' located in Asmara with a capacity of 240 beds. According to the MLHW [Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare] staff here include one trained psychiatrist and seven psychiatric nurses. There is no specialist child psychiatrist in the country or dedicated facilities for children with psychiatric problems, where hospital admission is necessary children are placed in a ward alongside adult patients. The paediatric unit of the Mekane Hiwot Hospital, also located in Asmara, may also….[treat] a small number of children with psychiatric conditions. However, as a result of poor community awareness children or adolescents with psychological problems are often believed to be either 'bad kids' or have their condition associated with 'demons or other traditional beliefs'". **[5] (p89)**

**HIV/AIDS**

**5.85** USAID in a report in May 2003 stated that despite limited surveillance information in Eritrea, they estimated at the end of 2001, "55,000 people were living with the disease, yielding an adult prevalence of 2.8 percent, although the National AIDS Control Program estimates approximately 60,000 to 70,000 Eritreans are currently living with the disease." **[39] (p1)**

**5.86** The report goes on to state that:

> "Heterosexual transmission is believed to account for up to 90 percent of HIV infections. The majority of reported AIDS cases (98 percent) have been found in the urban centers of Asmara, Assab and Massawa. The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported that in 1999 in Asmara alone, 386 children were orphaned due to AIDS. By the end of 2001 an estimated, 24,000 Eritrean children had lost one or both parents to AIDS". **[39] (p1)**

**5.87** The report further noted that, "In 2002, Eritrea 's Ministry of Health released the results of the first nationwide HIV prevalence survey….The 2002 survey also found that 99 percent of respondents reported they had heard of HIV/AIDS. Despite this awareness and a correspondingly high concern about the threat of HIV, respondents reported a low perception of personal risk". **[39] (p1)**

**5.88** In addition the report noted that, "Eritrea developed its first five-year plan for HIV/AIDS control in 1997....In 2001, Eritrea signed a $40 million credit agreement with the World Bank to establish the HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Sexually Transmitted Infections and Tuberculosis project (HAMSET)". **[39] (p2)**

**5.89** IRIN News (3 October 2002) observed that, "HAMSET was set up to coordinate and improve the treatment and management of these four communicable, and often inter-linked, diseases". **[21g] (p1)**

**5.90** USAID also reported that: "Financed by the Government and the World Bank, the HAMSET project has already overseen the building of a new national blood bank in Asmara. All blood donations in Eritrea are screened for HIV and other infections". **[21g] (p1)** USAID in a report in May 2003 stated that in addition, HAMSET "supports voluntary counseling and testing for HIV in 20 hospitals around the country. A life-skills curriculum for schools that will include HIV/AIDS education is planned". **[39] (p2)**

**5.91** IRIN News (3 October 2002) observed that the HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre (VCT) in Asmara, opened in June 2002. It "is Eritrea's first 'free-standing' HIV testing facility. Offering rapid, on-the-spot HIV tests, as well as pre- and post- test counselling, it represents part of a nationwide campaign by the Government to improve AIDS awareness as well as care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs)". **[21g] (p1)**

**5.92** USAID further stated that:

> "Several smaller projects have been developed to assist the growing number of Eritreans living with HIV/AIDS and to prevent the further spread of HIV. For example, Norwegian Church Aid supports a program of the Eritrean Evangelical Church to help women escape prostitution. In cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the Danish Embassy, the Eritrean Ministry of Health encourages community care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. Implemented by Eritrean faith-based and community organizations, the Community-Based HIV/AIDS Care and Support: Mobilizing the Civil

Society of Eritrea Project will provide basic nursing training to volunteers so they may offer home-care services to people living with AIDS". **[39] (p2)**

**5.93** IRIN News (3 October 2002) observed that a nationwide support group Bidho (meaning 'challenge') had been established in 2002. It is "run out of a small office in Asmara, [and] currently conducts workshops and courses to educate people about HIV/AIDS. It also plans to set up an advice hotline and to act as an advocate for PLHAs, lobbying to improve health care and treatment". **[21g] (p2-3)**

**5.94** IRIN News (3 October 2002) observed that, "The Health Ministry, together with UNAIDS, is currently working to improve medical treatment for PLHAs and has recently started a pilot programme in antenatal clinics to provide anti-retroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the HIV infection". **[21g] (p3)**

**5.95** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 stated that Anti-Retroviral (ARV) "drugs are not provided by the state for treatment of infected persons and reveals that there are no plans to introduce these drugs in the near future. A western embassy in Asmara confirmed that individuals imported ARV drugs but there were potential problems with the quality of these in so far as there is always a risk they could be out of date. However, the source confirmed that such drugs are cheap (in relative terms)". **[5] (p88)**

**The Disabled**

**5.96** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003, noted that:

> "There was no discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, or in the provision of other state services. The war for independence and the conflict with Ethiopia left thousands of men and women with physical disabilities from injuries they received as guerrillas, soldiers, and civilian victims. The Government dedicated a substantial share of its resources to support and train these former fighters, who were regarded as heroes. There are no laws mandating access for persons with disabilities to public thoroughfares or public or private buildings; however, many newly constructed buildings provided access for persons with disabilities". **[6e] (p12)**

**5.97** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 stated that:

> "Information provided by the MLHW [Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare] provides details of specialist facilities available to disabled persons within Eritrea. These include four orthopaedic workshops in three different locations where patients can be fitted with prosthesis. There are reportedly plans to open further workshops in other parts of the country. There is also a specialist clinic run by an NGO that specifically treats children under the age of 15 who are affected with a range of physical disabilities; 75% of patients are polio cases and 20%

of patients have clubfeet. However others have conditions including muscular disorders, cerebral palsy and congenital deformities. Treatment is also provided for burn victims and physical trauma cases. The clinic is based in Asmara but has a network of dormitories for out-of-town patients. The clinic sees approximately 3,000 cases in a year. The Hansenians Eritrean Welfare Organisation provides care for lepers". **[5] (p89)**

## Educational System

**5.98** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that:

> "Education is provided free of charge in government schools and at the University of Asmara….Education is officially compulsory for children aged between seven and 13 years of age. Primary education begins at the age of seven and lasts for five years. Secondary education beginning at 12 years of age, lasts for as much as six years, comprising a first cycle of two years and a second of four years". **[1a] (p405)**

**5.99** The US Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "Students were responsible for uniforms, supplies, and transportation, which can be prohibitively expensive for many families….There was a shortage of schools and teachers at all levels. According to Ministry of Education figures, only 38 percent of children attended school. Approximately 75 percent of the population was illiterate. In rural areas, young girls usually left school early to work at home". **[6e] (p11)**

**5.100** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that, "By mid-1994 Eritrea had about 600 schools, almost three times as many as in 1991. In 1997 there were 3,096 students enrolled at the University of Asmara or at equivalent-level institutions". **[1a] (p405)** BBC News on 20 September 2001 noted that the University of Asmara is the only University in the country. **[10b]**

**5.101** The US Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "The Government added an additional grade to secondary school during the year and required that all students attend their final year at a location adjacent to the Sawa military training facility. Students who do not attend this final year of secondary school do not graduate and cannot sit for examinations to be admitted to university. The remote location of this boarding school, concern about security, and societal attitudes resulted in few girl students enrolling for their final year of high school; however, women may earn an alternative secondary school certificate by attending night school after completing national service". **[6e] (p11)**

**5.102** The BBC in a report dated 11 January 2004 stated that:

> "The United Nations children's agency, UNICEF, says the north-east African country of Eritrea is breaking human rights regulations by making children complete the final year of their secondary education at the site of a military training camp.…Sawa - in the far west of the country near the Sudan border -.…It is the site of a massive military training camp where every Eritrean aged between 18-40 must go as part of their compulsory military service…. Now to matriculate you must leave home and complete Grade 12 in Sawa - a move the government say was taken because they do not have the money to expand secondary schools around the country…. Those who attend grade 12 in Sawa and matriculate will have the chance to pursue further educational opportunities. For those who choose not to go - their national service begins when they turn 18 and that usually starts with training in Sawa's military camp". **[10e] (p1-2)**

**5.103** Moreover, the US Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "The University of Asmara refused to give diplomas to graduates unless they had completed their national service obligations, and the Ministry of Education did not release transcripts or exam results for those who were not released from national service. The Government placed tight controls on students who wanted to study abroad. Many were unable to obtain exit visas or were prevented from departing at the airport despite having necessary approvals. In addition, new graduates were frequently pressured to work for government entities". **[6e] (p7)**

**5.104** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "High school students also were required to participate in a paid summer work program". **[6e] (p13)**

Return to Contents

# 6. Human Rights

## 6A. Human Rights: Issues

### General

**6.1** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "The Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses". **[6e] (p1)** The draft Constitution prohibits torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. **[4] (p7)** The USSD 2003 report noted that:

"Security forces were responsible for disappearances. There were some reports that police resorted to torture and physical beatings of prisoners, particularly during interrogations, and police severely mistreated army deserters and draft evaders. Arbitrary arrests and detentions continued to be problems; an unknown number of persons were detained without charge because of political opinion. The use of a special court system limited due process. The Government infringed on the right to privacy. The Government severely restricted freedom of speech and press, and limited freedom of assembly and association". **[6e] (p1)**

**6.2** The UK Fact Finding Mission report stated that:

"One western embassy in Asmara described the general human rights situation within Eritrea as 'quite bad' from the point of view that dissidents were taken into detention without trial and the general lack of democracy. It was noted that all existing parliamentarians were linked to the ruling party and suggested that in effect the Government was effectively a dictatorship. Whilst viewing this situation as 'worrying', the source added that the Government did not compare with the military dictatorships that control some other countries. However, the source also noted that the Government appeared to respect and work according to the draft constitution although it was pointed out that this is neither complete nor ratified". **[5] (p17)**

**6.3** The AI report of May 2004 stated that:

"Human rights violations continue in Eritrea on a massive scale. Thousands of government critics and political opponents – many of them prisoners of conscience who have not used or advocated violence – are detained in secret. Some have been held for several years. None has been taken to court, charged or tried. In some cases, panels of military and police officers have reportedly handed down prison sentences in secret proceedings that flout basic standards of fair trial. Detainees are not informed of the accusations made against them, have no right to defend themselves or be legally represented, and have no recourse to an independent judiciary to challenge abuses of their fundamental rights". **[7h] (p2)**

**6.4** The UK Fact Finding Mission to Eritrea published 29 April 2003 stated that, "Unlike most countries the police are seldom seen on the street though occasionally groups of 2-3 soldiers might be observed participating in round ups for national service or a general ID check. The source considered detention conditions in Eritrea compared favourably with those in some neighbouring countries in the region. Reference was made to the Human Rights training ICRC provides to the army". **[5] (p18)**

**6.5** IRIN News reported on 27 March 2003 that, "President Isayas Afewerki's top economic adviser, Dr Woldai Futur on Thursday accused the international community of subjecting Eritrea to 'double standards' over human rights

issues. Speaking to reporters at the Office of the President in Asmara, he said conditions imposed on Eritrea in the field of human rights were 'much harsher' than those imposed on other countries….Woldai, who asserted that the Eritrean Government remained open to criticism, also said that it expected the international community to ensure implementation of an independent Boundary Commission's decision on demarcation of the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea". **[21h]**

**6.6** Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted in their January 2004 report that:

> "The government has refused to implement the 1997 constitution, drafted by a constitutional assembly and ratified by referendum. The constitution contains restraints on the arbitrary use of power. It provides for writs of habeas corpus, the rights of prisoners to have the validity of their detention decided by a court, and fair and public trials. The constitution protects freedom of the press, speech, and peaceful assembly. It authorizes the right to form political organizations. It allows every Eritrean to practice any religion". **[32c] (p1)**

Return to Contents

## Freedom of Speech & of the Media

### The Media

**6.7** The draft Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the Press. **[4] (p8)** However, Afrol News in an article dated 24 August 2004 commented on the previous day's publishing by Reporters sans Frontieres (RSF) of the "world press freedom ranking". It reported that "The states with "the most catastrophic situation" according to RSF, are to be found in Asia, with eight countries in the bottom ten. These include North Korea, Burma, China and Iran, but also Cuba and Eritrea – the worst country in Africa, according to RSF". **[18a] (p1)**

**6.8** Amnesty International (AI) noted in their report on 18 September 2002 that, "dozens of other government critics - civil servants, businesspeople, journalists, former liberation movement fighters, and elders who had sought to mediate between the Government and its critics - have been arrested since September 2001". **[7d] (p1)**

**6.9** The same AI report documented that:

| **The 10 journalists detained in September 2001** | |
|---|---|
| **Said Abdulkadir** | Chief editor and founder of the newspaper, Admas; also employee of the Ministry of Information's Arabic-language newspaper, Haddas Eritrea; aged 34. |
| **Yosuf Mohamed** | Chief editor of the newspaper, Tsigenay; business studies graduate; aged 45. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Ali** | |
| **Amanuel Asrat** | Chief editor of the newspaper, Zemen ("Time"); EPLF member since the 1970s. |
| **Temesgen Gebreyesus** | Sports reporter on the newspaper, Keste Debena ("Rainbow"); amateur actor; aged 36. |
| **Mattewos Habteab** | Editor of the newspaper, Meqaleh ("Echo"); mathematics graduate, University of Asmara; aged 30. |
| **Dawit Habtemichael** | Assistant chief editor and co-founder of the newspaper, Meqaleh; physics graduate, University of Asmara; full-time science teacher employed by the Ministry of Education; aged 30. |
| **Medhanie Haile** | Assistant chief editor and co-founder of the newspaper, Keste Debena; law graduate, University of Asmara; full-time employee of the Ministry of Justice; aged 33. |
| **Dawit Isaac** | Editor and co-owner of the newspaper, Setit; dual Eritrean and Swedish citizen as a result of being granted asylum in Sweden in the 1980s; education graduate; writer and theatre producer; aged 38. |
| **Seyoum Tsehaye** | Freelance photographer; French language graduate and former French teacher; EPLF veteran since the 1970s; former director of Eritrean state television in the early 1990s; aged 49. |
| **Fessaye Yohannes ("Joshua")** | Reporter and co-founder of the newspaper, Setit; EPLF veteran since 1977; poet and director of an amateur cultural dance group; studied in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2000; aged 46. |

**[7d] (p10-11)**

**6.10** It further stated that:

> "On 31 March 2002 the journalists began a hunger strike, demanding a fair trial before an independent court if they were charged with breaking the law, or their release. The authorities allegedly refused them water. Three days later, as the hunger-strike began to attract international attention and protests, nine of the ten were moved from the 1st Police Station in Asmara to undisclosed places of detention. Dawit Isaac, who had recently undergone medical surgery, was taken under guard to a hospital in Asmara, but nothing has been heard of him since. The outcome of the hunger strike is not known and nothing has been heard of the nine other journalists since, from government or unofficial sources". **[7d] (p11)**

**6.11** The USSD report continued that, "The Government permitted four reporters for foreign news organizations to operate in the country. The reporter for Deutsche Welle was a citizen, while British Broadcasting Corporation, Agence France-Presse, and Reuters reporters were foreigners". **[6e] (p6)**

**6.12** It further said that:

> "The arrests of journalists continued during the year [2003]. On July 8 police took Aklilu Solomon, a journalist who submitted articles to the Voice of America from his home during the night. He remained in detention at an unknown location at year's end [2003]. Although the Government claimed that he was detained for failing to fulfill national service obligations, reports indicate that Aklilu had a medical exemption from further national service and had been called into the MOI [Ministry of Information] 10 days before his detention. At that meeting, his press credentials were cancelled and he was told that his reports concerning soldiers who died in the war with Ethiopia 'pleased the enemy'". **[6e] (p6)**

**6.13** RSF, in its 2003 Annual Report said that:

> "The press freedom situation in Eritrea is the most serious in all of sub-Saharan Africa. The privately-owned press has been shut down and those of its journalists who failed to flee are in prison or in hiding. Eritrea was the world's biggest prison for journalists at the end of 2002. This is the first time in many years that an African country achieved this grim distinction. Most of the imprisoned journalists had been held since September 2001 in an undisclosed location without any official reason. The authorities referred to this situation on several occasions during 2002 while remaining evasive about the charges against the detainees. No date had yet been set for any trial. Eritrea is still the only country in Africa, and one of the very few in the world, to have no privately-owned news media. Aside from the international radio stations that can be received in certain regions, the state is the only source of news. It controls the television and radio and the few newspapers. Journalists working for the state-owned news media have no room for manoeuvre. They just relay the government's propaganda. No criticism of the government is tolerated". **[19] (p1)** This is also substantiated by the US State Department and the UK Fact Finding Mission. The latter documents that one source believed that e-mails are monitored. **[5] (p26-27)**

## Non Media Criticism

**6.14** Amnesty International on 18 September 2002 stated that:

> "In October 2000, Eritrean professionals and academics met in Berlin, Germany, and wrote a letter to President Issayas Afewerki, since known as the 'Berlin Manifesto', about the 'political and economic challenges that confront us as a new nation'. The group, most of them

from abroad, said that the Government had 'lagged behind in the development of democratic institutions, including mechanisms for ensuring accountability and transparency.' The letter complained that civil society had become alienated and that the collective leadership of the EPLF had been 'abandoned and replaced by one-man leadership'. It cited the 'absence of freedom of expression which has prevented the citizens from exercising their rightful duties of restraining the undue accumulation of power in the presidency.' In the letter, the group criticised the Special Court, established outside the normal judicial system, for '...undermining the rule of law and creating disaffection…. People have been languishing in jail for many years without being formally charged with any crime.' The letter ended with a call for open debate". **[7d] (p5)**

