



Plenary sitting

B8-0321/2016

2.3.2016

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Eritrea
(2016/2568(RSP))

**Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Ignazio Corrao, Isabella Adinolfi,
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on behalf of the EFDD Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Eritrea
(2016/2568(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the final report of the Monitoring Group on Eritrea and its conclusions,
 - having regard to the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 751 (1992), 1907 (2009), 2182 (2014) and 2244 (2015),
 - having regard to Council Decision 2010/127/CFSP of 1 March 2010 and Council Regulation (EU) No 667/2010, subsequently amended in 2010 by Council Decision 2010/414/CFSP,
 - having regard to the EU's further restrictive measures against Eritrea as set out in Council Decision 2012/632/CFSP and Council Implementing Regulation (EU) No 942/2012,
 - having regard to the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea by the UN Human Rights Council through resolution 26/24 of 27 June 2014,
 - having regard to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the optional protocols thereto,
 - having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,
 - having regard to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
 - having regard to the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, also known as the Khartoum Process,
 - having regard to the Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions on the EU-Horn of Africa Regional Action Plan 2015-2020,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Eritrea is one of Africa's poorest and closest nations and has a one-party

system, with the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) being the only legally sanctioned political party; whereas the president has been in charge since the country became independent in 1993; whereas the constitution was never implemented and the country has never held national elections; whereas the National Assembly stopped convening in 2002 and laws are passed by government decree;

- B. whereas Eritrea, a country of six million people, is one of the 'world's fastest-emptying nations', with a refugee population near the half-million mark; whereas 5 000 Eritreans leave the country each month, mainly seeking refuge in neighbouring Ethiopia and Sudan, but also undertaking the dangerous journey to the EU; whereas Eritreans make up the third-largest number of refugees trying to reach Europe;
- C. whereas the most commonly cited reason for leaving the country is conscription into the national-service programme; whereas a statutory requirement of 18 months of military or civilian service was extended in 2002, becoming indefinite in practice; whereas the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea found that national service often entails 'arbitrary detention, torture, sexual torture, forced labour, absence of leave, and [...] ludicrous pay', calling it 'an institution where slavery-like practices are routine'; whereas conscripts include boys and girls as young as 16 as well as the elderly, and whereas national service often amounts to forced labour;
- D. whereas conscription could last for decades and there are cases in which multiple family members are conscripted at the same time and geographically separated; whereas those who take leave without permission face imprisonment and, if they cannot be found, family members are imprisoned in their place; whereas the basic monthly conscription salary amounts to USD 43-48 before deductions, an amount insufficient to meet individual basic needs; whereas in Eritrea there is no provision for conscientious objection;
- E. whereas systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been, and continue to be, committed in Eritrea under the authority of the government, which has created and sustained a repressive system in order to control, silence and isolate individuals in the country, depriving them of their fundamental freedoms; whereas it is routine for individuals to be arbitrarily arrested and detained, tortured, disappeared or extra-judicially executed;
- F. whereas pervasive control systems and severe consequences for perceived deviant behaviour have created an environment of self-censorship in which people are unable to express themselves, practise their religion or exercise their freedom of assembly and association; whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, Eritrea had the least-free press in the world in 2015;
- G. whereas thousands of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners are held by the Eritrean authorities in secret detention, without charge or trial; whereas the conditions of detention are extremely harsh, as the detainees are often kept in underground cells or in shipping containers and the lack of access to sufficient food, water and medical care while in detention could lead to health complications, including death;
- H. whereas Eritrea's government has taken an ambivalent stance toward its migratory outflow, in part because it benefits from the diaspora in the form of an income tax from

the migrants, reportedly by threatening to deny consular services to them or to their family members; whereas in 2011 the UN Security Council called on Eritrea to cease using extortion, threats of violence, fraud and other illicit means to collect this tax, which yielded USD 73 million for the state from 2010 to 2013;

