

**SUBMISSION TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE: 119<sup>th</sup> SESSION**

for the attention of the Country Report Task Force on **ERITREA**  
**Military service, conscientious objection and related issues.**

Prepared December 2016

**Basic Information**

**HISTORY:** Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993, after a thirty-year armed liberation struggle, and that year became the 184<sup>th</sup> member state of the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> Following independence, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front transformed itself into the “Popular Front for Democracy and Justice”, and under that title has imposed military rule ever since. Between 1998 and 2000 a war with Ethiopia over a disputed border caused massive casualties: since then there have been simmering border tensions but no full-scale military conflict. Nevertheless, the level of militarisation in the country has if anything increased.

**POPULATION(November 2015, estimated<sup>2</sup>)**  
**6,528,000**

**MILITARY SERVICE** was briefly after independence not formally obligatory; the size of the former liberation forces was such that Eritrea did not need significant fresh recruitment. It is however not clear that the realities on the ground matched the legal situation (see main text). The first national service to be introduced was an 18-month development service under the Ministry of Regional Administration. However, under the 1995 Proclamation on National Service<sup>3</sup> this was replaced by an obligation for all citizens (male and female), to perform six months of military training followed by twelve months of military service, which might be armed or unarmed. The development service was retained only for those found to be unfit to perform military service.

**Duration:** currently, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)<sup>4</sup> is four months of training followed by 16 months of service. In practice, it is not usual for persons once enlisted

---

1 Kiribati, Montenegro, Nauru, Palau, South Sudan, Switzerland, Timor Leste, Tonga and Tuvalu have been the more recent admissions.

2 Source: *The Military Balance 2016* (International Institute of Strategic Studies, London), which bases its estimate on “demographic statistics taken from the US Census Bureau”.

3 Proclamation on National Service No.82/1995, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1995, Article 8.

4 Ibid, p.444

**to be released; therefore the duration of military service is in fact indefinite. (Again, see main text.)**

**Minimum recruitment age: 18, but the final year of secondary education takes place at a military training facility, so some students are “in effect, conscripted below the age of 18”.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the prevalence of forced recruitment also means that in practice many Eritreans are incorporated into the armed forces below the age of 18. (Yet again, see main text for fuller details.)**

**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE is not recognised.**

**POPULATION ANNUALLY REACHING RECRUITMENT AGE:  
approximately 134,550<sup>6</sup>**

**ARMED FORCES active strength, November 2015(“mostly conscripted”)<sup>7</sup>:  
201,750  
as a percentage of the population reaching recruitment age  
149.9%<sup>8</sup>**

**MILITARY EXPENDITURE: US \$ equivalent, 2014<sup>9</sup>  
\$78m  
Per capita \$11  
As % of GDP  
2.0%**

**REFUGEES. Eritrea is one of the world's principal “source countries” of refugees. At the end of 2015, with something over 350,000 it ranked**

---

5 Child Soldiers International (formerly Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers), Louder than words: an agenda for action to end state use of child soldiers London, September 2012, p147.

6 Based on figures quoted until 2015 by the CIA World Factbook ([www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)) of the population who had reached the age of 16 in 2010; the source has not subsequently produced such estimates.

7 The Military Balance 2016, p444, op cit. Given the ongoing state of general mobilisation this figure may be even higher; it is not clear how many of the estimated 120,000 reserves are mobilised at any one time. Some observers suggest that the Eritrean armed forces in fact contain about a third of the able-bodied work-force, a proportion approached in no other State.

8 When comparing with other States it must be remembered that this is a proportion of the total age group, not just the males.

9 The Military Balance 2016, p444, op cit. (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute - SIPRI - the usual source for such figures - has not estimated of Eritrean military expenditure since 2003.)