**6.15** It goes on to note that "PFDJ officials and members of the Government reacted vigorously to the criticisms in the 'Berlin Manifesto'. Editors from the independent press were arrested to prevent them from publishing it. Nevertheless the criticisms persisted". **[7d] (p5)**

**6.16** The USSD Background Note of March 2004 reported that:

> "In September 2001, after several months in which a number of prominent PFDJ party members had gone public with a series of grievances against the government and in which they called for implementation of the constitution and the holding of elections, the government implemented a crackdown. Eleven prominent dissidents, members of what had come to be known as the Group of 15, were arrested and held without charge at an unknown location. At the same time, the government shut down the independent press and arrested its reporters and editors, holding them incommunicado and without charge. In subsequent weeks, the government arrested other individuals, including two Eritrean employees of the U.S. Embassy. All of these individuals remain held without charge and none are allowed visitors". **[6f] (p4)**

Return to Contents

## Freedom of Religion

**6.17** The US State Department Report on Religious Freedom, 2003, noted that, "The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, its provisions have not yet been implemented and in practice the Government restricted this right in the case of several Protestant denominations, Jehovah's Witnesses, and for other religious groups that do not have a long history in the country". **[6b] (p1)**

**6.18** The US State Department Report 2003 on Human Rights noted that:

> "In May 2002, the MOI [Ministry of Information] ordered several Protestant churches to close, including the Rhema Church,

Pentecostals, Full Gospel, and other Protestant groups. The Government instructed these churches to register with the MOI to receive authorization to reopen. Despite the fact that several of the churches submitted registrations in 2002, none of the churches had been authorized to reopen by year's end [2003]. The four government-sanctioned religious groups were not required to register". **[6e] (p8)**

**6.19** The US State Department Report 2003 on Human Rights noted that, "The Government prohibited political activity by religious groups and faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Government's Directorate of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Local Government monitored religious compliance with this proscription against political activity". **[6e] (p8)**

**6.20** AI in a report dated May 2004 said, "In early 2003, the authorities cracked down on the minority churches, breaking into religious services in church premises or private homes, confiscating bibles and musical instruments, arresting and beating church members on the spot, and torturing them later in military detention centres". **[7h] (p12)**

**6.21** AI further said in a report dated 1 June 2004 that:

"Church leaders Haile Naizgi and Dr Kiflu Gebremeskel were arrested at their homes in the capital, Asmara, on 23 May [2004]. They are reportedly held incommunicado in the 1st and 6th police stations respectively in Asmara. Amnesty International considers them prisoners of conscience, arrested solely because of their religious beliefs. They are at risk of torture to abandon their faith. They have not been taken to court within 48 hours, as required by law, or charged with any offence. Tesfatsion Hagos, pastor of the Rema evangelical church in Asmara, was arrested on 27 May [2004] while on a visit to Massawa port. His whereabouts are not yet known, but he too is believed to have been arrested solely on account of his religious beliefs. Haile Naizgi is the chairperson of one of Eritrea's largest pentecostal churches, the Eritrean Full Gospel Church (also known as Mullu Wongel church). Dr Kiflu Gebremeskel, a former chairperson, is now a pastor. Their arrests are part of an intensifying wave of government persecution of minority Christian evangelical and pentecostal churches in Eritrea. Both men are in their 40s. Haile Naizgi, formerly an acoountant for World Vision, is married with four children. Dr Kiflu Gebremeskel, a former mathematics lecturer at the Univesity of Asmara, with a PhD from a US university, is also chair of the Eritrean Evangelical Alliance, a grouping of different churches including the Rema church. Hundreds of members of Eritrea's evangelical and pentecostal churches, both adult and children, and several pastors, have been arrested since early 2003, following a government directive of May 2002 closing down the minority churches and ordering them to register with the new Department of Religious Affairs. Many people have been tortured to try to force them to abandon their faith". **[7l]**

## Religious Groups

**6.22** Africa South of the Sahara 2004 noted "Eritrea is almost equally divided between Muslims and Christians. Most Christians are adherents of the Orthodox Church, although there are Protestants and Roman Catholic communities. A small number of the population follow traditional beliefs". **[1a] (p403)**

**6.23** The US State Department Report on Religious Freedom 2003 noted that:

> "Although reliable statistics are not available, approximately 50 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim, and approximately 40 percent is Orthodox Christian. The population also includes a small number of Eastern Rite and Roman Catholics (5 percent), Protestants (2 percent), smaller numbers of Seventh-day Adventists, and fewer than 1,500 Jehovah's Witnesses. Approximately 2 percent practices traditional indigenous religions. Also present in very small numbers are practicing Buddhists, Hindus, and Baha'is. The population in the eastern and western lowlands predominantly is Muslim and in the highlands predominantly is Christian. There are very few atheists. Religious participation is high among all ethnic groups". **[6b] (p1)**

**6.24** This report continued that:

> "Within the country's geographic and ethnic groups, the majority of the Tigrinya is Orthodox Christian, with the exception of the Djiberti Tigrinya, who are Muslim. The majority of the Tigre, Saho, Nara, Afar, Rashaida, Beja, and Blen is Muslim. Approximately 40 percent of the Blen is Christian, the majority of whom is Catholic. The majority of the Kunama is Roman Catholic, with a large minority of Muslims and some who practice traditional indigenous religions. The central and southern highland areas, which generally are more economically developed than the lowlands, predominantly are populated by Christian Tigrinyas and some Muslim Djiberti and Saho. The Afar and Rashaida, as well as some of the Saho and Tigre, live in the eastern lowlands. The Blen live on the border between the western lowlands and the central highlands and are concentrated in the Keren area, which also includes a significant minority of Tigre and Tigrinya speakers. The Beja, Kunama, Nara, and the majority of Tigre live in the western lowlands". **[6b] (p1)**

**6.25** It further said that, "Leaders of the four principal religions meet routinely and engage in efforts to foster cooperation and understanding among those religions. Of these religions only the Catholic Church has publicly defended the right of freedom of conscience. Leaders of the four principal religious organizations enjoy excellent interfaith relations". **[6b] (p4)**

**6.26** The USSD Report also noted that:

> "Citizens generally are tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion, particularly among the four government-sanctioned religious

groups. Mosques and the principal Christian churches coexist throughout the country, although Islam tends to predominate in the lowlands and Christianity in the highlands. In Asmara, Christian and Muslim holidays are respected by all religions. Some holidays are celebrated jointly. Societal attitudes towards Jehovah's Witnesses are an exception to this general tolerance…. There was some societal prejudice against members of the non-sanctioned religious groups including individual cooperation with government authorities to report on and harass those members. There also were reports that some Orthodox Christian priests encouraged harassment of these non-sanctioned religious groups and reported their activities to the Government". **[6b] (p4)**

**6.27** The report continued that, "The military has no chaplains. Military personnel are free to worship at nearby houses of worship for the four sanctioned religions". **[6b] (p3)**

**6.28** The UK Fact Finding Mission to Eritrea published 29 April 2003 stated that, "The Sawa military training establishment is not only secular, but also that the practice in operation there is to mix religions and races of the military trainees. This is so that squad members have to rely on people who are of differing religions and races but who above all are Eritreans". **[5] (p33)**

**6.29** The USSD Report on Religious Freedom 2003 noted that, "In 2001 the Government began closing religious facilities of non-sanctioned religious groups, those not belonging to the four principal religious groups in the country". These are Othodox Christians, Muslims, Catholics, and members of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea. The same report added that, "Following the May 2002 government decree that all religious groups must register or cease all religious activities, religious facilities not belonging to the four sanctioned religious groups were closed. Authorities also informed non-sanctioned religious groups that a standing law would be used to stop political or other gatherings in private homes of more than three or five persons". **[6b] (p2)**

**6.30** The same report added that, "The Government harassed, arrested, and detained members of non-sanctioned Protestant religious groups locally referred to collectively as 'Pentes,' reform movements from and within the Coptic Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and adherents of the Baha'i Faith….There were also numerous reports of forced recantations and physical torture". **[6b] (p1)**

**6.31** The UK Fact Finding Mission to Eritrea published 29 April 2003 stated that the 'Pente' groups that were ordered to close were "generally suspected of being externally funded, mainly from the USA and Western Europe, a view supported by the amount of money that they seemed to have at their disposal. Large meetings were held at top hotels including the Intercontinental, the most expensive in the country. No local or regional group could afford to do this". **[5] (p33-34)**

## Non-Sanctioned Religious Groups

**6.32** The US Department of State report on Religious Freedom 2003 documented numerous abuses of non-sanctioned religious groups:

> On 1 January 2003 "50 members of the Rhema Church in Asmara were detained for 10 days without charge. On 16 February 2003, an additional 17 Rhema Church members were detained for 15 days after meeting in a private residence; some of the members reportedly were beaten while in detention". **[6b] (p3)**
>
> On 16 March 2003 "more than 70 members of different Protestant churches (Rhema, Full Gospel, Kalehiwot, and Mesert Cristos churches) in Asmara were detained for 10 days. This group reportedly was held in a metal shipping container without ventilation or sanitation facilities". **[6b] (p3)**
>
> On 23 March 2003 "40 members of the Philadelphia Church in Asmara were detained for 8 days, and some reportedly were subjected to physical torture and pressured to recant their faith. The pastor and other church leaders who went to inquire on their behalf also were detained. Members reported that their pastor was forced to walk barefoot over sharp stones. After 8 days, relatives were forced to sign papers stating that those detained would not attend church services or meet in their homes with other church members". **[6b] (p3)**
>
> On 17 April 2003 "15 members of a splinter group of the Orthodox Church in Kushte were attacked while meeting in a private residence. A few of the members were admitted to the hospital for treatment as a result of the attacks. On the same day in Asmara, 11 members of the Mesert Cristos Church were arrested while meeting at their church building and detained for 1 day". **[6b] (p3)**

**6.33** Amnesty International advised that "On 7 September [2003], 12 members of the Eritrean Bethel Church, including two children, were arrested at a prayer meeting in Asmara". **[7g] (p2)**

**6.34** The US Department of State report on Religious Freedom 2003 noted that:

> "There were several reports that on occasion police tortured those detained for their religious beliefs, including using bondage, heat exposure, and beatings. There also were credible reports that some of the detainees were required to sign statements repudiating their faith or agreeing not to practice it as a condition for release. In some cases where detainees refused to sign, relatives were asked to do so on their behalf. Some of these statements reportedly threatened execution for those who continued to attend unsanctioned religious services or meetings". **[6b] (p3)**

**6.35** On 18 September 2003 AI stated that:

> "Fifty-seven young male and female members of minority Christian churchs are being held in metal shipping containers at Sawa military camp in Western Eritrea. They were arrested in mid-August [2003] and are being held incommunicado in harsh conditions, which amount to torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The 57 prisoners of conscience are school students from all over Eritrea who were sent to Sawa Military Camp in western Eritrea for a compulsory 3-month summer course under new pre-National Service education regulations. They were arrested in the camp for possessing bibles in the Tigrinya language (although this is not illegal) and are imprisoned in metal shipping containers. Conditions in the containers, which have no light or ventilation, are said to be extremely hot and suffocating, and they are allegedly being given little food, refused medical care and have to perform bodily functions inside the container. They are being pressurized to sign statements to abandon their religion and re-join the majority Eritrean Orthodox Church. Five others arrested with them were allowed to go free when they signed the statements". **[7f] (p1)**

**Jehovah's Witnesses**

**6.36** The US Department of State report on Religious Freedom 2003 noted that, "Most Jehovah's Witnesses have refused on religious grounds to participate in national service or to vote, which has led to widespread criticism that Jehovah's Witnesses collectively were shirking their civic duty". **[6b] (p3)**

**6.37** The US Department of State report on Religious Freedom 2003 noted that:

> "Although members of other religious groups, including Muslims, reportedly have been punished in past years for failure to participate in national service, the Government has singled out Jehovah's Witnesses who were conscientious objectors for harsher treatment than that received by followers of other faiths for similar actions. Only Jehovah's Witnesses who did not participate in national service have been subject to dismissal from the civil service, revocation of their trading licenses, eviction from government-owned housing, and denial of passports, identity cards, and exit visas". **[6b] (p3)**

**6.38** It also noted that:

> "At the end of the period covered by this report [30 June 2003], 11 Jehovah's Witnesses remained in detention without charge and without being tried for failing to participate in national service. These individuals have been detained for varying periods, some for more than 8 years. The maximum penalty for refusing to perform national service is 3 years. Ministry of Justice officials have denied that any Jehovah's Witnesses were in detention without charge, although they

acknowledge that some Jehovah's Witnesses and a number of Muslims were jailed for evading national service". **[6b] (p3-4)**

**6.39** Amnesty International on 18 September 2003 reported that "three Jehovah's Witnesses have been detained for nine years for their faith-based refusal of military service". **[7g] (p2)**

**6.40** The US Department of State report on Religious Freedom 2003 noted that, "In 1994 in accordance with a presidential decree, the Government revoked the trading licenses of some Jehovah's Witnesses and dismissed most of those of the faith that worked in the civil service. This governmental action resulted in economic, employment, and travel difficulties for many Jehovah's Witnesses, especially former civil servants and businessmen". **[6b] (p2)**

**6.41** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 stated that:

> "According to this source [the delegation met a prominent member of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Eritrea], the procedures for becoming a recognised Jehovah's Witness are strict and difficult. Before they are baptised, a person has to prove their knowledge and devotion to the faith. Much study is needed, so much so that the source stated "If a person claiming to be a witness did not know all of the main points of the faith then that is a lie". They added, "A person can be termed a Witness, attendee or liar". An attendee is nothing, anyone can attend a witness event but that does not make the person a Witness. Only those baptised and possessing the correct knowledge should be considered as Witnesses". **[5] (p35)**

**6.42** The same report stated that, "Over a number of months the Witness applicant will often without warning be asked to visit a group of noted Witnesses. Often these are Elders and generally three people will be present. Here they will be extensively tested on their knowledge and thus their acceptability to the faith. Many describe this process as being the hardest but most rewarding experience of their lives". **[5] (p35)**

**6.43** The UK Fact Finding Mission report published 29 April 2003 stated that:

> "There are no Kingdom Halls [places of worship for the Jehovah's Witnesses] in Eritrea, nor have there been any since independence. The Government owns all land and as they do not recognise the faith it can not get permission to set up Kingdom Halls. Worship 'underground' is illegal also. Meetings that are not sanctioned are not allowed to involve more than 5 persons. There exists an Eritrean Council of Elders but the branch office is in Nairobi (Kenya) and has been for many years. All witnesses in Eritrea know this. It is basic knowledge even to attendees". **[5] (p35)**

**6.44** Afrol News in an article dated 20 February 2004 stated "The Eritrean Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of religion. However, Jehovah's Witnesses in Eritrea – who number about 1,600 have frequently been arrested

on account of their faith's principle of refusing military service, according to a US government report. **[18b]** The USSD report on Human Rights for Ethiopia, 2002 noted that "The Government continued its policy of not deporting members of Jehovah's Witnesses of Eritrean origin, who might face religious repression in Eritrea " **[6c] (p16)**

**6.45** The US Department of State report on Religious Freedom 2003 noted that on 16 April 2003, "Approximately 160 Jehovah's Witnesses were detained while meeting in a private home in Asmara. Most were released within a week, but 5 who apparently were considered 'elders' were detained for 28 days." **[6b] (p3)**

**6.46** AI in a report dated 18 February 2004 stated that:

> "On 24 January 2004 Eritrean police arrested 38 members of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion who were holding a religious service in a private home in the capital, Asmara. Ten were released without charge in the next few days but 28 remain in custody, including children, and a 90-year-old man. AI considers them prisoners of conscience, detained solely because of their religious beliefs. The Eritrean authorities have not publicly acknowledged the arrests or given any reason for them. The whereabouts of the 28 are not known, but they are believed to be held in one of Eritrea's many secret detention centres". **[7g] (p1)**

### Muslims

**6.47** It was noted by the US Department of State report on Religious Freedom 2003 that although Muslims have been punished in past years for failure to participate in national service, the Government has singled out Jehovah's Witnesses who were conscientious objectors for comparatively harsher treatment. **[6b] (p3)**

**6.48** The same report noted that, "Some Muslims also have objected to universal national service because of the requirement that women perform military duty". **[6b] (p3)**

**6.49** AI in its Press release on 19 May 2004 entitled 'Eritrea: Government resists scrutiny on human rights and calls to end torture and arbitrary detention' noted that, "Muslims have been targeted too, some held in secret incommunicado detention for years on suspicion of links with an Islamist armed opposition group operating from Sudan". **[7j]**

**6.50** The US Department of State report on Religious Freedom 2003 noted that, "The Government also restricts what it deems to be fundamentalist forms of Islam. Most foreign preachers of Islam are not allowed to proselytize, and funding of Islamic missionary or religious activities is controlled". **[6b] (p3)**

## Freedom of Assembly & Association

**6.51** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "The Constitution, which has not been implemented, provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully; however, citizens were not allowed to exercise this right in practice. A small group of former fighters held authority within the Government. The PFDJ completely dominated the Government, which came to power in the 1993 popular referendum in which more than 99 percent of voters chose to have an independent country managed by a transitional government run by the PFDJ rather than to remain part of Ethiopia. The PFDJ has not transitioned to a democratically elected government and national elections, originally scheduled for 1997, were never held. The only authorized political party was the PFDJ, and there were no opposition parties active domestically". **[6e] (p10)**

