



Plenary sitting

B9-0312/2020

6.10.2020

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on Eritrea, the case of Dawitt Isaak
(2020/2813(RSP))

Malin Björk, Marisa Matias
on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

B9-0312/2020

**European Parliament resolution on Eritrea, the case of Dawitt Isaak
(2020/2813(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Eritrea,
 - Having regard to the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea of 2019 and 2020
- having regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief of 1981,
- having regard to the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Pact of New York,
- having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
- having regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,
- having regard to Rules 144 of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas Eritrea achieved independence from Ethiopia in 1993, following a 30-year war; whereas, according to estimations, the 1998-2000 border war with Ethiopia produced between 54 000 and 137 000 casualties;
- B. whereas Eritrea has not held democratic elections since 1993; whereas the Eritrean Constitution ratified in 1996 has never been implemented and, whereas from 2001 the country has fallen gradually into a dictatorship; whereas in January 2013, following a 'mutiny of the exiled opposition which was presented as an abortive coup' a new wave of mass arrests took place; whereas this was used to justify the closure of the country;
- C. whereas the country has been under UN Security Council sanctions since 2009 for its alleged support for jihadists in Somalia, a charge the Eritrean government has always denied; whereas in November 2018 the UN Security Council lifted sanctions against Eritrea, after a historic peace deal with Ethiopia and a warming of relations with Djibouti which could be a first step for positive changes in the Horn of Africa;
- D. whereas on 8 June 2016, the report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Human Rights Situation in Eritrea noted that "*crimes against humanity have been committed in a widespread and systematic manner in detention centres, military training camps and*

other places across the country over the past 25 years"; whereas according to the UN report of 2019 *"The positive momentum for peace and security in the region has raised expectations in Eritrea and in the international community that the Government of Eritrea will implement political and institutional reforms. However, the Eritrean authorities have not yet engaged in a process of domestic reforms and the human rights situation remains unchanged."*; whereas the UN Special Rapporteur is still denied access to Eritrea to conduct in-country visits since 2009;

- E. whereas human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interconnected;; whereas, according to several NGOs and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea, the conditions for press freedom and freedom of expression are considered among the worst in the world;
- F. whereas since 2001, the government has shut down all private media and censored all the country's private press claiming that it is subservient to foreign interests and threatens the integrity and independence of the country;
- G. whereas according to UN, at least 16 journalists remain in custody in Eritrea; whereas one case is that of Dawit Isaak, a national of both Eritrea and Sweden, who was arrested in Asmara on 23 September 2001 during a government crackdown on the independent press – in which other journalists were also arrested – and has been held incommunicado ever since; whereas at least ten of the journalists arrested since 2001 died in prison, including former Foreign Minister Mahmud Ahmed Sherifo, and journalist Fesshaye Yohannes; whereas, according to a person close to President Afevorki, interviewed by a Swedish newspaper in August 2010, Dawid Isaac is accused of "serious crimes concerning Eritrea's national security and survival as an independent state" and espionage aimed at facilitating an invasion of the country by the Ethiopian neighbour;
- H. whereas in a 2016 decision, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held that Eritrea should release or bring to speedy trial the journalists detained since September 2001, grant the detainees immediate access to their families and to legal counsel, and ensure payment of compensation to the detainees; whereas the Government of Eritrea has yet to comply with the decision
- I. whereas Dawit Isaak received the 50th Prize of the Golden Feather of Freedom in October 2011; whereas in March 2017 he was awarded the World Press Freedom Prize; whereas no one knows what has happened to him since 2010
- J. whereas ending the practices of indefinite and arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance has been declared the first priority by UN Special Rapporteur; whereas UN reports 2019 and 2020 as well as CEDAW report 2020is concerned that individuals continue to be held incommunicado and to be detained indefinitely, in violation of their basic due process rights, including the rights to be informed of the charges against them, to be brought promptly before a judge, to have their detention put to judicial review, to have access to counsel and medical attention and to receive family visits;