**ninth.<sup>10</sup> But its population is much smaller than most source countries. The number of refugees is equivalent to over 5% of the resident population. In this it is outranked only by Syria, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan and (newly in 2015) South Sudan. The number of new refugees fleeing Eritrea in 2015 was approximately 35,500, the seventh highest figure in the world.<sup>11</sup> At about 0.5% of the population, this was the fifth highest proportion, after Syria, Burundi, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. All of the states which outrank Eritrea are currently suffering armed conflicts embroiling two or more parties; in the case of Eritrea the refugee flow is solely because of repression by the Government, and as will be explained in the main text, mainly linked with the issue of indefinite military service.**

#### SUMMARY

Of all the world's states, Eritrea is the only one in which military service issues are widely considered to be the major human rights concerns. Both men and women are subject to conscription; since 2002, under a situation of general mobilisation, the period of service has been prolonged indefinitely. Forced recruitment and abusive treatment within the military are widespread. The right of conscientious objection is not recognised; the only way to escape enlistment is to leave the country. Travel restrictions however mean that few citizens are able to do this legally, and it is believed that a "shoot to kill" policy is in place to prevent persons crossing the border clandestinely. Nevertheless, almost throughout its independent existence Eritrea has, proportionate to population, suffered one of the largest refugee outflows in the world.

There is no freedom of expression or of the press; no international non-governmental organisation has been permitted to continue working in the country. Most information about what is happening in Eritrea thus comes from recent refugees, who confirm that the situation is little changed. Thus in its 2016 report to the Human Rights Council, the Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea had no hesitation in stating "Eritreans continue to be subjected to indefinite national service, arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances, reprisals for the alleged conduct of family members, discrimination on religious and ethnic grounds, sexual and gender-based violence, and killings."<sup>12</sup>

---

10 UNHCR, *Global Trends 2015*, (Geneva 2016), p16, figure 4.

11 *Ibid*, p15.

12 A/HRC/32/47, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2016, para 29.

The government's reaction is generally to dismiss all reports of human rights violations as malicious and categorically to deny even the most well-documented facts. It however has generally refused access to independent observers and on one of the rare exceptions, the “working level technical assessment visit” at the invitation of the Government of staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in February 2016, “OHCHR noted that the visit was short and not conducted in circumstances that allowed for a full assessment of the situation of Human Rights”.<sup>13</sup>

As well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Eritrea has acceded to the Convention Against Torture, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the international Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its two Optional Protocols, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. Only under CEDAW and the CRC itself has however Eritrea submitted reports. Its overall human rights record first came under scrutiny in 2010, during the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). It has now been through the second cycle of the UPR, but the Human Rights Council now gives it more detailed attention following the creation in 2012 and subsequent annual renewal of the mandate of Special Rapporteur, followed by the appointment in 2014 of a Commission of Inquiry.

## BACKGROUND: MILITARY SERVICE IN ERITREA

Article 21.1 of the 1995 Proclamation on Military Service reads “During a mobilisation or war period anyone in Active National Service is under the obligation of remaining even beyond the prescribed period unless the concerned Authority allows him to leave officially.”<sup>14</sup> Throughout the 1998-2000 border war with Ethiopia, this provision was not invoked, but the “Warsai-Dikalo Development Campaign” of 2002 included the indefinite prolongation of military service. The initial period of military training has now been shortened from six months to four and the original unarmed development service has disappeared altogether as an alternative, although military conscripts spend a considerable proportion of their time doing civilian tasks as forced labour.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, paras 23, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Proclamation on National Service No.82/1995, op cit, Article 21, (translation as given on UNHCR Refworld database)

The UN-brokered peace accord of December 2000 included a demobilisation plan, and as of December 2006 some 104,400 soldiers had been demobilised. Fresh tensions with Ethiopia however led to the suspension of the programme, and there has been no significant demobilisation ever since; indeed in 2012 Eritrea supplemented its armed forces with the Hizbawi Serawif militia, in which service is also obligatory. Those not subject to military service, particularly those above-age, often find themselves obliged to serve in this force;<sup>15</sup> It is not known how many additional conscripted citizens this adds to the already large active and reserve forces (see "basic information " above). In Eritrea's second UPR review the USA and the United Kingdom recommended an end to obligatory militia service.<sup>16</sup>

There was a suggestion in April 2015 that Eritrea was contemplating reinstating the 18-month duration of national service established by the 1995 proclamation, but in December that year and again in February 2016 Government sources insisted that the security situation which had allegedly necessitated the extension of military service remained unchanged.<sup>17</sup>