**6.52** However, the report said: " Several respected elders who were arrested in 2001 for meeting without a permit remained in detention without charge at year's end [2003]". **[6e] (p7)**

**6.53** The same report also noted that, "In February 2002, a new electoral commission was established to set a new date for elections and review the previously drafted laws; however, elections were still not scheduled at year's end [2003]. Government officials stated that the elections were delayed because of continuing tensions with Ethiopia and problems caused by dissidents and the press". **[6e] (p10)**

**6.54** However in Africa South of the Sahara's 2004 report it was noted that, "In 2003 local elections began to be held in villages throughout Eritrea; in most cases previously appointed administrators were elected to their existing positions ". **[1a] (p389)**

**6.55** Europa in a report dated 27 November 2003 said that, "A process of local elections was launched in May 2002. Debub and Maekel were the first two regions where the process has been completed. International observers reported that the debates in the communities are open and transparent and the electoral process was carried out seriously with all guarantees of secrecy". **[1c]**

**6.56** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "The Constitution, which has not been implemented, provides for freedom of assembly and association; however, the Government restricted this right in practice. A permit from the Ministry of Local Governments was required for a public meeting or demonstration. There were no reports of any political demonstrations that were not sponsored by the ruling party; no other permits were applied for during the year [2003]. Several respected elders who were arrested in 2001 for meeting without a permit remained in detention without charge at year's end". **[6e] (p7)**

**6.57** The Constitution states that every citizen has the right to form organisations for political ends. **[4] (p8)** However the US State Department Report 2003 stated that, "the Government restricted the freedom of association. The Government did not allow the formation of any political parties other than the PFDJ". **[6e] (p7)**

**6.58** BBC News reported on 15 August 2004 that:

> "The opposition to Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki has been meeting, leading to the most significant shake-up in Eritrean politics for many years. Opposition groups, which have been notoriously disunited, have come up with a common set of objectives, which could – for the first time in years – begin to pose a greater challenge to the president's hold on power. Since achieving independence from Ethiopia in 1993, Eritrea has been a one party state, with the ruling *People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) the only party* allowed to function. But there was a critical moment in September 2001 when some of President Isaias' closest associates sent him an open letter calling for the implementation of the Eritrean constitution, which guaranteed a wide range of human rights. The president's reaction was to detain his critics without trial, some of whom had fought alongside him during the 30-year long war of independence. All independent newspapers were closed and journalists arrested. Many members of the PFDJ living abroad formed the Democratic Party, but have since then been attempting to come up with a strategy for resisting the president's rule. Now the Democratic Party has agreed on a common set of objectives with two older parties, the ELF and the ELF-RC. At a meeting in Frankfurt, Germany, the parties agreed to work together to try to bring about what they called a 'national dialogue'. An influential student grouping – the Movement for Democratic Change – led by the exiled former President of the University of Asmara student's union, Semere Kessete, has decided to formally merge with the Democratic Party. This has left the Eritrean opposition in two clear camps. One camp – the Eritrean National Alliance – is based in Ethiopia and wishes to overthrow President Isaias by force. It has refused to take a stand on the contentious issue of where the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea lies – something the two countries went to war on in 1998. The other camp includes the Democratic Party, the ELF and ELF-RC. They resist Ethiopian intervention in Eritrean affairs. They also support the adjudication of an international tribunal, which ruled in Eritrea's favour over key aspects of the border with Ethiopia. This grouping also appears willing to meet President Isaias – if that would lead to a democratic renewal in Eritrea. For the first time in many years, President Isaias now faces a more united and more determined opposition". **[10i] (p1-2)**

Return to Contents

## Political Activists

## Political Opposition

**6.59** AI on 18 September 2002 stated that, "Eritrea's new Constitution (1997) allowed for the formation of multiple political parties, but the democratisation process was postponed during the 1998-2000 war". **[7b]**

**6.60** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that:

> "December 1996 was marked by a number of assassinations, including that of former commanding officer of the ELF. Numerous people were wounded in a bomb attack in Habero. A former military commander of the radical armed Islamist group, the Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ) was also killed in December. The Government blamed most of these incidents on the EIJ, although some analysts suggested that they were perpetrated by pro-Government elements involved in internal disputes. Other observers linked the killings to an anti-corruption investigation that started in December. During the investigation PFDJ members responsible for the party's Red Sea Trading Corporation were found guilty (by a closed tribunal) of involvement in a smuggling operation with customs officials and sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment". **[1a] (p389)**

**6.61** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "There were unconfirmed reports that the Government continued to hold numerous members of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), an armed opposition group. Authorities sometimes arbitrarily arrested and detained former combatants or members of the PFDJ who violated an unwritten code of conduct". **[6e] (p4)**

**6.62** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that, "Relations between Eritrea and Sudan deteriorated in late 1994, when the Eritrean authorities accused Sudan of training 400 terrorists. Sudan accused Eritrea of training some 3,000 Sudanese rebels in camps within Eritrea. In January 1997 the National Democratic Alliance launched an attack from Eritrea on Sudanese forces in the border region, resulting in numerous casualties. Sudan, however, blamed the incident on Eritrea's armed forces. Meanwhile, Eritrea claimed that the EIJ was training more than 4,000 Eritrean Muslims in Sudan to launch attacks against the Eritrean authorities from Sudanese bases in Eritrea". **[1a] (p390-391)**

**6.63** Furthermore the report noted that:

> "In March 1999 the Alliance of Eritrean National Forces (AENF) was launched in Khartoum by 10 Eritrean opposition organizations. It was led by Abdallah Idriss, the Chairman of an ELF faction, who had consistently opposed the Afewerki Government from exile. The AENF declared that it would establish a Government in exile and commence negotiations over the border dispute with Ethiopia. However, the AENF, composed of conflicting religious and ethnic factions, was accused of largely being a creation of Sudan and Ethiopia. By mid-1999 Sudan indicated its willingness to improve its relations with Eritrea too. In May

1999 President Afewerki and his Sudanese counterpart signed a reconciliation agreement". **[1a] (p391)**

## Democratic Elections

**6.64** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "In February 2002, a new electoral commission was established to set a new date for elections and review the previously drafted laws; however, elections were still not scheduled at year's end [2002]. Government officials stated that the elections were delayed because of continuing tensions with Ethiopia and problems caused by dissidents and the press". **[6e] (p10)**

**6.65** However in Africa South of the Sahara's 2004 report it was noted that, "In 2003 local elections began to be held in villages throughout Eritrea; in most cases previously appointed administrators were elected to their existing positions ". **[1a] (p389)**

**6.66** The Economist Intelligence Unit in its 2004 country profile of Eritrea noted that, "The elections were held in 178 administrative localities in Gash-Barka over a 37-day period, but few other details are available. Since the government still holds many of its main political opponents in detention, voters are likely to have been limited to choosing from among supporters of the administration". **[22] (p11)**

## The G15 Group

**6.67** AI on 18 September 2002 advised that: "In response to increasing criticisms and opposition to the President and to the latest G15 letter detailing 'obstacles to reform', the security authorities detained 11 members of the group in Asmara on 18 September 2001. Four members escaped arrest: three were out of the country and one withdrew his support for the group". **[7d] (p7)**

**6.68** The report goes on to note that:

> "The 11 were all members of the Central Committee of the PFDJ and had been senior EPLF military or political leaders during the liberation struggle. They included three former Foreign Ministers - Haile Woldetensae, Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo (who was later Vice-President) and Petros Solomon, Aster Fissehatsion, a prominent woman EPLF leader, and three army generals. As Central Committee members, they automatically became members of the first National Assembly under the 1997 Constitution and should therefore have enjoyed parliamentary immunity from arrest. The National Assembly, however, declared on 4 February 2002 that 'by committing such a crime, defeatism, they have removed themselves from the National Assembly'. Some had been co-founders and leading members of the EPLF since the 1970s, subsequently being appointed government ministers following independence, although all had been dismissed from their posts by the time of their arrests". **[7d] (p7)**

**6.69** The report further noted that:

> "None of the eleven has been brought to court or formally charged with an offence, although the Constitution and the Penal Code require that detainees should be charged before a court or released within 48 hours of arrest. The maximum period for holding a suspect for investigation is 28 days. No lawyer, however, has dared to bring a habeas corpus action to challenge the detentions and to demand that the authorities produce the detainees in court". **[7d] (p7)**

**6.70** Furthermore, it noted that:

> "The Government said the eleven 'had committed crimes against the sovereignty, security and peace of the nation'. In February 2002 the National Assembly 'strongly condemned them for the crimes they committed against the people and their country'. It was claimed that the G15 had committed treason during the war with Ethiopia. Although no death penalty has been carried out in Eritrea since independence, treason is a capital offence". **[7d] (p7)**

**6.71** AI in its September 2002 report stated that:

| **The 11 "G15" detainees** | |
|---|---|
| **Ogbe Abraha** | Army General; formerly Chief of Staff of the Defence Force, Minister of Trade and Industry, and Minister of Labour and Social Welfare; he has chronic asthma. |
| **Aster Fissehatsion** | Director in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; executive member of the official National Union of Eritrean Women; EPLF official since 1977; former wife of Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo, also detained in September 2001; she has stomach ulcers. |
| **Berhane Gebregziabeher** | Army Major-General; head of the National Reserve Force; EPLF political bureau member since 1977. |
| **Beraki Gebreselassie** | Former Ambassador to Germany (to May 2001); previously Minister of Education and Minister of Information and Culture. |
| **Hamad Hamid Hamad** | Head of the Arabic (Middle East) Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; former Ambassador to Sudan. |
| **Saleh Kekiya** | Former Minister of Transport and Communication, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Head of the Office of the President. |
| **Germano Nati** | Regional Administrator. |
| **Estifanos Seyoum** | Army Brigadier General; former Head of the Inland |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Revenue Service (to August 2001). |
| **Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo** | Former Vice-President (dismissed in February 2001), Minister of Local Government, and Minister of Foreign Affairs; EPLF co-founder. |
| **Petros Solomon** | Former Minister of Maritime Resources; previously Minister of Foreign Affairs, EPLF military commander and intelligence chief, EPLF political bureau member since 1977. |
| **Haile Woldetensae (or Weldensae, also known as "Durue")** | Former Minister of Trade and Industry (until July 2001); previously Minister of Foreign Affairs during the war and the peace talks, and also Minister of Finance; former EPLF head of political affairs and political bureau member since 1977; he is diabetic. |

**[7d] (p8)**

**6.72** AI further noted that, "In the months following and through 2002 to the time of writing, there have been reports that dozens of other people have been detained by the security police for supporting views expressed in the G15 open letter and in some cases for criticising the G15 detentions. Some elders were reported to have been detained after trying to mediate between the Government and its critics. Arrests also have in many cases been difficult to confirm because of the secrecy and pervasive intimidation". **[7d] (p10)**

**6.73** The UK Fact Finding Mission report stated that:

> "People have read about them [G15] when there was an independent press although nobody really seems sure what they stood for or whether like the ELF and AENF the only policy they were perceived to have was a wish to replace President Issayas. They are however connected to the wish for greater democracy, and that has stirred interest in itself. The source emphasised there is no evidence of a reform movement based on the beliefs and policies of the G-15". **[5] (p12)**

**Supporters of the Ethiopian Derg Regime**

**6.74** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "An unknown number of persons suspected of association with the Ethiopian Mengistu regime, Islamic elements considered radical, or suspected terrorist organizations continued to remain in detention without charge, some of whom have been detained for more than 9 years". **[6e] (p4)**

**Supporters of the ELF and ELF-RC**

**6.75** AI in its report dated 18 September 2002 stated that:

> "In 1987 the EPLF, uniting with an Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) faction, agreed a policy objective of creating a multi-party democratic system in a future independent state. At independence in 1991 when the victorious EPLF formed the Provisional Government of Eritrea, there was no reconciliation between the ruling EPLF and the ELF rivals. However, ELF members were allowed to return to Eritrea as individuals on condition that they renounced opposition. Some ELF members complied, such as the ELF-Unified Organisation, whose leaders were given government and military posts. Others, such as the ELF-Revolutionary Council [ELF-RC], remained in opposition – some launching a new armed struggle from bases in Sudan, others engaging solely in political opposition in exile". **[7b] (p3)**

**6.76** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "There were reports that the Government continued to hold numerous members of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), an armed opposition group that fought against Ethiopia during the struggle for independence". **[6e] (p4)**

**6.77** The British Embassy stated on 3 March 2000 that, "The organisation is still active in exile (predominantly Sudan and Ethiopia) and remains openly critical of the present Eritrean Government. It is likely that the Government's reaction to the return of the individual would depend on the position he had held in the organisation and on the type of activity he was thought to have carried out". **[13]**

**6.78** On 10 August 2003 Gedab News reported that ELF-RC withdrew from the Eritrean National Alliance (ENA) an opposition umbrella group, formally the AENF, in October 2002, "to protest the ENA's alleged willingness to allow foreign forces to exert pressure on its operations including on matters dealing with the election of its leadership". **[38a] (p2)**

### Supporters of the EIJ

**6.79** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that, the EIJ still had "supporters in the western lowlands and considered that the group could not operate in the manner they do without such support. It was explained that this group had previously attacked Muslim citizens who support the Government though such incidents have decreased since the war with Ethiopia; mines however were still being laid in the region". **[5] (p10)**

**6.80** The United States Department of State report of March 2004 stated that, "Relations with Sudan also were colored by occasional incidents involving the extremist group, Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ)-which the Eritrean Government believes is supported by the National islamic Front government in Khartoum and by continued Eritrean support for the Sudanese opposition coalition, the National Democratic Alliance". **[6e] (p4-5)**

## Employment Rights

**6.81** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "Some government policies restricted free association or prevented the formation of unions, including within the civil service, the military, the police, and other essential services. The Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare must grant special approval for groups of 20 or more persons seeking to form a union. There were no reports that the Government opposed the formation of labor associations during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p12)**

**6.82** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "The Constitution, which has not been implemented, and Proclamation 118 of 2001, which has the effect of law, provide workers with the legal right to form unions to protect their interests; however, some government policies restricted free association or prevented the formation of unions, including within the civil service, military, police, and other essential services. The Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare grant special approval for groups of 20 or more persons seeking to form a union. There were no reports that the Government opposed the formation of labor associations during the year. The National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) maintained a close affiliation with the Government, and its leadership consisted of high-ranking PFDJ members. The NCEW represented more than 25,000 workers from 250 unions and received some assistance from the International Labor Organization (ILO) and foreign labor organizations. The largest union within the NCEW was the Textile, Leather, and Shoe Federation". **[6e] (p12)**

**6.83** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "Unions may affiliate internationally. All five workers' federations within the NCEW maintained affiliations with international unions". **[6e] (p12)**

Return to Contents

## People Trafficking

**6.84** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "the law does not prohibit trafficking in persons. Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports of trafficking forced or bonded labor". **[6e] (p13)**

## Freedom of Movement

**6.85** The draft Constitution provides for the rights of free movement and emigration. **[4] (p8)** The US State Department Report 2003 on Human Rights noted that,

> "Citizens and foreign nationals were required to obtain an exit visa to depart the country….Citizens of national service age (men 18 to 45 years of age, and women 18 to 27 years of age) [since updated by the AI report of May 2004 to men and women aged 18 to 40 years (see

> 5.63)], of Jehovah's Witnesses, and others who were out of favor with or seen as critical of the Government were routinely denied exit visas. In addition, the Government often refused to issue exit visas to adolescents and children as young as 10 years of age, apparently on the grounds that they were approaching the age of eligibility for national service. Some citizens were given exit visas only after posting bonds of approximately $7,300 (100,000 Nakfa). There were many instances in which the newly married spouse of a citizen or foreign national living abroad was denied an exit visa to join the partner often because the citizen's spouse residing abroad could not prove payment of the 2 percent income tax, which is imposed on all citizens living abroad". **[6e] (p9)**

**6.86** The report further noted that, "During the year, the Government annulled or denied exit visas for several citizens who had received scholarships to foreign universities or been nominated for participation in exchange programs. Upon request, officials reexamined denied cases on an individual basis, which frequently led to a reversal of the decision". **[6e] (p9)**

**6.87** Moreover the report noted that, "In general, citizens had the right to return; however, citizens had to show proof that they paid the 2 percent tax on their income to the Government while living abroad to be eligible for some government services on their return to the country. Applications to return from citizens living abroad who had broken the law, contracted a serious contagious disease, or had been declared ineligible for political asylum by other governments, were considered on a case-by-case basis". **[6e] (p9)**

**6.88** The US State Department Report 2003 on Human Rights noted that:

> "While citizens could generally travel freely within the country and change their place of residence, authorities restricted freedom of movement and emigration. The Government required all citizens to carry national identification cards, which must be presented on demand. The Government restricted travel to some areas within the country for security reasons. Military police periodically set up roadblocks in Asmara and other cities to find draft evaders and deserters, and periodic crackdowns continued during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p9)**

**6.89** The US State Department Report 2003 on Human Rights noted that, "Camp facilities [for IDPs] were rudimentary, but conditions generally were adequate. There also was a large but unknown number of IDPs residing outside camps during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p9)**

Return to Contents

# 6B. Human Rights: Specific Groups

## Ethnic Groups

[A map of Eritrea showing distribution of ethnic groups is annexed as source document 11]

**6.90** The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, language, colour, sex, religion, disability, political belief or opinion, or social or economic status or any other factors. **[4] (p7)** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report on Eritrea stated that, "The population is fairly evenly divided between Tigrinya-speaking Christians, the traditional inhabitants of the highlands, and the Muslim communities of the western lowlands, northern highlands and east coast". **[1a] (p387)**

**6.91** The UK Fact Finding Mission to Eritrea stated that, "while there are problems with ethnicity in all areas of the world, Eritrea has no real problem with the individual racial groupings, in fact in comparison to other areas of Africa it is remarkably stable. The source stated that nobody in Eritrea truly believes that a person would be persecuted for being part of any particular Eritrean ethnic group, as this would go against the beliefs of Eritrean unity espoused by the Government". **[5] (p40)**

### Languages

**6.92** Lonely Planet in its guide to Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti published November 2000 stated that, "In theory Tigrinya, Arabic and English are all the official languages of Eritrea. In practice Tigrinya is mainly confined to the highlands, Arabic to the coastal regions and along the Sudanese border and English to the educated urban populations (particularly in Asmara)…Each of the nine ethnic groups speaks its own language…Amharic, a legacy of Ethiopian rule is still widely spoken". **[36] (p334)** The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World published 1993 stated that, "the Eritreans consist of nine ethno-linguistic groups: Rasha'ida, Baria, Kunama, Beja, Tigre, Tigray, Bilin, Saho and Afar". **[35] (p195)**

**6.93** The UK Fact Finding Mission to Eritrea stated that, prior to independence Amharic "had been used by the Derge regime as the language of education. This 'language of domination', although still widely known and understood in Eritrea, is now generally avoided. While a person would not be shunned as an Amharic speaker, it is known that deportees from Ethiopia were badly thought of if they had not mastered another language for communication as soon as possible. Tigrinya, Arabic and English were popular choices as these are the most widely spoken. It would be considered taboo for a person to try to converse in Amharic unless there was no alternative". **[5] (p78)**

[Please note that as different people may be known differently to other groups, there may be more than one name for each group. This is indicated where possible.]

