

and subjected to violence by criminal groups attempting to extract ransom payments from their families. The UN Monitoring Group reported that it had identified a Swiss bank account that had been used to collect such payments.

In April 2014, 266 Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers were released from detention in neighbouring Djibouti and transferred to a refugee camp in the south of the country.

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

Eritrea faced increased international scrutiny. Appointed to the newly created role of UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea in October 2012, Sheila Keetharuth presented wide-ranging concerns and recommendations in reports to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2013 and June 2014, and to the UN General Assembly in October 2013 and October 2014. The Special Rapporteur's requests for access to the country have not been granted since her appointment in 2012.

In June 2014, a three-member UN Commission of Inquiry was established for one year to investigate all alleged violations of human rights in Eritrea outlined in the reports of the Special Rapporteur.

ESTONIA

Republic of Estonia

Head of state: **Toomas Hendrik Ilves**

Head of government: **Taavi Rõivas (replaced Andrus Ansip in March)**

Legislation allowing unmarried, including same-sex, couples to register their cohabitation was passed. About 91,000 people remained stateless. Few asylum-seekers were granted protection and the number of asylum applications remained

low. The government accepted the transfer of a Guantánamo detainee.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

On 9 October, parliament passed a gender-neutral Cohabitation Act, due to enter into force on 1 January 2016. The Act allows unmarried, including same-sex, couples to register their cohabitation. It also extends to them many of the rights of married couples, for example regarding benefits. Couples in a registered cohabitation agreement will be allowed to adopt the partner's biological children.

DISCRIMINATION - ETHNIC MINORITIES

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, stated that about 91,000 people (approximately 6.8% of the population) remained stateless; the vast majority were Russian speakers. Stateless people enjoyed limited political rights.

Efforts by the authorities to facilitate the naturalization of children born of stateless parents fell short of granting them automatic citizenship at birth, leaving Estonia in breach of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ethnic minorities continued to be disproportionately affected by unemployment and poverty, leading to concerns that ethnic and linguistic discrimination could be a contributing factor. Language requirements for employment were reportedly placing ethnic minorities at a disadvantage.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

The number of asylum applications remained low. Approximately 120 were made in the first 10 months of the year, of which some 35 were from Ukrainian nationals. At least 20 people had been granted asylum as of the end of November. There was concern that asylum-seekers could be denied access to asylum at borders and refused entry.

Reports indicated that the provision of legal aid and interpretation to asylum-seekers had improved.

COUNTER-TERROR AND SECURITY

In October, following a request from the USA, the government agreed to accept for resettlement a former Guantánamo detainee. Neither his identity nor the date of transfer were disclosed.

ETHIOPIA

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Head of state: **Mulatu Teshome Wirtu**

Head of government: **Hailemariam Desalegn**

Freedom of expression continued to be subject to serious restrictions. The government was hostile to suggestions of dissent, and often made pre-emptive arrests to prevent dissent from manifesting. Independent media publications were subject to further attack. Peaceful protesters, journalists, and members of opposition political parties were arbitrarily arrested. The Charities and Societies Proclamation continued to obstruct the work of human rights organizations. Arbitrary detention and torture and other ill-treatment were widespread, often used as part of a system for silencing actual or suspected dissent.

BACKGROUND

Economic growth continued apace, along with significant foreign investment including in the agriculture, construction and manufacturing sectors, large-scale development projects such as hydroelectric dam building and plantations, and widespread land-leasing, often to foreign companies.

The government used multiple channels and methods to enforce political control on

the population, including politicizing access to job and education opportunities and development assistance, and high levels of physical and technological surveillance.

The politicization of the investigative branch of the police and of the judiciary meant that it was not possible to receive a fair hearing in politically motivated trials.

Federal and regional security services were responsible for violations throughout the country, including arbitrary arrests, the use of excessive force, torture and extrajudicial executions. They operated with near-total impunity.

Armed opposition groups remained in several parts of the country or in neighbouring countries, although in most cases with small numbers of fighters and low levels of activity.

Access to some parts of the Somali region continued to be severely restricted. There were continuing reports of serious violations of human rights, including arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial executions. There were also multiple allegations of the rape of women and girls by members of the security services.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE - EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

In April and May, protests took place across Oromia region against a proposed “Integrated Master Plan” to expand the capital Addis Ababa into Oromia regional territory. The government said the plan would bring services to remote areas, but many Oromo people feared it would damage the interests of Oromo farmers and lead to large-scale displacement.

Security services, comprising federal police and military special forces, responded with excessive force, firing live ammunition at protesters in Ambo and Guder towns and Wallega and Madawalabu universities, resulting in the deaths of at least 30 people, including children. Hundreds of people were beaten by security service agents during and after the protests, including protesters, bystanders, and parents of protesters for