In 2010, in the first cycle of the UPR, Canada and the United Kingdom<sup>18</sup> had recommended ending the practice of indefinitely extending national service. The latter also recommended beginning a “process of phased demobilisation for those who have served longer than the statutory 18 months”. In the second cycle, similar recommendations were made by Norway and Austria<sup>19</sup> and the end of indefinite military service was also recommended by the USA, Germany, Croatia, the UK, Canada and France.<sup>20</sup> Australia went further and recommended the abolition of conscription and compulsory military training<sup>21</sup> – this is the only time such a recommendation has been made to any “State Under Review”.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, when it examined the report of Eritrea in 2015, also urged Eritrea to “Limit the duration of compulsory national service to 18 months, as stipulated in the law, and clearly articulate a policy of safeguards and guarantees”<sup>22</sup>. This was because of its concern “that many children are deprived of a family environment owing to the absence of their parents” as a result, among other things, of “prolonged periods of national service with infrequent leave and distant postings,”<sup>23</sup> For that reason, the Committee also urged Eritrea to

---

15 A/HRC/32/47, op cit, para 36.

16 A/HRC/26/13, 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014, paras 122.57 and 122.63.

17 A/HRC/32/47, op cit, paras 33, 34.

18 A/HRC/13/2, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Paras 79.58 and 79.60.

19 A/HRC/26/13, op cit, paras 122.55 and 122.65.

20 Ibid, paras 122.57, 122.60, 122.61, 122.63, 122.66 and 122.143.

21 Ibid, para 122.56.

22 CRC/C/ERI/CO/4, adopted 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015, published 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 para 48 (c).

23 Ibid, para 47 (b)

“guarantee that national service conscripts are posted closer to their families, if possible, and introduce regular leave in order to enable them to maintain their relationships with their children.”<sup>24</sup>

Eritrea's female conscription has its roots in the role women played in the Eritrean People's Liberation Front during the war of independence. Estimated at some 35% of the EPLF's strength, “(u)nlike their counterparts in the (Ethiopian) army, women in the (EPLF) usually assumed combat duties. In fact some are said to be among the best fighters. Not an insignificant number of them were posted in commanding positions within the force.”<sup>25</sup>

This emancipating image of female military service was initially carried forward into the Eritrean army. However the status of women in the army has suffered a sharp reversal; by 2004 it was reported that the perception that female conscripts faced sexual slavery led to violent confrontations with recruiters in some Muslim communities; since when conscription has been enforced less thoroughly on Muslim women.<sup>26</sup> Rape is now reportedly widespread, leading to frequent pregnancies, which result in release from the military but subsequent social stigmatisation.<sup>27</sup> In its 2015 report to the Human Rights Council, the Commission of Inquiry stated that the sexual slavery of female conscripts amounted to torture<sup>28</sup>.

However, even although women and girls are the most extreme sufferers, in general “Conditions and treatment during military training and service are harsh. They include lack of adequate food, water, hygienic facilities, accommodation and medical services that may result in death, severe disabilities or psychological and physiological long-term effects. Conscripts are routinely deprived of their rights to freedom of expression, movement and religion. They are systematically subjected to intentional punishment and ill-treatment aimed at inflicting severe pain. In many cases, this constitutes torture.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, “The commission finds that, during their service, most conscripts in the military and all conscripts in civil service are subject to forced labour. There is a pattern of torture, inhuman, cruel

---

24 Ibid, para 48 (d)

25 Case study on Ethiopia prepared for The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (the Machel Study) A/51/306 (1996), quoted in Brett, R. & McCallin, M., Children: the invisible soldiers (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998), Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children), Stockholm, p.83.

26 Amnesty International, “Eritrea: You have no right to ask” 2004

27 See Bailliet, C.M., “Examining Sexual Violence in the Military Within the Context of Eritrean Asylum Claims Presented in Norway”, International Journal of Refugee Law , 2007, pp.472 - 510.

28 A/HRC/29/42, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2015, para 59.

29 Ibid, para 58.

or degrading treatment or punishment of conscripts in the army in connection with the labour that conscripts are forced to perform. The working and living conditions of conscripts who are subject to forced labour are conducive or amount to additional human rights violations, such as to their right to work in just and favourable conditions, their right to adequate housing and their right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to health care, in particular when they are required to perform dangerous work.”<sup>30</sup> The International Labour Organisation had earlier defined the nature of national service in Eritrea as forced labour, pointing out that compulsory military service is excluded from the relevant conventions only if used for “work of a purely military character”, and for a limited duration.<sup>31</sup> The Commission of Inquiry, in 2016, reiterated that military service in itself is not recognised as a human rights violation, but emphasised “What distinguishes the military/national service programme in Eritrea from those in other States is (a) its open-ended and arbitrary duration (...); (b) the use of conscripts as forced labour in a wide range of economic activities, including private enterprises; and (c) the rape and torture perpetrated in military camps, and other conditions that are often inhumane.”<sup>32</sup>