## Afar/Danakils

**6.94** Lonely Planet stated that, the "Afars also known as the Danakils, make up 5% and inhabit the long coastal strip stretching from the Gulf of Zula into Djibouti. Predominantly nomadic pastoralists, the people are Muslim, though elements of ancient ancestor-worship still persist". **[36] (p331)** The World Directory of Minorities published 1997 stated that, "They speak Afar and Arabic". **[8] (p411)** The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World published 1993 stated that, the Afars have been involved in salt mining and "They were also involved in the slave trade practiced by Arabs in this part of Africa, and were famous as a war-like people". **[35] (p19)**

**6.95** This publication also stated that, "Distinction is made between two ancestor-related groups, the Asaymara ("red") and the Adoymara ("white"). The former is considered of higher status and lived mainly in the interior. Currently both groups are dispersed over Afar territory and the status distinction is less marked". **[35] (p19-21)**

**6.96** The World Directory of Minorities published 1997 stated that "Afar leaders are highly critical of the EPLF although they were in favour of the freedom enjoyed by Danakalia's Afar regional assembly and Eritrea's promise to provide Humanitarian and medical support to the Afar Front pour la Restoration de l'Unite et la Democratie (FRUD) in Djibouti". **[8] (p411)**

## Baria/Nara

**6.97** Lonely Planet stated that, "The Nara, also known as the Baria, tribes make up 1.5% of the population and inhabit the Barka Valley near the Sudanese border". **[36] (p333)** The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World stated that, "They speak Nara, a Nilotic language. The Baria are Sunni Muslims. They are sedentary agriculturalists. The academic ethnic label 'Baria' (Bareya) has in Amharic has the literal meaning of 'slave', denoting the status of the Baria (and the adjacent Kunamas) in the eyes of their dominant neighbours". **[35] (p97)**

## Hedareb/Beja/Beni Amber/Beni Amer

**6.98** Lonely Planet stated that, "The Hedareb, along with their 'brother' tribes the Beni Amer and Beja, make up 2.5% of the population, and inhabit the north-western valleys of Eritrea, straddling the border with Sudan". **[36] (p331)**

**6.99** It further stated that, "Most Hedareb are nomadic and travel great distances in search of pasture. The people are Cushitic in origin (probably directly descended from the ancient Beja tribe) and speak mainly Tigre and an ancient Beja language. The Beni Amer are a strongly patriarchal, socially stratified, almost feudal people. Their skills as camel drivers and in raising camels are legendary. Many of the men scarify their cheeks with three short, vertical strokes – the Italians called them the '111 tribe'". **[36] (p331-332)**

**Bilen/Bogos**

**6.100** Lonely Planet stated that, "The Bilen inhabit the environs of Keren and make up 2.1% of the population. Cushitic in origin, the Bilen are either sedentary Christian farmers or Muslim cattle rearers". **[36] (p332)** The World Directory of Minorities stated that, "The mostly agricultural people comprise two main tribes of about 15,000 each: Bet Teqwe and the Gebre Terqe". **[8] (p411)** The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World stated that, "They speak Bilin and Tigre, members of the central Cushitic language group. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, they were Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, but since then have shifted to Sunni Islam with a smaller number becoming Roman Catholics". **[35] (p112)**

**6.101** Lonely Planet stated that, "Bilen traditional society is organised into kinship groups. The women are known for their brightly coloured clothes and their gold, silver or copper nose-rings which indicate their means and social status. Like the Beja language, Bilen is slowly being replaced by Tigre, Tigrinya and Arabic, due to intermarriage, economic interactions and because Arabic is taught in local schools". **[36] (p332)**

**Kunama - Cultural**

**6.102** Lonely Planet stated that, "The Kunama are Nilotic in origin, and are very dark skinned. They are the original inhabitants of the region" **[36] (p332)**

**6.103** The UK Fact Finding Mission report stated that, "Although little is known of the origin of the Kunama; little is recorded about them, probably because they have no alphabet and, therefore, no recorded history. Many regard them, however, as the very first Eritreans. Today, Kunama children use the Latin alphabet, but are taught in their own language". **[5] (p41)**

**6.104** This report further stated that, "Originally, the Kunama were nomads; eventually they settled near the disputed border between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Kunama are peaceful, but the ongoing wars between Ethiopia and Eritrea have been devastating, drastically reducing the tribe's population to roughly 50 - 60,000 people. **[5] (p41)**

**6.105** It also stated that, "The region of Gash-Barka, home of the Eritrean Kunama, was formerly known as Gash-Setit, so named after the two important rivers of the area. The name change occurred after the Eritrean provinces were changed from 9 to six provinces". **[5] (p41)**

**6.106** It continued that, "Isolation and a tenacious adherence to tribal customs have enabled the Kunama to retain their traditions, which existed long before the introduction of Christianity and Islam into the area. Living in close harmony with nature and each other, they have survived by excluding the dominant cultures of the outside world". **[5] (p41)**

**6.107** It also stated that,

> "The Kunama venerate their ancestors and have a special reverence for the elders of the tribe. This respect for their elders allows the tribe to make important decisions, called 'democratic choices', which alway involves two elders. The Kunama work together, designating certain months for special 'events'. September, for example, is the time for harvest; January is the month for repairing houses. Everything is done as a community, each helping the other. Even at funerals, the entire village attends: it is their custom to bid farewell as a group, though children are not allowed to participate". **[5] (p41)**

**6.108** The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World stated that, "Their exogamic clan system still bears the traces of an older system of matrilineal descent". **[35] (p340)** The UK Fact Finding Mission explained that, "the Kunama are organised matrilinearly, so that daughters inherit from their mothers instead of sons from their fathers. Women therefore have far more freedom and decision power then women from other ethnic groups". **[5] (p41-42)**

**6.109** The report further stated that,

> "Kunama marriage customs reveal the tribe's practical yet gentle lifestyle. After much dancing and celebration, the newlyweds spend a few days together, but then the young woman returns to her mother, often for a year or more. During this time, the mother teaches her daughter the role of a wife and mother. This does not mean only learning how to cook and sew, but how to manage finances, how to organise, how to cultivate skills, how to care for a baby and more. By the time the couple are reunited, her husband and his family will have completed the new couple's home". **[5] (p42)**

**6.110** It also stated that, "For over 50 years, the highlanders in Ethiopia and Eritrea have pushed the Kunama territories to smaller and smaller dimensions. The population density in the Kunama lands are minute in comparison to the highland areas where most people are living, so as the non Kunama population grows, Kunama land is needed". **[5] (p42)**

**6.111** And that, "This is broadly in accordance with the 1994 Land Proclamation (Law No. 58/1994). This is the principal piece of legislation regulating land ownership, and stipulates that all land is the property of the state". **[5] (p42)**

### Kunama – Treatment

**6.112** The UK Fact Finding Mission report stated that, "the Kunama has traditionally relied on the Ethiopian Army when larger and more powerful ethnic neighbours attacked them. For historic reasons, although the majority of the Eritrean population strongly supported Eritrean independence, the Kunama still maintained their support for the Ethiopian army, although there was also support for independence and a number of Kunama fought on the side of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)". **[5] (p42)**

**6.113** The same report stated that, "But the perception has always been that the Kunama were the least enthusiastic of the Eritrean peoples with regards to Eritrean independence….'the Kunama people were in fact divided in opinion and had a great respect for the Ethiopians as well as many believed in Eritrea as a separate and independent nation. In the absence of a unifying Kunama political figure all conflicting opinions were heard' stated Gilkes [a consultant on the Horn of Africa]". **[5] (p42)**

**6.114** It also stated that, "the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) has tried to foster a closer relationship with the Kunama both before and after independence, but the fiercely independent nature of the Kunama leads many Eritreans to believe that the Kunama are pro-Ethiopia, whether this is true or not". **[5] (p42)**

**6.115** And that, "the Kunama have been mistrusted due to alleged support for Ethiopia in the border war of 1998-2000. However most people in Eritrea tend to dismiss the stories of persecution against the Kunama as being a way that the Ethiopians and supporters of Ethiopia can attack Eritrea". **[5] (p43)**

**6.116** The USSD Report 2003 noted that, "There were reports of government and societal discrimination against the Kunama, one of nine ethnic groups, who reside primarily in the west. Because a Kunama opposition group operated out of Ethiopia and was supported by Ethiopian authorities, some Kunama in the country were suspected of supporting or having sympathies with the Ethiopian Government. There continued to be unconfirmed reports that the Government took land from Kunamas without compensation and gave it to other ethnic groups on the grounds that the land had not been efficiently exploited. There was some societal discrimination against Kunamas because they were seen as ethnically and culturally different from most citizens". **[6e] (p12)** The report further noted that "Members of the Kunama ethnic group were detained without charges during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p12)**

**6.117** The UK Fact Finding Mission report noted Amnesty International believe that the "Kunama are the only ethnic group considered as being likely to have any basis for an asylum claim from the ethnic groups in Eritrea". **[5] (p43)**

**6.118** The report however further noted that the UK delegation to Asmara was told that "the Government does not discriminate along ethnic lines and that different groups within Eritrea co-exist peacefully". **[5] (p43)**

**6.119** The report noted that, "the same source added that the Government strives to promote ethnic balance and that is one of its strengths. However, it was explained that the authorities would be likely to react harshly if members aligned to any particular ethnic group politicised issues". The UK delegation was told that "a specific ethnic group such as the Kunama could not seriously cite ethnic persecution in Eritrea". **[5] (p43)**

**6.120** It further stated that, "there is a long history of conflict between the EPLF/PFDJ (People's Front for Democracy and Justice) and the Kunama….at

least 55 Kunama, administrators and civil servants under the previous regime of Ethiopia, were arrested in 1991 when the EPLF took over for alleged human rights abuses under the Derg, and have not been seen since. None have been released and it is unclear if any have been charged or tried publicly". **[5] (p44)**

**6.121** The same report stated that,

> "the Kunama have also suffered from extensive land take-overs.…in Barentu.…between 1991 and 1997 some 30,000 Tigreans were moved into the towns and given land/houses by the Government. 'They [the Tigreans] fled on arrival of the Ethiopian troops in 2000 [and the destruction by Ethiopian troops was very precisely targeted at their houses] and I think they have largely returned despite Kunama complaints, [both before and after the war] about the way the fighters were losing lands and property'" as stated by Dr Patrick Gilkes, a consultant on the Horn of Africa". **[5] (p44)**

**6.122** The report further noted that Gilkes stated probably the two best known Kunama resistance groups are the "Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrean Kunama (DMLEK) and the Eritrean Democratic Resistance Movement - Gash Setit (EDRM)". **[5] (p44)**

**6.123** The report further quoted that, "the Eritrean Democratic Resistance Movement - Gash Setit (EDRM), which also calls itself "Sawrawi Baito" is led by Ismail Nada and is reportedly close to the current ELF. Some expect them to merge with the ELF at some point. Nada is a former ELF fighter is said to think along similar lines to leading ELF-RC members". **[5] (p44)**

**6.124** The UK Fact Finding Mission also noted that, "the Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrean Kunama (DMLEK) is led by Kerneolos Osman and is best known for the material it places on pro-opposition websites. The DMLEK is based in Addis Ababa". **[5] (p44)**

**6.125** Refugees International in an article dated 18 February 2004 stated that:

> "UNHCR has begun discussions with the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea concerning the possible voluntary return of the Kunama to Eritrea. Repatriation would be the ideal, most durable solution for the refugees; however, there are no concrete plans in place at this time. Eritrean officials insist that the refugees would be welcomed back to Eritrea, but refugees are skeptical of this claim. Many of the Kunama refugees fled Eritrea to avoid having their sons conscripted into the army. 'I came here to save myself and my family,' one refugee told the UN. 'Until things change I do not want to return.' Resettlement in Ethiopia does not appear to be a viable option for the Kunama, and few of the refugees have made efforts to seek relocation in a third country". **[24a] (p2)**

**Rashaida**

**6.126** Lonely Planet stated that, "The Rashaida are the only true Eritrean nomads. Making up just 0.5% of the population, they roam the northern coasts of Eritrea and Sudan, as well as the southern reaches of the Nubian desert. Like their neighbours the Beja *(related to the Hedareb) they live by raising cattle and are Muslim….Their language is Arabic". **[36] (p333)**

**6.127** It also stated that, "The Rashaida people are known for their great pride; marriage is only permitted within their own clan. The people are expert goat rearers, as well as merchants and traders along the Red Sea coasts". **[36] (p333)**

**Saho**

**6.128** The World Directory of Minorities stated that, "Sandwiched between Afar and Tigre are Saho momads and semi-nomads.…Saho speak local languages but have also used Arabic in commercial dealings and have long been exposed to foreign influence in the form of trade with expanding empires". **[8] (p411)** The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World stated that, "They are Sunni Muslims, with some Ethiopian Orthodox Christians". **[35] (p509)**

**6.129** Lonely Planet stated that, "Many Saho children (up to the age of 16) wear little leather pouches around their neck, which are full of herbs and spices to ward off evil spirits….The Saho are organised in patrilineal descent groups. The leaders, elected by the male assembly, are known as 'rezantos', and were formerly military chiefs in times of war". **[36] (p331)**

**Tigrinya**

**6.130** This guidebook also stated that, "The Tigrinya make up 50% of the Eritrean population and inhabit the densely populated central highlands, extending over the provinces of Seraye, Hamasien and Akele Guzay. The people are sedentary farmers and are overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian, with just a small minority of Muslims, who are better known as Jiberti". **[36] (p330)**

**6.131** According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in a letter dated 10 May 1996, the Tigrinya Jiberti are "Muslims scattered throughout the Christian Highlands who practice Islam but also observe some customs of the Christians among whom they live". The document also concludes that the Jiberti speak the Tigrinya language and some Arabic. **[12] (p1-2)**

**Tigre/Tegre**

**6.132** The World Directory of Minorities stated that, "The Tigre peoples, who represent about one-third of the country's population, are dominant. Culturally and ethnically they are related to the Beja of Sudan. Claiming Arab origin, their language, Tigre, is Semitic.…Its use is declining under the impact of Tigrinya in Eritrea". **[8] (p410)** The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World stated that they also speak "Bedawiye and Arabic. They are Sunni Muslims or Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. A Major shift from the latter to the former

religion took place during the first half of the nineteenth century which loosened Tigre links with the Ethiopians". [35] (p600) The World Directory of Minorities goes on to state that, "Their primary occupation is cattle herding. Most are nomadic, however, some have settled by rivers such as the Barka and on state cotton plantations". [8] (p410) The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World noted that "The Tigre include ten major tribal units: Ad Sawra, Ad Sheikh, As Mu'allim, Aflenda, Bet Asgede, Bet Juk, Marya, Mensa, Meshalit and Sabdarat". [35] (p600)

**6.133** Lonely Planet stated that, "Tigrean society is traditionally hierarchical, with a small aristocracy known as shemagille ruling the masses. When the village leader dies, his power passes to his offspring". [36] (p330) The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World stated that **"**Historically 'Tigre' was used to denote a vassal to a ruling stratum claiming descent from the Beni Amer or Saho". [35] (p600)

**Returning Eritreans**

**6.134** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "In general, citizens had the right to return; however, citizens had to show proof that they paid the 2 percent tax on their income to the Government while living abroad to be eligible for some government services on their return to the country. Applications to return from citizens living abroad who had broken the law, contracted a serious contagious disease, or had been declared ineligible for political asylum by other governments, were considered on a case-by-case basis". [6e] (p9)

