



**Human Rights Council, 56<sup>th</sup> Session**  
**June 20<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Item 2: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur  
on the situation of human rights in Eritrea**

**Oral statement delivered by War Resisters International, in collaboration with Connection e.V.**

Ms. Vice-President,

War Resisters International (WRI) thanks the Special Rapporteur for his report<sup>1</sup> and expresses serious concerns regarding the situation of human rights in Eritrea.

The conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region has increased the alarm on human rights violations by Eritrean forces<sup>2</sup>: mass roundups and repression in the context of an intensive forced conscription campaign.<sup>3</sup> Many that did not want to join the war front either got arrested, fled the country or their family members were arrested in their absence.<sup>4</sup>

We restate the concern regarding Eritrean refugees who often flee from the system of a de facto indefinite National Service which presents practices that in many cases amount to forced labour. In 2023 we registered over 13,000 new Eritrean asylum applications in European countries.<sup>5</sup>

We call on the international community to protect refugees and to withdraw from practices which reinforce the above-mentioned system.

We second the call of the Special Rapporteur upon the government to schedule demobilization and reform the national service.<sup>6</sup>

Together with its partner Connection e.V., WRI urges Eritrea to ensure the protection of human rights, including the human right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion within which the human right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent.<sup>7</sup>

We encourage Eritrea to continue to promote initiatives such as the seminar held by the Minister of Justice on legal frameworks this past May<sup>8</sup> which could enhance a process leading to the rule of law in the country.

We call on this Council to ensure the protection of human rights of Eritreans providing the needed assistance and monitoring for this purpose.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Special Rapporteur Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker; A/HRC/56/24 <https://documents.un.org/doc/un-doc/gen/g24/073/00/pdf/g2407300.pdf?token=eVH4oVw53gVIQPvd7q&fe=true>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/eritrea>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63208353>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/09/eritrea-crackdown-draft-evaders-families>

<sup>5</sup> 13,110 first time applicants. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR\\_ASYAPPCTZM\\_custom\\_11881582/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZM_custom_11881582/default/table?lang=en)

<sup>6</sup> A/HRC/56/24 par 29.

<sup>7</sup> UN Human Rights Council resolution 24/17, September 2013. UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 22 on Article 18, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IxShDwewXjE>