Reports that conscripts were used as forced labour in private enterprises had been referred to in a recommendation by the UK in the first cycle of the UPR.<sup>33</sup> In the second UPR cycle Germany and Canada made recommendations explicitly defining the indefinite military service as forced labour, while Switzerland referred to the forced labour of children in the context of military service.<sup>34</sup>

Apart from the negative effects of separation, which have already been referred to, the Committee on the Rights of the Child further expressed concern that “The prolonged period of conscription for national service, including for parents and caregivers, is having negative effects on parents’ and caregivers’ capacity to provide for their children, as the salary and allowance earned during national service are below minimum subsistence level and the workforce within the family is reduced as a result of the conscription.”<sup>35</sup>

## FORCED AND JUVENILE RECRUITMENT

---

30 Ibid, para 63.

31 International Labor Organisation, Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), Comments on Eritrea adopted in 2010.

32 A/HRC/32/47, op cit, para 35.

33 A/HRC/13/2, op. cit, para 79.60.

34 A/HRC/26/13, op cit, Paras 122.60, 122.66 and 122.123.

35 Ibid, para 57 (a).

Refugees have reported that military training occupies two to three hours twice a week in the secondary school curriculum<sup>36</sup> and it is known that the final year of secondary education must be served at a desert location adjacent to Sawa military camp. When the Committee on the Rights of the Child examined the report by Eritrea in 2015, it expressed severe concern over this<sup>37</sup> and urged Eritrea to "ensure that the minimum age for compulsory military training set at 18 is always respected"<sup>38</sup>

As well as the official call-up system, facilitated by the formalised militarisation of the education system; much conscription takes the form of forced recruitment in raids ("*giffa*" in the local Tigrinya language), in areas where persons who have not responded to the call-up, or who have deserted, may be hiding. In these raids everyone is seized who appears to be of military age and cannot produce documentation proving that they are not liable for military service. Such a model is prone to result in at least the inadvertent conscription of persons aged under the legal recruitment age of 18. Some of the evidence however implies that age limits may be wilfully ignored. For example one documented case of forced recruitment concerned a former child soldier interviewed in Germany in 2003 who had been seized by the military at the age of 13.<sup>39</sup> A later account<sup>40</sup> gives a picture of widespread conscription at an extremely young age. A conscript who completed training in July 2007 reports that in his battalion of 500 there were 17 children aged below 15 (the minimum age for military recruitment which had been set in the CRC itself, before the Optional Protocol). He names three eleven-year-olds, two twelve-year-olds and four fourteen-year-olds. Of the others who were "under age" ie. 15, 16 or 17 years old, the number was so large that he was unable to give an estimate. Naturally some of the younger recruits were physically unable to bear weapons so instead became enslaved as personal servants for individual officers.

The question of ending juvenile recruitment has featured in many UPR recommendations to Eritrea: in 2010 from Argentina, the United Kingdom, the USA, Poland and Ghana;<sup>41</sup> in 2014 from Spain 58, Germany, 60 and Switzerland.<sup>42</sup>

## MILITARY RECRUITMENT AND THE REFUGEE ISSUE

---

36 See, for instance, Yosef-Tudla, R. "I am against war on principle" in Women Conscientious Objectors, an anthology (War Resisters' International, London, 2010), p 78.

37 CRC/C/ERI/CO/4, adopted 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015, published 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 para 63 (b).

38 Ibid, para 64 (b).

39 Ludwig, M., Former Child Soldiers as Refugees in Germany, (Originally published in German by terre des hommes Deutschland, 2003. (English translation published by Quaker UN Office, Geneva.