**6.135** AI reported on 18 September 2002 that:

> "Over 100,000 Eritreans who had lived in Sudan for up to 25 years were offered voluntary repatriation, which many refused, or an alternative option of alien resident status in Sudan. Voluntary repatriation was suspended by the UNHCR in October 2002 for security reasons. The cessation of refugee status was widely misunderstood to mean that Eritrea was safe for all refugee returns, which was not the case. Many of the long-term refugees in Sudan feared persecution on return on account of their links with the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), a rival to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) which formed the independence government in 1991, or because of conscientious objection to military service. Army deserters during and after the Ethiopian war feared persecution on return. Over 10,000 refugees applied from the cessation". [7a]

**6.136** Furthermore, the AI report of May 2004 stated that:

> "The majority of the refugees rejected the option of voluntary repatriation. Most long-term refugees, some of whom had been in Sudan for a generation, wished to remain in Sudan, either permanently

(although Sudan had not officially agreed to accept them as citizens or provide them with permanent residence permits), or through retaining their refugee status. By early 2004 only a few thousand had voluntarily returned to Eritrea". **[7h] (p24)**

**6.137** The United States Committee for Refugees (2004 report) stated that, "The World Food Program (WFP) provided returnees with a two month food supply. UNHCR provided blankets, water containers, agricultural tools, materials to construct traditional homes, and mosquito nets to each returnee family. UNHCR also issued cash grants to returnees". **[29c] (p2)**

**6.138** The report also noted that:

> "Returnees also benefited from UNHCR-implemented community-based reintegration programs that included education, health, and water projects. The government's Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission allocated five-acre (2 hectares) plots of land, enabling returnee families to construct their homes and cultivate new crops. Many returnees expressed concern that the government-issued land was not favorable for cultivation and that development projects in returnee areas were virtually non-existent". **[29a] (p2)**

**Eritreans from Sudan**

**6.139** AI on 18 September 2002 stated that, "In May 2002, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) declared the cessation [end] of refugee status for two categories of Eritreans - who had fled during the 30-year independence struggle up to 1991, and those who fled during the war with Ethiopia from 1998 to 2000. Many of these have already returned voluntarily to Eritrea from Sudan, although others have expressed reluctance to return and will have their cases reviewed by UNHCR. **[7d] (p17)** They further stated in their 2002 report that "over 10,000 refugees applied for exemption from the cessation". **[7a] (p1)**

**6.140** The AI Eritrea Annual Report 2003 stated that:

> "Over 100,000 Eritreans who had lived in Sudan for up to 25 years were offered voluntary repatriation, which many refused, or an alternative option of alien resident status in Sudan. Voluntary repatriation was suspended by the UNHCR in October 2002 for security reasons. The cessation of refugee status was widely misunderstood to mean that Eritrea was safe for all refugee returns, which was not the case. Many of the long-term refugees in Sudan feared persecution on return on account of their links with the Eritrean Liberation Front (EPLF), a rival to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) which formed the independence government in 1991, or because of conscientious objection to military service. Army deserters during and after the Ethiopian war feared persecution on return. Over 10,000 refugees applied for exemption from the cessation". **[7a]**

**6.141** An AI report of May 2004 stated that: "The majority of the refugees rejected the option of voluntary repatriation. Most long-term refugees, some of whom had been in Sudan for a generation, wished to remain in Sudan, either permanently (although Sudan had not officially agreed to accept them as citizens or provide them with permanent residence permits), or through retaining their refugee status. By early 2004 only a few thousand had voluntarily returned to Eritrea". **[7h] (p24)**

**6.142** IRIN News on 22 February 2002 reported that:

> "Eritreans in Sudan represent one of the oldest groups of refugees on the continent. 'UNHCR has been caring for Eritreans in Sudan longer than any other large group of exiles, with the first camp having opened by the agency in eastern Sudan in 1967' it [UNHCR] said. They began fleeing hostilities at home after the Eritrean liberation movement rose up against Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie's annexation of the territory in 1962. Subsequent periods of drought drove thousands more Eritreans into Sudan, so that at their peak they numbered about 500,000. The 1998-2000 war also saw the arrival of thousands more refugees, although many of these have since gone back". **[21d] (p1)**

**6.143** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "UNHCR reported that approximately 9,378 refugees were repatriated from Sudan during the year [2003]. The repatriation movements had been halted from July 2002 until June [2003] due to political tensions with Sudan. At year's end [2003], approximately 36,000 of the approximately 243,000 refugees remaining in Sudan had registered for repatriation while the rest were having their cases assessed on an individual basis. The Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC), a government agency, was the principal organization responsible for returnees and IDPs". **[6e] (p9)**

**6.144** Reliefweb confirmed on 5 March 2004 that, "The voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan resumed on 25 February 2004 after a two-month suspension, as agreements between Eritrea and Sudan were finalised. A total of 180 initial returnees cross the border by bus where they received meals and rest at the Tesseney Reception Centre. Many have been away for 10-20 years and the return home is an emotional one". **[30]**

**6.145** The report further noted that, "The second movement on 29 February 2004 saw a further 545 returnees with many more scheduled to come. A total of 23 convoys are planned before the start of the rainy season in June this year [2004]. At present, over 30,000 refugees have registered to be assisted to return through the Government of Eritrea /UNHCR repatriation programme". **[30]**

**Eritreans from Ethiopia**

**6.146** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "Unlike in the previous year [2002], there were no reports that authorities harassed and detained deportees of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia while the Government checked on their status". **[6e] (p4)**

**6.147** HRW reported in January 2003 that, "Expellees were asked to fill out a detailed registration form and were issued the same type of registration card that Eritrean refugees returning from exile received. Once registered, the deportees were entitled to the standard government assistance for returning refugees: including short-term housing, food, and settlement aid; medical coverage; and job placement assistance". **[32b] (p28-29)**

**6.148** The same report added that:

> "For the first year of the war, the ERREC issued the expellees an identification card known as a 'green card' or 'Repatriated Refugees Card'. The card identified the expellee's name, age, gender, level of education, native language, occupation, and dependents, as well as the date and location of the individual's arrival. The card did not identify the citizenship of the holder. ERREC's clerks were instructed to note, under the heading 'remarks,' that the individual or individuals named on the card had been 'forcibly expelled from Ethiopia'. The cards were written in both Tigrigna and Arabic, the two languages of Eritrea. In mid-1999, the ERREC began issuing expellees from Ethiopia a new identification card, labeled 'Identification Card For Eritreans Expelled from Ethiopia,' and also known as the 'blue card'. The information on the card largely corresponded to that on the green card, although the blue card used English in addition to Tigrigna and Arabic". **[32b] (p28 footnote)**

Return to Contents

## Ethiopians in Eritrea

### General

**6.149** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that:

> "One international observer commented to the delegation that since 2000 the attitude towards Ethiopians had changed, not as a result of any Government led initiative but as a result of a shift in the attitude of the public and police towards them. The inability to earn a living had been a leading cause for those that chose to be repatriated. Without the possibility of work they have little option but to leave. The source added that since the end of the war not only have societal attitudes changed, but with so much of the potential workforce in the military it is possibly a lot easier to gain employment now if one is registered as a resident foreigner". **[5] (p45)**

**6.150** AI in a report dated 21 May 1999 stated that:

"Before the [border] conflict started, there were an estimated 100,000 Ethiopians working in Eritrea. They consisted of long-term residents, some married to Eritreans, and more recent migrant workers especially from the bordering Tigray region. The Red Sea port of Assab in particular, was host to a community of an estimated 35,000 Ethiopians most of whom worked in the port or ran supporting businesses". **[7c] (p15)**

**6.151** They further reported that after the outbreak of the border war the Eritrean Government stated in June 1998 that:

"Ethiopians were free to return to Ethiopia or to stay in Eritrea as they wished. Many did want to leave, as there was no longer any employment for them or because they feared retaliation as enemy nationals or that Assab and other towns in Eritrea would become military targets for Ethiopian military attacks. However, before the Ethiopians could leave Eritrea, they had to clear any tax debts or utility bills and purchase an exit visa. Without work, many Ethiopians were unable to meet these demands and complained that they were thereby being prevented from leaving". **[7c] (p15)**

**6.152** HRW reported in January 2003 that:

"From August 1998 to January 1999, a period of relative calm on the war front, some 21,000 Ethiopian residents of Eritrea left for Ethiopia with the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). While Eritrean authorities insisted that these departures were voluntary, a measure of coercion was involved in a number of cases. Indeed, many individuals in this first wave complained upon arrival to Ethiopia of beatings, rape, and the confiscation of their property". **[32b] (p6)**

**6.153** The USSD Human Rights Report 2001 noted that:

"In 2000 the Government shut down all businesses in Asmara that belonged to Ethiopians with only a few days' notice; approximately 300 businesses owned by Ethiopians were shut down. The Government gave Ethiopians occupying government-owned housing a 1-month notice to vacate. The Government reportedly also froze some bank accounts and seized some assets belonging to Ethiopians. Some Ethiopians had difficulty renewing business licenses, driving licenses, resident permits, or leases. A significant but unknown number of Ethiopians were fired or lost their jobs because of their nationality; in some cases, this was due to the fact that Ethiopians were working for Ethiopian businessmen who left the country or whose businesses were shut down. Ethiopians generally were able to renew residence permits without difficulty during the year; however, they continued to be unable to obtain business licenses, driving licenses or leases, and many continued to lose their jobs because of their nationality. In most cases, Ethiopian business owners who lost their inventories when their shops

were closed down did not receive compensation. These hardships encouraged many Ethiopians to leave the country voluntarily during the year [2000]". **[6a] (p7)**

**6.154** HRW reported in January 2003 that:

"In the first week of June 2000, Eritrean authorities told Ethiopian citizens living in Asmara 'to register with the local authorities in preparation for repatriation.' A government spokesman for the foreign ministry in Eritrea denied that the Eritrean government was pursuing a policy of forced repatriation, attributing the directive to a 'communication gap,' but the interments proceeded anyway". **[32b] (p7)**

**6.155** The report noted that:

"Shortly thereafter, Eritrean authorities acknowledged holding at least 7,500 Ethiopian nationals, and allowed the international press to visit one of several internment sites. Eritrean authorities started expelling larger numbers of Ethiopian residents in earnest in July and August 2000, in several instances without prior information to the ICRC to ensure the safety of deportees as they crossed front lines. The ICRC's request of Eritrea and Ethiopia in early August to agree on common routes for border crossings led to better compliance by the two belligerents with the requirements of safe passage for civilians expelled across the border. Between October 2000 and late 2001, the ICRC accompanied batches of several hundreds of repatriated Ethiopians on a regular basis". **[32b] (p7)**

**Treatment**

**6.156** The USSD Human Rights Report 2001 noted that:

"An unknown but believed to be small number of Ethiopians, particularly men, are believed to be held in police stations, prisons, and jails in Asmara and possibly in other areas. The Government stated that Ethiopians detained in such places were in detention because they had committed a crime or legal infraction. International monitors have access to the majority of detainees in police stations and jails". **[6a] (p5)**

**6.157** More recently, the USSD Human Rights Report 2003 documented that:

"During the year [2003], conditions remained difficult for Ethiopians living in the country, but most who wanted to leave had already done so. The Ethiopian Embassy reported approximately 7,000 Ethiopians remained. Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports that the Government targeted Ethiopians in particular for discrimination in renewing business licenses, residence permits, and employment. There were reports that Ethiopians who remained in the country were not allowed to live in the strategically important Debub Province bordering Ethiopia". **[6e] (p6)**

**6.158** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "An unknown number of Ethiopian detainees were released during the year [2003]; some were repatriated to Ethiopia, while others chose to remain in the country. The ICRC continued to visit approximately 150 Ethiopians who were still in detention at year's end [2003]. Most of these detainees were reportedly being held on suspicion of committing crimes, while others were detained because their residency permits had expired and they did not have the necessary funds to renew them". **[6e] (p3)**

**Deportations**

**6.159** HRW reported in January 2003 that:

> "The Eritrean government's attitude towards residents of Ethiopian origin hardened considerably after the resumption of hostilities in May 2000. After interning thousands of them during and in the immediate aftermath of the fighting, the Eritrean government encouraged their repatriation to Ethiopia. A significant rise in the number of Ethiopians expelled from Eritrea occurred in the aftermath of the signing of the cease-fire agreement in mid-June 2000. The first to be forcibly expelled were among the 7,500 Ethiopians whom Eritrea rounded up as Ethiopian troops advanced deep into uncontested territory in May and June. Eritrean authorities claimed that their internment was for their protection from attacks by angry neighbors as well as from being caught in the fighting. However, while some Ethiopians said that they went to the camp voluntarily to avoid being attacked by hostile neighbors, some of those interviewed by international journalists at Shikete site, one of the internment camps, said they were detained there by force. The Ethiopian government for its part denounced the internment of its citizens as a measure of collective punishment and revenge for recent Eritrean setbacks in the war. On June 16 [2000] the Eritrean government said it was 'finalizing the necessary arrangements to expedite the voluntary departure of Ethiopians who have decided of their own free will to return to Ethiopia,' and reserved the right 'to repatriate Ethiopians on case by case basis.' By the end of June [2000], the ICRC had repatriated some 4,635 Ethiopian nationals, and announced that it was preparing to facilitate the return to Ethiopia of several thousand more". **[32b] (p35-36)**

**6.160** The report goes on to note that:

> "The pace of repatriations and forcible expulsions of Ethiopians from Eritrea dramatically accelerated in July and August 2000. Media reports in mid-July 2000 exposed the detention in Eritrea and subsequent expulsion to Djibouti of ninety-two Ethiopian women who were mostly domestic workers. The women arrived in Djibouti 'wearing almost no clothes' according to one report. The official Addis Ababa

Radio on July 30 accused Eritrea of expelling 550 Ethiopians, mostly women and children without notifying the ICRC, a report that the ICRC later confirmed. The ICRC also confirmed, in a statement issued by its office in Addis Ababa, the forcible deportation on August 2 [2000] of some 2,700 Ethiopians from an internment camp north of the capital Asmara to a location near the front line; it said the deportees had to walk eighteen hours before reaching Ethiopian positions". **[32b] (p36)**

**6.161** It added that, "Repatriations of people of Ethiopian origin to Ethiopia decreased dramatically in the first quarter of 2002, from a weekly average of 1,000 repatriations during the corresponding period in 2001, to a few dozens". **[32b] (p36)**

**6.162** The report continued:

"A number of factors appeared to have contributed to the decrease, including the end of the conflict, and the fact that many who wanted to leave had already left. Repatriated persons claimed in interviews with U.N. human rights investigators that discrimination against Ethiopians with regard to access to employment and social services, and exposure to arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment during detention were the main factors that led them to decide to leave". **[32b] (p36)**

**6.163** The USSD Human Rights Report 2001 noted that:

"When the Government began detaining and returning Ethiopians to Ethiopia in 2000, authorities singled out young Ethiopian women, particularly prostitutes, barmaids, and waitresses, for detention and involuntary deportation; reportedly this was due, in part, to the fear that these women spread HIV/AIDS. Prostitution is illegal. As a result of displacement and difficult economic conditions, prostitution has become a serious problem in the country. Reportedly those women who could demonstrate that they had a child with an Eritrean father were permitted to remain in the country. However, other female deportees alleged that they were prevented from taking their children because the fathers were Eritreans". **[6a] (p12)**

**6.164** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "During the year [2003], the Government repatriated approximately 380 Ethiopians to Ethiopia. They were repatriated voluntarily and with ICRC participation". **[6e] (p9)**

**6.165** However the US Report also noted that, "There was at least one report of a citizen of Ethiopian origin stripped of citizenship and deported". **[6e] (p3)**

Return to Contents

## Women

### General Situation

**6.166** The Constitution and the transitional Civil Code stated that no person may be discriminated against on account of their gender. **[4] (p7)** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "The Government consistently advocated improving the status of women, many of whom played a significant role as fighters in the independence struggle. Women have a legal right to equal educational opportunities, equal pay for equal work, and legal sanctions against domestic violence; however, in practice, men retained privileged access to education, employment, and control of economic resources, with greater disparities in rural areas than in cities. Women generally did not enjoy a social status equal to men. Laws were enforced unevenly, because of a lack of capacity in the legal system and long-standing cultural attitudes". **[6e] (p11)**

**6.167** The UK Fact Finding Mission dated April 2003 reported that:

> "A western embassy in Asmara told the mission that the position of women within Eritrean society compared favourably with their counterparts in other African and Arab countries living within urban circles. Here it was explained that women were well respected and had access to good opportunities in life and that if a girl or woman lived in a city they would have a good chance to shape their own life. However, it was noted that 80% of Eritrean women live in rural communities, including villages and small towns, and here, within traditional Eritrean society, equality and the opportunity to gain a full education or work is minimal". **[5] (p63)**

**6.168** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "During the year [2003], efforts to detain women draft evaders and deserters decreased. According to some reports, women drafted for national service were subject to sexual harassment and abuse. In 2002, most women in the national service were scheduled to be demobilized; however, many were still serving at year's end [2003]. In addition, hundreds were required to continue serving in government ministries". **[6e] (p11)**

**6.169** The same report noted that:

> "Three women served on the PFDJ's 19-member Executive Council and 11 women on the 75-member Central Council. Women participated in the Constitutional Commission (occupying almost half of the positions on the 50-person committee). They also served in several senior government positions, including the Ministers of Justice, Tourism, and Labor and Welfare. By law, one-third of regional National Assembly seats are reserved for women, and women also may compete for the unreserved seats; however, the National Assembly does not meet". **[6e] (p10)**

**6.170** The UK Fact Finding Mission dated April 2003 noted that:

"Barebel Hoefers, Child Protection Officer, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) referred to two women in senior Government positions. She identified these as Askalu Menkerios, the Minister of Labour and Women's Welfare and Fawzia Hashim, the Minister of Justice who the source considered the most senior woman in Government having taken up her position in 1992 [and according to the State of Eritrea, Ministry of Information still held it in August 2004]. The head of the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) is also a woman. However, a western embassy in Asmara pointed out to the delegation that none of the senior figures in Government were women. The source considered the Minister of Labour to be the most powerful woman in Government. However, in qualifying this statement it was added that she was nowhere near as powerful as several male ministers of Government were. The source concluded that women were under represented politically". **[5] (p64-5)** The report added that this view was supported by a second western embassy and that a third stated that 30% of parliament is made up of women.