- I. whereas EU Member States are increasingly rejecting asylum applications from Eritrea, claiming that those arriving at their borders are economic migrants; whereas there is a generalised risk of arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment for any returned asylum seeker;
- J. whereas the government has a widespread network of informants, coerced by the state, controlling the population, and whereas citizens who are suspected of treasonous behaviour are subject to arbitrary arrest, forced disappearance, extra-judicial execution and torture; whereas there are unfair restrictions on internal movement and speech, and whereas domestic media are controlled by the state;
- K. whereas the country's lack of financial transparency continues to create an informal economy controlled by the PFDJ and involving hard-currency transactions through an obscure, non-transparent network of business entities owned by the state and managed by senior government officials; whereas this is of particular concern at a time when international organisations are pledging monetary aid to the government;
- L. whereas this lack of transparency also heavily affects mining revenues; whereas there are cases of alleged use of forced labour and inhumane treatment, and whereas payments made by international companies to labour provided by government contractors are allegedly diverted from workers' wages to the Eritrean military and government;
- M. whereas, in particular, the Canadian Company Nevsun, which owns a 60 % stake in the Bisha copper and gold mine, with the other 40 % belonging to the government, has been accused of permitting forced labour to be used in the construction of its mine, both by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea and in a lawsuit filed in a Canadian court; whereas Nevsun denied the allegations and rejected the UN's findings;
- N. whereas all sectors of the economy rely on forced labour, and whereas most Eritreans are likely to be subjected to it at some point in their lives;
- O. whereas on 27 June 2014 the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) established the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea to investigate all alleged violations of human rights in Eritrea; whereas the Commission of Inquiry presented its first report on 23 June 2015, and whereas the HRC extended the Commission of Inquiry's mandate for one year to June 2016, with a revised mandate to investigate the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations, with a view to ensuring full accountability, including where these violations may amount to crimes against humanity; whereas the Commission of Inquiry will present a written report with its finding and recommendations to the HRC in June 2016;
- P. whereas the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, notwithstanding its repeated requests, was never permitted to visit Eritrea during its mandate and did not obtain the

government's full cooperation, as requested in UN Security Council resolution 2182 (2014); whereas the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and independent human rights organisations have all repeatedly been denied access to Eritrea;

- Q. whereas in 2009 the UN Security Council sanctioned Eritrea for its alleged support of al-Shabaab, an Islamist militia in Somalia; whereas the UN measures included an arms embargo and travel bans as well as asset freezes for designated individuals; whereas, on adopting resolution 2244 (2015), the UN Security Council reaffirmed last year the arms embargo on Eritrea, in the light of the country's continued support to other regional armed groups, including a newly formed unified front of armed Ethiopian opposition groups, the Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM) and the military leader of Ginbot Sebat;
- R. whereas Eritrea has forged a new strategic military relationship with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, allowing the Arab coalition to use Eritrean land, airspace and territorial waters in its anti-Houthi military campaign in Yemen; whereas Eritrea has allegedly received compensation from the two countries, including monetary compensation and fuel supplies, and whereas any compensation diverted directly or indirectly towards activities that threaten peace and security in the region, or for the benefit of the Eritrean military, would constitute a violation of UN Security Council resolution 1907 (2009);
- S. whereas residual tensions from a 1998-2000 border war with Ethiopia still linger and are used as a rationale for a police state;
- T. whereas on 28 January 2016 Eritrea and the EU signed a landmark agreement on future development cooperation, promoting renewable energy and sound governance; whereas the EU has announced EUR 200 million in long-term support to Eritrea through the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), focusing on energy and governance; whereas Eritrea can be a beneficiary of actions under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and other EU initiatives, in particular the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights;
1. Calls for the EU and its Member States to place full respect for human rights at the forefront of every interaction with the Government of Eritrea, in particular as regards the management of migration flows;
 2. Is convinced that the root causes of the Eritrean refugee crisis are the absence of rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights and the repression of its citizens, and that unless these underlying causes are addressed it will be impossible to stop the refugee crisis by any other means; is afraid that at this moment the Eritrean Government cannot be seen as a credible partner for the EU;
 3. Expresses its doubts about the decision to devote EUR 200 million from the EDF to projects concerning energy and governance in Eritrea, given the dire situation of human rights in the country; is worried, given the complete lack of transparency in the financial management of the country, that these funds could easily be diverted by the government and used to support further repression;

4. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to refrain from using the EU Trust Fund for Africa for any purpose other than improvements in human rights and development assistance, underlining that projects financed by the Trust Fund must respect the EU's fundamental rights; emphasises that all EU assistance which does not pursue humanitarian objectives should be made strictly conditional on real progress in the country; calls on the Commission to suspend financial assistance directed to the Eritrean Government and to put in place monitoring mechanisms to ensure that any aid directed to the country is not diverted by the Eritrean Government or used for repression or any activity that may use forced labour;
5. Calls on private companies and other entities investing or operating in Eritrea to undertake human rights due diligence in order to ensure that conscripted labour is not used at any point in their operations and that they do not provide funds or support to projects using conscripted labour; calls on the Eritrean authorities and foreign companies to help strengthen governance in the extractive industry by complying with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative;
6. Calls on the President and Government of Eritrea to institute reforms to ensure that Eritrea complies with its international and human rights obligations by, inter alia, implementing the 1997 constitution, bringing national laws and regulations into line with international human rights standards, allowing independent political parties and civil society organisations to function freely, establishing an independent judiciary and convening long-due free and fair elections;
7. Notes that, according to Reporters Without Borders, Eritrea is the country with the least-free press in the world and is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa without a single private media outlet; calls for measures to allow the operation of independent and free media and to protect journalists from arbitrary interference;
8. Calls on the authorities to permit freedom of movement within the country and to facilitate the lawful movement of people in and out of the country by lifting the requirement for an exit visa and treating returnees in compliance with international standards;
9. Urges the Eritrean Government to bring an end to practices of indefinite conscription into national service, which often amounts to forced labour and as such is in violation of international law, and to demobilise all conscripts at the end of 18 months of active service; calls on the Eritrean Government to ensure that no one undertakes military training before they reach 18 years of age and that no members of the population past the normal conscription age are conscripted; further calls on the government to ensure that all conscripts are provided with accommodation and conditions which comply with international human rights law and that they are remunerated in a way that permits a dignified life;
10. Calls on the government to make provision for conscientious objection to military service and to provide alternatives and non-punitive services of a civilian nature of a length comparable to that of military service;
11. Calls on the authorities to bring an immediate end to the unlawful practices of arbitrary detention without charge or trial, incommunicado detention and detention in unofficial

detention centres, to immediately provide detainees' families with information on their whereabouts and their health status and to fully respect the rights of the detainees; further calls on the authorities to refrain from detaining or punishing deserters after the 18 months of service mandated in the National Service Proclamation; calls for the immediate release of those who are being detained for this reason;

12. Calls on the Eritrean authorities to ensure that all detainees are treated humanely and in accordance with international human rights standards, including by providing them with adequate shelter, food, water, sanitation and access to medical care, and to ensure that no one is subject to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; calls on the authorities to ensure that all allegations of torture or other ill-treatment are promptly investigated and that those responsible are held accountable; calls on the authorities to open all prisons and other places of detention to inspection by independent monitoring bodies;
13. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and for Eritrea to comply with its obligations to report to the bodies responsible for monitoring implementation of international human right treaties to which Eritrea is a party; calls on the government to allow access to the country to UN and African Union independent experts, including the UN Special Rapporteur, and to allow the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea to fully exercise its mandate and to cooperate with it, including as regards public finance issues; calls on the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to coordinate with other international monitors and give an assessment of the situation in the country to the European Parliament;
14. Calls on the government to immediately cease the practice of enforced disappearances and all forms of extra-judicial execution by, inter alia, revoking the shoot-to-kill policy at borders and setting up an effective mechanism to establish the whereabouts of those disappeared;
15. Calls on the Member States assessing Eritrean claims for asylum to regard the indefinite conscription practised in Eritrea as a human rights violation amounting to forced labour and therefore prohibited under international law, and the existence of a generalised risk of arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment for any asylum seeker returning to Eritrea, and to continue to provide protection to all those who have fled, and continue to flee, Eritrea, by respecting the principle of non-refoulement;
16. Calls on the Eritrean Government to immediately suspend any support or activity, such as supporting rebel movements in neighbouring countries, that may undermine regional stability, and to suspend its support to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, reportedly in exchange for financial compensation, for their military campaign in Yemen; calls on the Eritrean authorities to crack down on, and not give tacit approval to, weapons trafficking, which is in violation of the UN arms embargo on the country;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Pan-African Parliament, the co-presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the African Union, and the President, Parliament and Government of Eritrea.