- K. whereas the recent developments in regional peace and security were expected to lead to the introduction of reforms to the national/military service and to the demobilization of conscripts in Eritrea; whereas to date, there have been no official announcements of a reduction in the duration of the national/military service or of any demobilization plans; whereas the national/military service continues to be involuntary in nature and of open-ended duration; whereas the national/military service affected particularly women and girls including by physical, sexual and verbal abuses and by forcing them to work as domestic servants;
- L. whereas the national/military service remains one of the main sources of migration from Eritrea; whereas UNHCR statistics suggest that about 10% of the Eritrean population is currently in exile; whereas in 2019, over 70,000 new Eritrean asylum seekers sought refuge in the Tigray and Afar regions of Ethiopia;
- M. whereas Eritrea is one of the poorest countries in the world and ranks 221th out of 228th in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index for 2018; whereas Eritrea is seriously threatened by climate change, which is likely to have dramatic consequences in terms of nutrition, access to water and sanitation, health and housing for the vast majority of the population;
- N. whereas the Horn of Africa is, and has always been, an important geostrategic region for Western countries, and in particular for the EU and some of its Member States that had colonized part of the region; whereas the Gulf States are exacerbating the destabilization of the region, particularly in the context of the war in Yemen; whereas these countries have privileged relations with Eritrea, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, which use Eritrean logistics facilities such as the port of Assab for their military interventions in Yemen;
- O. whereas, on 28 November 2015, ministers in the EU-28 and several African states, including Eritrea, as well as the European and African Union launched the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, also known as the 'Khartoum Process', which aims to externalise EU border control and limit the number of migrants travelling to Europe under the pretext of the fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling; whereas the Khartoum Process also means international legitimacy and financial support to the Eritrean regime;
- P. whereas between the fourth quarter of 2018 and the fourth quarter of 2019, 12,225 Eritreans sought asylum for the first time in the European Union; whereas according to UN report 2020 "*the tightening of asylum regulations applicable to Eritrean asylum seekers remains a concern*" in several European countries;

1. Expresses extreme concern at the dramatic situation in Eritrea in particular by the systematic violations of human rights which constitute crimes against humanity practiced systematically and repeatedly and denounced by the United Nations; strongly condemns these systematic and growing human rights violations in Eritrea and their disastrous consequences for the Eritrean people and the region as a whole;
2. Urges the implementation of UN recommendations in the country, including the release of all political prisoners; calls, therefore, for release of Dawit Isaak and the other journalists arrested in 2001 and since;
3. Condemns strongly the systematic harassment of journalists and civil society representatives in Eritrea; condemns, in addition, the systematic threats made against the Eritrean diaspora, including the "diaspora tax" collected by extortion and other illegal acts among Eritreans living abroad;
4. Urges the Eritrean government to ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are detained only in official places of detention and are provided with all legal safeguards, including access to a lawyer and health care, family visits and prompt judicial review of their detention;
5. Calls for an end to the indeterminate national service system by demobilizing those who have completed their compulsory 18-month service, as well as to end compulsory work for those called beyond that period and to end the requirement for all schoolchildren to spend their last year of schooling in a military training camp;
6. Is deeply concerned about the economic and social situation of the entire population of Eritrea, including refugees and displaced persons, whose numbers continue to increase;
7. Is concerned by the persistent link between business and politics and corruption in Eritrea; asks for an international independent inquiry on EU companies' involvement in human rights violations, in particular in forms of slavery, and their connivance and support to the Eritrean regime; calls urgently for some measures to ensure that that EU funding and other activities do not contribute to the abusive system of forced labor in Eritrea including on the actual project to rehabilitate a road from the border with Ethiopia to the coast of Eritrea¹;
8. Strongly condemns the EU Khartoum Process which legitimates governments who are themselves the source of migration; condemns the financial support of the EU for policies whose aim it is to externalise border controls under the pretext of the

¹ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200218IPR72834/eu-development-cooperation-with-eritrea>

fight against trafficking and to create ‘information campaigns’ which in reality legitimise authoritarian regimes and dictatorships;

9. Condemns all kinds of political conditionality, including collaboration on migration management, on Official Development Aid (ODA); calls on the EU and its Member States to effectively follow the principle of Policy Coherence for Development in all their actions towards Eritrea in order to ensure they are aligned and do not undermine the objective of poverty reduction and the sustainable development goals; deplores the increasing tendency of EU development policy to follow geopolitical, security and private profit interests;
10. 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 ACP-EU Council, the East African Community and the governments of its member states, the institutions of the African Union and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.