**Female Genital Mutilation**

**6.171** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 same report stated that:

"According to the Eritrean Demographic Health Survey (EDHS) of 2002 an estimated 89% of girls are now subjected to some form of FGM. This represents a small reduction since 1995 when the figure was an estimated 95% of girls. As reflected in the Report on the implementation of the convention of the rights of the child document prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare (MLHW) and published in October 2002, young girls brought up under the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) are the exception to the custom. The report also states that in lowland regions where the population is predominately Muslim infibulation (the most severe form of FGM) is generally practised. In the highlands it is the excision and cliterodectomy procedures that are most widely used. (Further details of the different forms of FGM practised in Eritrea are documented in section one of the Amnesty International report - Female Genital Mutilation published in 1997)". **[5] (p67)**

**6.172** The report further stated that:

"The aforementioned Government report also states that within Eritrea the age when the procedure is usually performed varies between a few days and 12 years, the timing is primarily determined according to the child's ethnic group. The report explains that within traditional society, Eritrean women who do not undergo some from of FGM are seen as being 'impure', having uncontrollable sexual impulses which drive them to sexual deviation and prostitution, and often put them in the category of being seen as unsuitable for marriage. Genital mutilation is also seen as a right (sic) of passage that can be avoided only at the cost of

ostracism. For these reasons, the Government states that it recognises that simply banning the practice will not wipe it out". **[5] (p67)**

**6.173** Moreover the report noted:

> "The Eritrean Government considers that long-term community education is the only effective means of bringing about change. A community education programme intended to educate against FGM has been operating in Eritrea since 1994. In 1997 Eritrea hosted a regional consultation on the Elimination of FGM. In October 1999 the first strategy to eliminate FGM was developed at a workshop in Asmara; a total of 50 participants included Government ministers, traditional birth attendants, youth and women's associations, UN agencies, religious groups and bilateral donors. The strategy aims to implement communication activities that will educate and motivate key partners and target groups to take action to eliminate FGM". **[5] (p67)**

**6.174** The US State Department Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "The U.N. Population Fund, through the Ministry of Health, sponsored reproductive health projects that provided training and awareness programs that focused on the harmful physical and psychological impacts of FGM". **[6e] (p11)**

**6.175** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that, "Christian Balselv-Olsen, UNICEF Representative to Eritrea advised the delegation that, UNICEF view FGM as being deeply anchored within Eritrean society. Hoefers acknowledged the EPLF had actively discouraged the practice and noted that the percentage of girls subjected to the procedure may have reduced slightly in recent years though the problem remains significant". **[5] (p67)**

**6.176** The same report stated that:

> "FGM is practised by all classes of society at a fairly even level; irrespective of the level of education received by the parents. It was added that in many cases, pressure to carry out the procedure comes from the father. However, in recent years there has been a slight reduction in the percentage of girls subjected to some form of FGM. It was noted that former EPLF fighters do not practice FGM on their children.…the practice is undertaken prior to the christening of Christian girls – this would be within 80 days of birth. Within the Muslim community it was explained that the procedure is most commonly carried out prior to the age of 7 but may be undertaken at any age prior to marriage". **[5] (p67-8)**

**6.177** It further stated that:

> "The Minister of Information has publicly condemned the practice of FGM on the radio and has referred to it as being 'forbidden'; but….there is in fact no legislation that formally outlaws the practice. The source commented that as a consequence of the widespread

practice of FGM, Eritrea had one of the highest rates of death in childbirth in Sub Saharan Africa amounting to a figure of 985 in 100,000. This particularly applies to Muslim women who, by nature of the procedure they have undergone, commonly require being 'stitched up' following each delivery". **[5] (p68)**

**6.178** The same report added that:

"An international observer told the delegation that the Eritrean Government works actively to discourage FGM in Eritrea. However, it was noted that the procedure is still not illegal. In view of this source, so entrenched is FGM within society that it can not be made illegal despite the best intentions of the Government. As there is an FGM rate of approximately 90% it was remarked that making the practice illegal would mean the arresting and bringing charges against many of otherwise (sic) good citizens. This would prove to be very unpopular in the country hence the Governments position to recognise that it is an ancient recognised practice but to educate against the dangers and promote the non-use of FGM. The source added that nurses working for International NGOs had reported that most young Eritrean women are still circumcised". **[5] (p68)**

**Domestic & Sexual Violence**

**6.179** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

"Violence against women was pervasive. Spousal abuse is a crime; however, spousal abuse, especially wife beating, was widespread. Women seldom openly discussed domestic violence because of societal pressures. Such incidents were more commonly addressed, if at all, within families or by religious clergy. It was estimated that more than 65 percent of women in the Asmara area were victims of domestic violence during the year. The Government's response to domestic violence was hindered by a lack of training, inadequate funding, and societal attitudes". **[6e] (p10-11)**

**6.180** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that unconfirmed reports state that some female soldiers have been sexually abused by their superiors. "Often this is consensual and may be a tool to achieve promotion". Sexual harassment in these circumstances is "believed to be more 'pressure' than the 'sex-slaves' situation reported in countries such as Angola". **[5] (p66)**

**Women's Organisations**

**6.181** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that:

"An international observer informed the delegation that the NUEW campaigns on issues such as FGM and political representation as well as issues like childcare and better parenting. A prominent member of

the Eritrean community commented that the NUEW is a Government controlled organisation. The source also referred to a poster campaign by the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUYES) that highlighted issues relating to FGM. A prominent member of the Eritrean community advised that the NUYES are another Government controlled organisation active in fighting negative gender perceptions. Additionally NUYES activities sometimes overlap with issues pursued by NUEW, especially those that may particularly impact upon children including FGM". **[5] (p68-9)**

Return to Contents

## Children

### General

**6.182** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "The Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare is responsible for policies concerning children rights and welfare. The Children's Affairs Division in the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare covered childcare, counseling, and probation. Although the Government was generally committed to children's rights and welfare, its programs were limited by resource constraints". **[6e] (p11)**

**6.183** The same report noted that:

> "Child labor occurred. The Government does not have a national plan of action to protect children from exploitation in the workplace; however, the legal minimum age for employment is 18 years, although apprentices may be hired at age 14. Proclamation 118 bars children, young workers and apprentices under 18 years of age from performing certain dangerous or unhealthy labor, including working in transport industries, jobs involving toxic chemicals or dangerous machines, and underground work such as mines and sewers. Labor inspectors from the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare are responsible for enforcing child labor laws; however, due to the small number of inspectors, inspections were infrequent. It was common for rural children who did not attend school to work on family farms, fetching firewood and water, and herding livestock among other activities. In urban areas, some children worked as street vendors of cigarettes, newspapers, or chewing gum. Children also worked as child-minders, traders, and in small-scale manufacturing". **[6e] (p13)**

**6.184** BBC NEWS in a report dated 11 January 2004 stated that:

> "The United Nations children's agency, Unicef, says the north-east African country of Eritrea is breaking human rights regulations by making children complete the final year of their secondary education at the site of a military training camp. Eritrea's recent history has been dominated by conflict with Ethiopia and 10% of the population is thought to be in the army. Sawa - in the far west of the country near the Sudan border – has always occupied a special place in Eritrean

society. It is the site of a massive military training camp where every Eritrean aged between 18-40 must go as part of their compulsory military service. Now to matriculate you must leave home and complete Grade 12 in Sawa - a move the government say was taken because they do not have the money to expand secondary schools around the country.… Those who attend grade 12 in Sawa and matriculate will have the chance to pursue further educational opportunities. For those who choose not to go - their national service begins when they turn 18 and that usually starts with training in Sawa's military camp". **[10e] (p1-2)**

**Childcare Provisions for Orphans**

**6.185** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that:

> "The number of orphans within Eritrea is identified by the MLHW [Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare] as one of the main social problems in Eritrea. In 1992 - 1993 a national survey identified approximately 90,000 orphans in the country. A survey conducted in 1999 - 2000 identified 51,000 in need of urgent support. A survey is presently underway to identify the number of AIDS orphans, as of October 2002 there were a total of 552 registered with the ministry on this basis. Within Eritrea the term orphan is defined as 'a child who lost either one or both parents or has been abandoned'". **[5] (p72)**

**6.186** The same report stated that, "the Government policy with regards to orphans and unaccompanied children is against the proliferation of orphanages and other forms of institutionalisation. Instead, the policy is to strengthen the traditional safety nets that have been in place within communities throughout Eritrea for generations. On the basis of information provided by the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare's Report on the implementation of the convention on the rights of the child the Government strategy for caring for orphans and unaccompanied children can be summarised as follows: -

- **Reunification of orphans** with close relatives is regarded as the best solution for guaranteeing their psychological integration and developmental needs. This is the most favoured option; between 1994 and 1997 just under 14,000 orphans were re-unified with nearly 7,000 families.

- **Foster care** with an unrelated family has been tried as a second alternative to reunification in Eritrea since 1992 in situations where a close relative can not be found. However, for a number of factors, including the rejection of foster care by communities as an alien concept, the Government does not consider the foster care programme to have been successful and has no plans to extend the programme.

- **Adoption** is possible within Eritrea and involves the legal recognition that the child is part of the adopted family. Consent of any surviving parent is required, as is the consent of the adopted child itself if aged over 10 years

of age. A relatively large number of families wish to adopt but priority is given to childless families or those with one child, hence few Eritrean families qualify. In the case of infants adoption is only permitted where the child has been abandoned; the Government states there are an average of 6/7 abandoned infants per year. A total of only 50 children have been adopted in Eritrea since independence.

- **Community based children's homes (Group care)** have been considered the best alternative to reunification, foster care or adoption. It is considered that this option, in which children are established in group-homes within the community, can limit the social and psychological effects of institutional living. Residents are kept to a manageable size of 10-12 children and two housemothers. As of 2002 a total of 132 children had been placed in 12 group homes situated within larger towns; six further homes are under construction. Children aged between 1 and 12 are selected for placements in group homes, siblings are kept together and where possible placements are within the region the child originates from. Government evaluations of group-homes in 1998 and 2002 conclude that these homes provide a secure and caring environment for the children.

- **Institutional care (orphanages)** is considered as the Government's least desirable option. Due to the effective reunification programme and the reunification of many children within their extended families all but one of the Government run orphanages have been phased out. There are however ten non-governmental orphanages within Eritrea, all these are administered by religious organisations. The (MLHW) carries out supervision of all orphanages. Children may be admitted to orphanages from birth up until the age of 11; in 2002 official estimates suggested a total of 1,500 were in such institutions".

**[5] (p72-73)**

**6.187** The UK Fact Finding Mission report also stated that:

> "Review of Placements is undertaken by social workers of the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare. All children placed under the provisions of the reunification or foster care programmes are checked upon regularly. However, the authorities do acknowledge that there is a need to develop guidelines for social workers working in the field, particularly in respect of their handling of cases involving children. It is also the case that many social workers have not received formal training, however the MLHW have worked in conjunction with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to upgrade social workers skills". **[5] (p73)**

**6.188** The same report stated that, "Christian Balselv-Olesen, UNICEF Representative to Eritrea commented to the UK delegation to Eritrea that there is a very well defined programme for alternative childcare arrangements within Eritrea. Barbel Hoefers, Child Protection Officer, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), confirmed this was the case, so much so that the UN agency considers the Eritrea model suitable to export to other countries". **[5] (p73)**

**6.189** It continued that:

> "Hoefers confirmed that the authorities' favoured arrangement is reunification of orphans within their extended family. She considered that in practice, the second option favoured by the authorities is the placement of children into group homes. The third option is the use of orphanages; she advised that Eritrea has one state run orphanage and 10 further orphanages managed by churches. UNICEF stated that there are approximately 1,500 children in these facilities, 300 of whom are in the state orphanage. With regard to adoption of children, either to foreign families or within the country, Hoefers confirmed that this could sometimes be arranged but commented that it was a difficult process". **[5] (p73)**

**6.190** It also said that:

> "There are several large orphanages within Eritrea adding that Asmara has one of the biggest. Orphanages are either run by the state or Christian NGOs in the country. They are considered by UNICEF to have satisfactory facilities such as adequate bedding, food and clothing provisions etc. Acceptability for entry to an orphanage is universal; there are no unacceptability rules that apply. Eritrea does all that it can for orphans and the Eritrean public and expatriate community supports them in this policy". **[5] (p73-74)**

**6.191** It further added that, "The Government's priority is to place orphans with surviving family if at all possible, if that is not possible then the authorities will attempt to place in a group home (essentially an extended foster family). The last resort is for a child to be put in an orphanage". **[5] (p74)**

**Abuse & Trafficking of Children**

**6.192** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that:

> "A parent or guardian may not treat their child with negligence, give too large a task for the child to complete, beat the child in a way which may affect their mental or physical development, abandon the child in dangerous places or conditions or deny the child necessities. The court is sanctioned to impose a punishment against the parent or guardian in respect of any breaches of the above, the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE) also provides for the rights of the parent or guardian to be limited". **[5] (p82)**

**6.193** The same report stated that:

> "According to the MLHW [Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare] Report on the implementation of the convention of rights to the child sexual abuse within the family is said to be unknown. In practice though, it is acknowledged that there has been no research undertaken

to find the extent of the problem. However, the report accepts that 'it is difficult to conclude that it does not occur at all'. The TPCE prescribes for more severe penalties for sexual offences committed by family members and others in a position of trust against a minor. Although the law strongly condemns sexual exploitation of children the MLHW states that it is rare that children or their guardians exercise the right to take perpetrators to court. However, various customary laws also recognise incest and prescribe punishments such as the loss of land (livelihood) and public office for offenders". **[5] (p82)**

**6.194** It further stated that:

"The above mentioned report also refers to the rape of large numbers of young girls by Ethiopian soldiers during the border war. Rape is not dealt with openly in Eritrean society and the families of rape victims often keep such incidents a secret as a consequence of the shame brought on the family of a rape victim. In most Eritrean families' virginity is a pre-requisite for marriage and consequently marriage for a girl who has been raped can become unattainable". **[5] (p82)**

**6.195** Additionally it stated that,

"The Government officially states that it is not aware of any documented or anecdotal evidence to suggest that children are being taken out of the country illegally for the purposes of adoption of other forms of illicit transfer. No official study has been conducted into this issue, however the MLHW Report on the implementation of the convention of rights to the child concludes on this issue 'it would be extremely unlikely that this constitutes a significant problem in Eritrea'". **[5] (p82)**

## Homosexuals

**6.196** According to the British Embassy in Asmara, "Penal Code Proclamation of 1957 No. 158/1957 Book V Title IV Section II which is still in force in Eritrea strictly prohibits 'Sexual Deviations', among which is performing sexual acts with someone of the same sex". Confirmation is given that people who commit "such an act are prosecuted and punished whenever found guilty". **[23]** However the International Lesbian and Gay Association state that same-sex sexual activity is legal for men and women in Eritrea, however they do note that much of the information is out of date. **[14]**

Return to Contents

## 6.C Human Rights - Other Issues

### Use of Torture

**6.197** The USSD Report 2003 noted that:

"The Constitution, which has not been implemented, and the Penal Code prohibit torture; however, there were numerous reports that police resorted to torture and physical beatings of prisoners, particularly during interrogations. During the year [2003], police severely mistreated and beat army deserters, draft evaders, and members of particular religious groups. Police detained deserters and draft evaders and subjected them to various disciplinary actions that included prolonged sun exposure in temperatures of up to 113 degrees Fahrenheit or the binding of the hands, elbows and feet for extended periods". **[6e] (p2)**

**6.198** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that:

"One international observer in Asmara told the delegation that whilst they were personally not aware of anyone who had been subjected to torture they assumed it probable that torture was used in some circumstances, such as against the Eritrean Islamic Jihad. However, the source added that it was not possible to comment whether an occasional beating was policy or represented more an isolated incident. The source added that they would be greatly surprised if corporal punishment and other rough treatment were not used on occasion. However, the source considered that the situation did not amount to the culture of systematic torture that exists in certain other countries in the region". **[5] (p19)**

**6.199** However, the AI report of May 2004 stated that: "Torture is systematically practiced within the army for interrogation and punishment, particularly of conscription evaders, deserters and soldiers accused of military offences, and members of minority churches. Torture is also used against some political prisoners. Furthermore, the atrocious conditions under which many political prisoners are held amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment". **[7h] (p2)**

**6.200** AI in its report dated 19 May 2004 described the following methods of torture:-

**"The helicopter"**: the victim is tied with a rope by hands and feet behind the back, lying on the ground face down, outside in the hot sun, rain or freezing cold nights, stripped of upper garments. This is a punishment allocated for a particular number of days, the maximum reported being 55 days in the Dahlak Kebir island prison, but it is more often one or two weeks. The prisoner is tied in this position 24 hours a day, except for two or three short breaks for meals and toilet functions.

**"Otto" (Italian for "eight")**: the victim is tied with hands behind the back and left face down on the ground, but without the legs tied.

