

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3447/09  
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to the Commission

Subject: Human rights in Eritrea

In a recent report Human Rights Watch describes the widespread practice of detention and torture in Eritrea as well as the extremely long military service in that country. As a result, an increasing number of Eritreans are leaving their country, according to the above human rights organisation, which has documented grave human rights violations by the Government of Eritrea.

Nevertheless, and despite concern that development projects in Eritrea are being carried out with the use of forced labour or by prisoners in breach of international law, the Eritrean regime is still receiving an EU aid package worth EUR 122 million.

According to which criteria is a country allocated development aid? Which initiatives are due to be financed with these resources? Humanitarian aid, which the Catholic Church for instance would like to provide in Eritrea, is being made virtually impossible by numerous prohibitions and restrictions.

The report also examines the difficult predicament of Eritreans who have been able to flee to other countries. Owing to the risk of ill-treatment for those repatriated to Eritrea, the United Nations has urgently warned against deporting persons to Eritrea, even in the case of rejected asylum seekers. It is therefore important that the Commission warn all Member States of the particular situation of refugees from Eritrea seeking asylum. What plans does the Commission have in this connection? In particular Italy, which is doing everything possible to stem the flow of refugees from Africa should be alerted to this situation.

Eritrea justifies the continuing mass mobilisation by pointing to security concerns owing to the two-year long border conflict with Ethiopia in which tens of thousands of persons died between 1998 and 2000. What does the Commission intend to do to encourage Ethiopia to recognise the decision of the independent UN mission on the demarcation of the border and the town of Badme?

Will conditions also be attached to EU aid?