**"Jesus Christ"**: the victim is stripped to the waist, wrists tied, and standing on a block with hands tied to a tree branch; the block is removed, leaving the victim suspended with the feet just off the ground

in a crucifix-like posture. Beatings are inflicted on the bare back. This is said to be an extremely severe torture, restricted to only 10-15 minutes to avoid serious lasting injury. This method was first reported from Adi Abeto prison in 2003.

**"Ferro" (Italian for "iron"**): the wrists are bound behind the back with metal handcuffs while the victim lies on the ground face down and is beaten with sticks or whipped with an electric wire on the back and buttocks.

**"Torch" or "Number eight":** inside a special torture room, the victim is tied up by wrists behind the back and with the feet bound; a stick is placed under the knees and supported on a framework on both sides horizontally, and the body is turned upside down with the feet exposed. The soles of the feet are beaten with sticks or whipped…. Torture used in interrogations of political prisoners held in security prisons has allegedly also included electric shocks and sexual torture – a coca-cola bottle filled with water and tied to the testicles". **[7h] (p15)**

**6.201** HRW noted in their 2003 report that:

"Because of the volume of arrests, prisoners are often held in improvised cargo containers. At Aderser, near Sawa, prisoners are held in underground cells. At least six high school students were also reported incarcerated in solitary confinement in underground cells at Sawa. In addition to psychological abuse, escapees report the use of physical torture at some prisons. Prisoners have been suspended from trees, arms tied behind their backs, a technique known as almaz (diamond). Prisoners have also been placed face down, hands tied to feet, a torture known as the 'helicopter'". **[32c] (p2)**

**6.202** The USSD report on Religious Freedom 2003, noted that, "Some of the detainees reportedly have been rolled around in oil drums, abused by fellow prisoners, and the women sexually abused; some of the detainees reportedly suffer from partial paralysis and other injuries as a result of their torture. Other reports describe other individuals and groups in the military and national service who have been detained, harassed, and physically tortured for practicing non-sanctioned religions". **[6b] (p4)**

**Refugees in Eritrea**

**6.203** The U.S. Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey 2004 reported that:

"Nearly 280,000 Eritreans were refugees at the end of 2003, including some 270,000 in Sudan, nearly 7,000 in Ethiopia, and some 3,000 Eritrean asylum seekers in various Western countries. About 75,000 Eritreans were internally displaced at year's end [2003]. Fewer than 10,000 Eritrean refugees repatriated during the year, primarily from Sudan. Eritrea hosted nearly 4,000 refugees, including more than

3,000 from Somalia and fewer than 1,000 from Sudan". **[29c]** The US State Department Report 2002 on Human Rights noted that, "the few deportees of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia who could not demonstrate their ties to the country were issued documents that identified them as Ethiopians, which permitted them to stay in the country. Government and army officials reportedly considered these Ethiopian deportees to be citizens who were trying to avoid national service. As a result, they were subjected to harassment and detention while the authorities checked their status". **[6d] (p4)**

**6.204** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "The law does not provide for the granting of refugee status or asylum to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. There is no domestic legislation relating to refugees. Consequently, the Government cannot issue legal refugee status or asylum to persons seeking protection on its territory; however, the Government offers temporary protection to persons from Sudan and Somalia on a prima facie basis and provided protection against refoulement. The Government cooperated with the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in assisting refugees. There were 661 Sudanese refugees at Elit camp in the west and 3,314 Somali refugees at Emkulu camp, near Massawa. There were also 5,000 to 7,000 Beja Sudanese and approximately 600 Ethiopians in the Gash Barka region to which UNHCR has no access or responsibility. UNHCR was accommodating 200 Ethiopian asylum seekers who arrived during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p9)**

**6.205** The report further noted that, "The Office of Refugee Affairs (ORA) was responsible for refugees of non-Eritrean origin, including management of the Elit and Emkulu camps. In November and December [2003], the Government cooperated with UNHCR to re-register Sudanese and Somali refugees at the Elit and Emkulu camps". **[6e] (p9-10)**

**6.206** IRIN News stated on 23 January 2004 that, "Thousands of refugees who fled northeastern Sudan into Eritrea are living in appalling health conditions, with no access to adequate water and unable to send their children to Eritrean schools". **[21a]**

**6.207** The report goes on to state that Action by Churches Together (ACT), a worldwide alliance of churches and related agencies said that, "'The water supply for human and animal use is desperately inadequate. Girls take water from small, shallow pools in the dry riverbeds, the same pools where animals drink and pollute the water. Waterborne diseases are frequent among young children, weakening further their already weak status'". **[21a]**

## Internally Displaced Persons

**6.208** The World Refugee Survey 2004 prepared by the US Committee for Refugees reported that:

> "About 75,000 war-uprooted Eritreans remained displaced throughout the country at year's end [2003]. The prevalence of landmines, poor security, and the widespread destruction of business, homes, and water and transportation systems within the Temporary Security Zone prevented the return of tens of thousands of internally displaced Eritreans. As in previous years, the absence of basic health care and education services in war-destroyed villages also impeded large-scale return. More than 55,000 internally displaced persons continued to live in camps in western Eritrea's Gash Barka and Debub Zones. An additional 8,000 resided in makeshift camps and host communities. Eritrea's displaced population also included some 15,000 people of Eritrean descent who Ethiopian authorities deported from Ethiopia during the war. Sever drought, food shortages, and Eritrea's depressed economy compounded the already difficult lives of the country's displaced population. Insufficient rainfall left rivers dry and dams and wells empty. Most war-uprooted internally displaced persons lacked alternative sources of income and continued to rely exclusively on relief organisations for their daily needs, including WFP food rations. 'The emergency needs of internally displaced persons and expellees, living in and outside camps, has not improved,' the UN reported. Most camp-based war-uprooted internally displaced persons continued to live in temporary shelters. Nearly 75% of tents sheltering internally displaced persons required urgent replacement, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs". **[25]**

**6.209** IRIN News reported on 23 January 2004 that:

> "ACT said many of its target communities were situated in the war-affected extreme south of Eritrea, which also hosts many internally displaced people. Another 66,000 vulnerable poor people were in Zoba Maekel in central Eritrea, where most households are headed by women. 'About 90 percent [of the vulnerable community consists of] women-headed households; the rest are vulnerable groups consisting of disabled, elderly persons with nobody to look after them. Most of the female-headed families lost their husbands during the 30-year war for liberation and the recent bloody border war with Ethiopia,' ACT added". **[21a]**

## Treatment of returned failed Asylum Seekers

**6.210** Amnesty International (AI) in its report covering 2002 stated that, "Over 200 Eritreans who had originally entered Sudan were deported back to Eritrea from Malta in September 2002 and detained on arrival". **[7a] (p1)** Human Rights Watch report of 2003 noted that, "They were arrested upon arrival in Asmara, taken to a military camp, and held incommunicado". **[32a] (p2)**

**6.211** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that:

> "In September and October 2002, approximately 220 citizens, who are believed to have fled the country to escape or avoid national service, were deported from Malta. These deportees were detained upon arrival and most had been held at secret locations without contact with their families and without formal charges. There were reports that some who tried to escape again were killed by security forces". **[6e] (p3-4)**

**6.212** However UNHCR, in their position paper of January 2004, also noted the treatment of the Malta returnees and conclude "It appears that the deportees from Malta to Eritrea may have faced persecution owing to an imputed political opinion, conscientious objection or other reasons. It cannot be excluded that future deportees would face a similar risk". **[20] (p7)**

**6.213** This report continued:

> "It is again emphasized that the scope of the cessation clauses for Eritrean refugees announced by UNHCR in May 2002 is limited to persons who fled their country as a result of the war of independence which ended in 1991, or the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia which ended in June 2000. Other Eritrean refugees, i.e. those fleeing persecution, remained and continue to be unaffected by the cessation clauses. It is also underlined that the applicability of the cessation clauses is always rebuttable and, upon request, each individual case is to be examined on it merits. In this context, the possibility of a valid 'sur place' claim should not be excluded.
>
> In the light of the above, UNHCR recommends that asylum claims submitted by Eritrean asylum seekers should undergo a careful assessment to determine their needs for international protection. It is also recommended that states refrain from all forced returns of rejected asylum seekers to Eritrea and grant them complementary forms of protection instead, until further notice. This position will be reviewed in the second half of 2004". **[20] (p7)**

**6.214** Malta Media reported on 23 May 2004:

> "With reference to reports in some newspapers on the deportation of Eritrean citizens in 2002, the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs insists that the United High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) did not oppose their repatriation". The Ministry also said that the Eritreans did not apply for refugee status in Malta and were illegal immigrants to all effects. The reaction was triggered by reports from Amnesty International that some of these Eritreans in question were imprisoned and tortured after their return from Malta." **[26]**

**6.215** UNHCR, in their position paper of January 2004, have stated that they have not noted any "incidents of reprisals or persecution perpetuated by the

Government of the State of Eritrea against refugees who voluntarily elected to return to their country, and did so under the auspices of UNHCR's voluntary repatriation programme." UNHCR add that, "the voluntary repatriation programme continues and UNHCR hope to be able to assist as many refugees as possible to repatriate, including the remaining 35,000 refugees who are currently registered for voluntary repatriation in Sudan". **[20] (p6)**

**6.216** IRIN News stated on 12 March 2004 that, "After more than 30 years in exile, an estimated 1,700 Eritrean refugees left their camps in eastern Sudan to return home to Eritrea this week, in the biggest return convoy this year [2004]. On Wednesday, a convoy of 58 passenger buses and more than 30 luggage trucks carrying 1,770 refugees and their belongings crossed into Eritrea under the escort of officials from Sudan and the UN refugee agency". **[21c]**

**6.217** The article further stated that:

> "Eritrea is one of several countries that has been chosen for UNHCR's pilot testing of a new initiative dubbed the 4Rs – Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction – which is already being tested in Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The 4Rs project aims to ensure that the return of the refugees and their reintegration is backed by 'solid rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes', UNHCR reported". **[21c]**

**6.218** The article noted that, "The Sudanese government estimates the total number of Eritreans remaining in Sudan to be over 200,000. About 35,000 people have signed up for voluntary repatriation to Eritrea this year [2004], while over 29,000 families have applied to remain in Sudan as refugees". **[21c]**

**Human Rights Organisations in Eritrea**

**6.219** Africa South of the Sahara in its 2004 report stated that:

> "In late 1996 the Government imposed severe restrictions on non-governmental organizations (NGO's) operating in Eritrea. Thenceforth NGO's would be permitted to operate only in education and health sectors, and expatriate personnel would be required to pay income tax at 38%. Many NGOs expressed concern that the restrictions would prevent them from continuing their work in Eritrea. In early 1998 several key western NGOs withdrew from the country. During 1999 the Eritrean Government invited back selected NGOs in an attempt to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the fighting with Ethiopia, and significant renewed NGO and US emergency assistance was forthcoming during 2000-02….The expulsion of mine-clearing NGOs in August 2002 and June 2003 appeared to be a further manifestation of Eritrea's awkward relationship with donors and NGOs, and will further reverse efforts to clear land and roads for development". **[1a] (p397)**

**6.220** AI, on 18 September 2002, stated that:

> "Independent national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which might be critical of the Government are generally not allowed. The Eritrean Human Rights and Development Centre set up in 1992 to promote human rights was shut down in 1993. Citizens for Peace in Eritrea (CPE) was granted registration during the Ethiopian war but its work focused on Ethiopia's abuses against Eritreans. In 1994 the Government enacted a law allowing religious freedom but barring religious groups from engaging in political activities. It stripped the Jehovah's Witnesses (Watchtower) Christian sect of civil and political rights because its members in Eritrea refused compulsory national service. International development NGOs have also experienced government restrictions on their work and have been required to channel all their activities and funds through the Government, rather than working directly with local communities". **[7b] (p3)**

**6.221** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that, "there are not many truly independent local NGOs within the country. Many organisations representing specific groups are under Government control but two NGOs that the source did regard as independent were Vision Eritrea which deals with rehabilitation and development work and HABEN that aims to respond to the issues relating to IDPs". **[5] (p24)**

**6.222** The USSD Human Rights Report 2003 noted that, "There were 31 international and 16 domestic NGOs operating in the country; however, only one domestic human rights organization, Citizens for Peace in Eritrea (CPE), was allowed to operate, and its work was limited to advocacy on behalf of war victims. Government officials were cooperative and responsive to CPE's views on these issues. All NGOs were required to register with the ERREC". **[6e] (p10)**

**6.223** It further noted that, "International human rights organizations were not permitted to operate within the country, with the exception of the ICRC, which continued its programs during the year and provided shelter to approximately 70,000 persons who were displaced by the conflict with Ethiopia. The ICRC also visited prisons and detention centers where Ethiopians were held during the year [2003]". **[6e] (p10)**

**6.224** The UK Fact Finding Mission report dated April 2003 stated that, "the only prisoner visits that ICRC has clearance to undertake are to POWs. Over the years….[the] ICRC have at times been given access to normal prisons, but this is the exception rather than the rule. This is in accordance with the 4th Geneva Convention". **[5] (p25)**

Return to Contents

# ANNEX A

## CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS

**1889** Ethiopia recognises Italian control over Eritrea in Treaty of Ucciali. **[1a] (p387)**

**1941** British forces capture Eritrea during the Second World War; Eritrea remains under British military administration until 1952. **[1a] (p387)**

**1952** UN approves federation between Eritrea and Ethiopia; however Ethiopian rule effectively stifles Eritrean autonomy. **[1a] (p387)**

**1958** Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) founded. **[1a] (p387)**

**1961** Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), which had superseded ELM, begins armed campaign for Eritrean independence from Ethiopia. **[1a] (p387)**

**1962** Eritrea's status reduced to that of an Ethiopian province. **[2] (p1535)**

**1972-74** Civil war in Eritrea between ELF and breakaway Popular Liberation Forces (which went on to form the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1977). **[1a] (p387)**

**1974** Revolution which brings hard-line Marxist 'Derg' regime to power. **[1a] (p387) [2] (p1535)**

**1977** 'Red Terror' campaign across Ethiopia by Derg regime increases opposition to Ethiopian rule of Eritrea. **[2] (p1535)**

**1977-78** Further splits within ELF. **[1a] (p387)**

**1985** Second civil war between ELF and breakaway factions, leading to further splits from ELF, effectively neutralising it as an effective military force; EPLF now the main opposition force to Ethiopian rule. **[1a] (p387)**

**1990** EPLF captures Massawa. **[1a] (p387)**

**May 1991** EPLF captures Asmara; at same time EPRDF captures Addis Ababa and overthrows Derg; EPRDF recognises EPLF as government of Eritrea and agrees independence referendum for Eritrea in 1993. **[1a] (p387-388) [2] (p1535)**

**April 1993** UN-supervised referendum overwhelmingly approves independence from Ethiopia. **[1a] (p388) [2] (p1535)**

**24 May 1993** Independence proclaimed. **[1a] (p388) [2] (p1535)**

**28 May 1993** International recognition of independence of the State of Eritrea; EPLF establishes transitional government, with EPLF leader Issayas Afewerki becoming first President of Eritrea. **[1a] (p388) [2] (p1535)**

**8 June 1993** Issayas Afewerki elected first President of Eritrea by the National Assembly. **[1a] (p388) [2] (p1535)**

**February 1994** EPLF becomes the People's Front for Democracy & Justice (PFDJ) and espouses its support for a pluralistic political system. **[1a] (p388) [2] (p1535)**

**1994-1995** Conferences on constitutional reform held throughout Eritrea, but Government opponents not invited to participate. **[1a] (p388)**

**May 1995** Government rationalisation programme cuts size of civil service and reorganises administrative regions. **[1a] (p388)**

**December 1996** Political assassinations of ELF's former commanding officer and a former military commander of EIJ. **[1a] (p389)**

**May 1997** New Constitution adopted by Constituent Assembly but not fully implemented. **[1a] (p389)**

**May 1998** Border conflict with Ethiopia erupts into heavy fighting, thousands of Eritreans expelled from Ethiopia and many Ethiopians leave Eritrea. **[1a] (p392)**

**February 1999** Upsurge in fighting with Ethiopia. **[1a] (p392)**

**March 1999** 10 opposition groups based in Sudan form Alliance of Eritrean National Forces (AENF), led by ELF-CC's Chairman. **[1a] (p391)**

**May 2000** Ethiopia launches all-out attack on Eritrea, capturing territory taken by Eritrea in May 1998. **[1a] (p393)**

**June 2000** Eritrea and Ethiopia sign cease-fire agreement and agree to UN monitoring force along border. **[2] (p1538)**

**October 2000** Eritrean professionals and academics meet in Berlin, Germany, and write a letter to President Issayas Afewerki, since known as the "Berlin Manifesto", about the "political and economic challenges that confront us as a new nation". **[1a] (p390)**

**December 2000** Eritrea and Ethiopia sign peace agreement in Algeria establishing commissions to mark border, exchange prisoners, return displaced people and hear compensation claims. **[1a] (p393)**

**February 2001** Eritrea accepts United Nations plans for a temporary demilitarised zone along its border with neighbouring Ethiopia. **[2] (p1538)**

**22 February 2001** Ethiopia says it has completed its troop withdrawal from Eritrea in accordance with a United Nations-sponsored agreement to end the border war. **[2] (p1538)**

**April 2001** Eritrea announces that its forces have pulled out of the border zone with Ethiopia - a key provision of the peace agreement signed between the two countries. **[2] (p1538)**

**May 2001** A dissident group at the centre of the PFDJ publicly express strong criticisms of the President. This group is known as the "Group of 15" or "G-15". **[1a] (p390) [2] (p1536)**

**July 2001** Semere Kesete Negasi, the student union president at the University of Asmara, makes a speech at the graduation ceremony criticising the Government. He was arrested shortly afterwards. **[1a] (p390) [7b] (p7)**

**August 2001** An application was made to the High Court for the authorities to produce Semere Negasi in court and justify his detention. Hundreds of students demonstrate outside the court, police arrest 400 of them, two of which die during hard labour in detention. **[1a] (p389) [7b] (p7)**

**18 September 2001** Security authorities detain 11 members of the G15 group. Four members escape arrest. **[1a] (p390) [7b] (p8)**

**September 2001** The Government closes eight privately run newspapers. Following this the police arrest 10 leading journalists. **[1a] (p390) [7b] (p10)**

**February 2002** Eritrea's highest legislative body, the National Assembly, decides not to allow the creation of any political parties in the near future. **[1a] (p390)**

**March 2002** Prominent EPLF veteran Ermias Debessai (Papayo) is released from custody. **[21j]**

**31 March 2002** The 10 journalists arrested in September 2001 begin a hunger strike. Nine of the ten were moved from the 1st Police Station in Asmara to an unknown location. **[7b] (p11)**

**13 April 2002** The International Tribunal announces the border decision. Both Eritrea and Ethiopia declare victory. Confusion over which country controls Badme remains. **[1a] (p393) [10d] (p1-2)**

**May 2002** Roma Gebremichael, the wife of one of the G-15 detainees is arrested. **[7b] (p13)**

**May 2002** The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announces that by the end of the year Eritreans in Sudan would no longer automatically be entitled to refugee status. **[7a] (p1)**

**Mid-2002** The Government extends mandatory national service obligations for another two years. **[32a] (p2)**

**August 2002** Semere Kesete Negasi escapes prison and flees to Ethiopia. **[7d] (p8)**

**August 2002** Eritrea repatriates 279 Ethiopian prisoners of war. **[21f]**

**October 2002** Malta deports over two hundred asylum seekers back to Eritrea. They are detained on arrival and held incommunicado without charge or further explanation. **[32a] (p2)**

**29 November 2002** 1,130 POWs and 95 civilian internees of Eritrean origin are released by the Ethiopian authorities and repatriated. **[1a] (p393)**

**March 2003** The Boundary Commission categorically rules Badme to be in Eritrean territory. Ethiopia voices its opposition to the ruling. **[1a] (p393)**

**August 2003** The Government detained 57 students who were members of non-sanctioned religious groups; the students were arrested while at a mandatory 3-month summer course at the Sawa Military Camp. **[6e] (p7)**

**July 2004** UN Secretary General Kofi Annan visited the Horn of Africa in a new initiative to kick start the stalled Ethiopian Eritrean peace process. **[10h]**

Return to Contents

# ANNEX B

## POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

**Alliance of Eritrean National Forces (AENF)** - see ENA. **[1a] (p403)**

**Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrea (DMFLE)** - Opposition group; leader Hamid Turky. **[1a] (p402)**

**Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ)** - Radical opposition group; in August 1993 split into a military wing and political wing; leader of political wing Sheikh Mohamed Arafa. **[1a] (p403)**

**Eritrean People's Liberation Front** – After 1962, Eritreans who opposed union carried on sporadic guerilla warfare against Ethiopia and the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was founded. In 1972 a rival insurgent group, the Eritrean Popular Liberation Forces (EPLF), was formed and battled the ELF for supremacy. **[28]**

**'Islamic Salvation Movement**, Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EIJM), Harakat al Jihad al Islami' The Federation of American Scientists (last updated 1999) stated:

> The Eritrean opposition group Harakat al Jihad al Islami (EIJM) changed its name to harakat al Khalas al Islami (Islamic Salvation Movement) in September 1998. The movement has been seeking the forceful overthrow of Eritrea's government and its replacement by an Islamic government. Sudanese authorities indicated their support of the movement allowing the Movement's Secretary-general Sheikh Mohamed Amer to hold a news conference in Khartoum". **[27]**

**Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)** - founded 1958; commenced armed struggle against Ethiopia in 1961; subsequently split into numerous factions; mainly Muslim support; opposes the PFDJ; successor to the Eritrean Liberation Movement. Factional splits in 1970s led to formation of rival EPLF, with which ELF fought, and lost, two civil wars in the 1970s and 1980s; now broken into several factions - see principal factions **ELF-CC**, **ELF-NC**, **ELF-RC.** **[1a] (p387 & 403)**

> **Eritrean Liberation Front-Central Command (ELF-CC)** - Founded 1982; Chairman Abdella Idriss. **[1a] (p403)**
>
> **Eritrean Liberation Front-National Council (ELF-NC)** - Leader Hassan Ali Assad. **[1a] (p403)**
>
> **Eritrean Liberation Front-Revolutionary Council (ELF-RC)** - Established by former ELF members who remained outside EPLF;

President Seyoum Ogbamichael; Leader Ahmed Mohamed Nasser. **[1a] (p403) [38a] (p1-2)**

**Eritrean National Alliance (ENA)** - Formally **Alliance of Eritrean National Forces (AENF)** and founded in 1999. Changed name in 2002 - Grouping of 13 opposition organisations (including EIJ, EIS, ELF, and a number of ELF factions). Military wing aimed set up in 2003; Chairman Abdella Idris; Secretary General Hiruy Tedla Bairu. **[1a] (p403) [21i] [31] (p5)**

**Eritrean People's Liberation Front Democratic Party (EPLF-DP)** – Founded 2001; breakaway group from the PFDJ. Gains credibility in not being connected to Sudan or Ethiopia as most opposition groups are. Leader the former Defence Minister Mesfin Hagos. **[1a] (p403) [10c] (p1-2)**

**People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)** - Founded 1970 as the Eritrean Popular Liberation Forces (EPLF); following a split in the Eritrean Liberation Front; renamed the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in 1977; adopoted present name in February 1994. Christian and Muslim support; in May 1991 took control of Eritrea and formed provisional Government; formed transitional Government in May 1993; Chair Issaias Afewerki President of Erritrea; Secretary General Alamin Mohamed Said. **[1a] (p403)**

**Popular Liberation Forces** - Breakaway faction from ELF which went on to form **EPLF** in 1977. **[1a] (p387)**

**Red Sea Afar Democratic Organisation**: Afar opposition group; Secretary General Amin Ahmmad. **[1a] (p403)**

Return to Contents

# ANNEX C

## PROMINENT PEOPLE*

**Abdella** Idriss - Chairman of ELF-CC and leader of ENA grouping. **[1a] (p403)**

**Adhanom** Gebremariam **-** Former Ambassador to Nigeria, member of G-15 group of dissenters. **[21b]**

**Ahmed Nasser –** Until recently [2003]Leader of ELF-RC. **[1a] (p403)**

In its 6th regular meeting in Addis Abeba (October 2003), the ENA had resolved and appointed a committee for national conference chaired by Ahmed Nasser, who recently abandoned his official position in the ELF-RC and later joined the ENA without assessment of his past withdrawal from it. **[33]**

**Alamin** Mohammed Said - Secretary-General of PFDJ. **[1a] (p403)**

**Ali** Said Abdella – Minister of Foreign Affairs**

**Amin** Ahmmad - Secretary General of Red Sea Afar Democratic Organisation. **[1a] (p403)**

**Berhane** Abrehe – Minister of Finance**

**Haile** Menkorios – former Eritrean ambassador to the United Nations, member of G-15 group of dissenters. **[21b]**

**Haile** Woldensae - Former Trade and Industry Minister arrested in September 2001 following involvement with G-15 group of dissenters. **[10a]**

**Hamid** Turky - Leader of Democratic Movement For the Liberation of Eritrea. **[1a] (p402)**

**Hassan** Ali Assad - Leader of ELF-NC. **[1a] (p403)**

**Issayas** Afewerki - Secretary-General of EPLF, Chairman of PFDJ and President of Eritrea June 1993 to present. **[1a] (p388 & 403)**

**Mahmoud** Ahmed Sheriffo **-** Former Foreign Minister, former Vice President, former Minister of Local Government, arrested in September 2001 following involvement with G-15 group of dissenters. **[7b] (p8 & 10)**

**Mesfin** Hagos **-** Former Defence Minister, member of G-15 group of dissenters. Hagos escaped arrest in September 2001 by being out of the country. He is believed to be one of the founders of the new EPLF-DP. **[1a] (p403) [10c] (p1-2)**

**Petros** Solomon - Former Minister of Maritime Resources; previously Minister of Foreign Affairs, EPLF military commander and intelligence chief, EPLF political bureau member since 1977. Arrested in September 2001 following involvement with G-15 group of dissenters. **[7b] (p8 & 10)**

**Sebhat** Ephrem – Minister of Defense**

**Seyoum** Ogbamichael – President of the ELF-RC. **[1a] (p403)**

**Sheikh** Mohamed Arafa - Leader of EIJ. **[1a] (p403)**

**Yemane** Ghebremeskel – Director, Office of the President**

- **It is more usual for people in Ethiopia and Eritrea to be addressed by the first name. This is reflected in this list and at times in the text of this report.**
- **** As at March 2004**

# ANNEX D

# LIST OF SOURCE MATERIAL


**[1] Europa Publications:**

**a.** South of the Sahara 2004

**b.** **Europa World Year Book 2004,** 45th Edition, Volume 1, Europa Publications Ltd, London. 2004

**c.** EU relations with Eritrea – 27 November 2003

**[2] Ethnologue** http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Eritrea - Languages of Eritrea

**[3] Keesings Record of World Events** – April 2003

**[4] Draft Constitution of Eritrea**, Constitutional Commission of Eritrea, Asmara July 1996

**[5] Home Office,** Report of Home Office fact-finding mission to Eritrea: 4 - 18 November 2002

**[6] United States Department of State** http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/

**a.** Eritrea Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2001: March 2002

**b.** Eritrea Country Report on Religious Freedom for 2003: 18 December 2003

**c.** Ethiopia Country Report on Human Rights for 2002: March 2003

**d.** Eritrea Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2002: March 2003

**e.** Eritrea Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2003: March 2004

**f.** Background Note – Eritrea: March 2004

**[7] Amnesty International** http://web.amnesty.org

**a.** **Eritrea Annual Report 2003** (covers 2002)

**b.** **Eritrea:** Arbitrary detention of government critics and journalists – 18 September 2002

**c.** **Ethiopia and Eritrea:** Human Rights Issues in a Year of Armed Conflict, 21 May 1999

**d.** **Eritrea:** Human Rights Appeal for 10th Independence Anniversary - 19 May 2003

**e.** **Eritrea:** Continued detention of prisoners of conscience and new arrests of members of religious groups – 18 September 2003

**f.** **Eritrea:** 57 male and female students – members of minority Christian churches - 18 September 2003

**g.** **Eritrea:** 28 Jehovah's Witnesses – 18 February 2004

**h.** **Eritrea:** 'You have no right to ask – Government resists scrutiny on human rights' – 19 May 2004

**i.** **Eritrea:** Fear of torture – 1 June 2004

j. **Eritrea:** 'Government resists scrutiny on human rights and calls to end torture and arbitrary detention' – 19 May 2004

**[8] World Directory of Minorities**, Eritrea, Minority Rights Group International, London 1997

**[9] Eritrean Nationality Proclamation** (Number 21/1992), Gazette of Eritrean Laws, Vol. 2/1992, Number 3, Eritrean Provisional Government

**[10] British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News Online**
http://news.bbc.co.uk/
**a.** Eritrean president sacks dissenters - 11 June 2001
**b.** Asmara University stays shut - 20 September 2001
**c.** Cyber Party challenges Eritrean Leaders - 14 January 2002
**d.** Controversy over border ruling - 16 April 2002
**e.** Eritrea rapped for 'military' schooling - 11 January 2004
**f.** UN accuses Horn rivals – 5 May 2004
**g.** UN-Eritrea row sinks to new low – 8 May 2004
**h.** Fresh Annan push for Horn peace – 4 July 2004
**i.** New unity in Eritrean opposition – 15 August 2004

**[11] Die Volker Afrikas Atlas**, Map of ethnic groups of Eritrea, Geographischer Dienst, Germany 1998

**[12] Foreign and Commonwealth Office**, 10 May 1996, 2 April 2001 and 3 March 2000

**[13] Global Edge** http://globaledge.msu.edu **Eritrea - Government** – using CIA World Factbook 2003 and USSD Country Background Note (March 2004)

**[14] The International Lesbian and Gay Association**
http://www.ilga.info/Information/Legal_survey/ilga_world_legal_survey%20introduction.htm (ILGA) - World Legal Survey Eritrea, 1999, Date accessed 3 March 2004

**[15] The AfroCentric Experience** http://www.swagga.com/news14.htm **-** 2 July 2004

**[16] Letter from the Eritrean Embassy -** 27 January 2004

**[17] Letter from the British Embassy in Addis Ababa -** 2 July 2001

**[18] Afrol News**
**a. SA, Benin best, Eritrea worst on press freedom** – 21 October 2003**"**
http://www.afrol.com/printable_article/10256
**b. Torture fears for Eritrean Jehovah's Witnesses** – 20 February 2004
http://www.afrol.com/articles/11334

**[19] Reporters sans Frontieres – Eritrea – 2003 Annual Report** - 2 May 2003

**[20] UNHCR position on return of rejected asylum seekers to Eritrea** – January 2004

**[21] Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)**
http://www.irinnews.org/
**a.** Eritrea: Sudanese refugees living in appalling conditions NGO - 23 January 2004
**b.** Passports of government critics revoked - 26 September 2001
**c.** Eritrea-Sudan: Biggest convoy of returning refugees this year - 12 March 2004
**d.** Special Report on Returnees - 22 February 2002
**e.** Demobilisation pilot phase completed - 2 July 2000
**f.** Remaining POWs freed - 29 August 2002
**g.** Eritrea Tackles AIDS - 10 July 2002
**h.** International community accused of "double standards - 27 March 2003
**i.** Opposition alliance says it has military wing - 1 May 2003
**j.** US Says human rights worsened, prominent detainee reportedly freed - 10 April 2003
**k.** Eritrea: Slight improvement, but humanitarian situation still grave - 17 March 2004
**l.** Eritrea: Drought worsens as world attention focused elsewhere - 19 March 2003
**m.** Eritrea: UN looking forward to "positive" ties with gov't – 13 August 2004
**n.** Eritrea: Deadline passes for ending refugee status – 2 January 2003
**o.** Eritrea: Hundreds of thousands of children living in extreme poverty – UNICEF – 20 July 2004
**p.** ETHIOPIA-ERITREA: UNMEE allowed direct Addis-Asmara flights – 20 August 2004

**[22] The Economist Intelligence**
Unithttp://db.eiu.com/report_dl.asp?mode=pdf&eiu_issue_id=1847085584
Country Profile Eritrea - 2004

**[23] Letter from the British Embassy in Asmara** – 14 July 2003

**[24] Refugees International** http://www.refugeesinternational.org/cgi-bin/ri/index
**a.** Forgotten People: The Kunama of Eritrea and Ethiopia - 18 February 2004

**[25] Global IDP** http://www.db.idproject.org **– USCR: 75,000 remain displaced throughout the country (June 2003)**

**[26] Malta Media**
http://www.maltamedia.com/news/2004/ln/printer_1905.shtml **– UNHCR did**

**not oppose the repatriation of Eritreans, Justice Ministry insists** – 23 May 2004

**[27] The Federation of American Scientists**
http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ism.htm **Islamic Salvation Movement (EIJM)** – 29 October 1999

**[28] InfoPlease** http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/AO858026.html **Eritrea - History**

**[29] United States Committee for Refugees (USCR)** http://www.refugees.org/
**a.** Country Report - Eritrea 2003 (for 2002)
**b.** Country Report - Eritrea 2000 (for 1999)
**c.** World Refugee Survey 2004 - Eritrea

**[30] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - OCHA** – http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/
Eritrea: Humanitarian Update 5 March 2004

**[31] CIA Factbook – Online** (updated 18 December 2003)
http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html

**[32] Human Rights Watch:** http://www.hrw.org/
**a.** Eritrea Report 2003 (covering 2002)
**b.** The Horn Of Africa War: Mass Expulsions and the Nationality Issue (June 1998 – April 2002) – January 2003 http://hrw.org/reports/2003/ethioerit0103/ Date accessed 2 March 2004
**c.** Eritrea Report 2004 (covering 2003)

**[33] Gabeel**
http://www.gabeel.com/ARTICLES/ENGLSIH/Nair_ENA_National_Conference_18 nov_03.htm - 'Has the Eritrean National Alliance an idea about National Conference?' 18 November 2003

**[34] United Press International**
http://www.upi.com/view.cfm?StoryID=20040609-050246-2302r Eritrea drought sparks migration for water – 9 June 2004

**[35] The Encyclopaedia of the Peoples of the World –** Edited by Amiram Gonen. Henry Holt Reference Books. 1993.

**[36] Lonely Planet – Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti.** By Frances Linzee Gordon. 2000.

**[37] Freeglossary.com**
http://www.freeglossary.com/Use_of_death_penalty_worldwide – Use of death penalty worldwide 2004

**[38] Awate Website/Gedab News** http://www.awate.com/

**a.** ELF-RC (Kassel) elects an Interim Leadership Report dated 10 August 2003

**[39] USAID** http://www.usaid.gov/index.html
Country Profile HIV/AIDS Eritrea – May 2003

Return to Contents