40 <http://www.ehrea.org/cs.htm>

41 A/HRC/13/2, op. cit, paras 79.57, 79. 61, 79.62, 79.63 and 79.64.

42 A/HRC/26/13, op cit, paras 122.58, 122.60, and 122.123.



It has been widely recognised that it is the indefinite nature of military service and the prevalence of forced recruitment which have been the chief drivers of the refugee outflow from the country. The Special Rapporteur began her second report to the Human Rights Council by pointing out that it focussed "on two main issues, namely, the indefinite national service and arbitrary detention, which, in her view, require the Human Rights Council's particular attention, especially as they are two of the key reasons that incite Eritreans to leave their home country for an unknown and precarious future elsewhere".<sup>43</sup>

After interviewing Eritrean refugees in Tunisia and Malta in "While those interviewed also described difficult economic and social conditions in their home country, they noted that the daily struggle for access to food and water, the lack of adequate health care and electricity had not motivated their departure."<sup>44</sup>

Likewise, the CEDAW Committee opened its Concluding Observations with the comment, "The Committee considers that the indefinite period of national service, the ineffective implementation of the Constitution of 1997 and the suspension of the National Assembly have led to a deterioration of the rule of law, and in a serious refugee crisis, which pose a challenge to the implementation of the Convention."<sup>45</sup>

The Commission of Inquiry, in its 2016 report to the Human Rights Council, confirmed that "Indefinite military/ national service is frequently cited by Eritreans as the prime reason for leaving Eritrea".<sup>46</sup>

Eritreans of "military age" are effectively debarred from leaving the country legally. What is military age? Exit visas, including for purposes of study abroad, are routinely denied to men aged below 54 years and women below 47 years, also, since 2006, to children aged 11 and above, on the grounds that they are approaching military service age.<sup>47</sup> In individual cases this reasoning has been extended to children as young as 5. Even persons who have documentary evidence that they have completed their active military service find themselves at risk of punishment as evaders of reserve responsibilities if they leave the country while still of military age.

In addition to the thousands of refugees who have escaped, an unknown number have been killed when attempting to cross the border; it is believed that the authorities operate a deliberate "shoot to kill" policy. Often there may have been no survivors who escaped to report. The Committee on the

43 A/HRC/26/45, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014. para 1.

44 United Nations press release, Geneva, 25<sup>th</sup> November, w2013.

45 CEDAW/C/ERI/CO/5, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2015, para 6.

46 A/HRC/32/47, para 32.

47 US Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2006: Eritrea, 6<sup>th</sup>. March 2006.

Rights of the Child in 2015 asked Eritrea about reports that thirteen children had been shot at the border in one incident in September 2014.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, Eritrea chose to deny the facts, and claimed that the reports were malicious.

Eritreans who leave the country to avoid military service and return at above the age of 40 are liable to imprisonment for five years, or until the age of 50, whichever is longer. Those who are still within the recruitment age on return are not only liable for military service, but are also subject to military punishment. Under the current semi-permanent state of mobilisation, the stipulated penalties are significantly increased. If the returnee is classified as a deserter (having been enlisted before escape), the minimum five-year sentence is increased to life imprisonment; if the desertion was from active service, the death penalty may apply. Moreover, military justice is in fact imposed summarily. There are many reports of torture and extrajudicial executions.

No Eritrean who has left the country without the blessing of the Government will be safe if returned. Fortunately the situation is so notorious that few states are now prepared to return people to Eritrea. Nevertheless the Human Rights Committee had to intervene in 2014, to prevent the "return" from Denmark to military service in Eritrea of a person who had been born and brought up in Ethiopia and had never set foot in Eritrea!<sup>49</sup>

The families of persons who do not report for military service have been subject to arbitrary detention without trial, being released only when they produce the missing conscript, or somehow manage to pay a fine of 50,000 Nakfa (approximately ten times the per capita GDP).<sup>50</sup>

Of particular concern to refugees from Eritrea is the tax of 2% levied strictly for military purposes on the incomes of all Eritreans living abroad. Non-payment of the tax may lead to severe penalties on return to Eritrea, and pressure may be exerted on relatives remaining within the country, for example non-payment by a relative already abroad may be cited as the ground for refusing to grant an exit visa.

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE

Eritrea does not recognise the right of conscientious objection to military service. In the twenty years of Eritrean independence, every person known to have declared a conscientious objection when faced with military recruitment has been imprisoned, and there has not been a single reported instance of the release of a conscientious objector from imprisonment.

---

48 CRC/C/ERI/Q4, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015

49 CCPR/C/D/2007/2010

50 Amnesty International 2013 *op cit*, p32.

The first conscientious objectors known to have declared themselves to the military authorities were twelve Jehovah's Witnesses, who were called up to military service in September 1994, before the current legislation was promulgated. All twelve were incarcerated at the military base at Sawa, in shipping containers which exacerbated the extremes of the desert temperatures. Under these conditions nine of the twelve relented and agreed to perform military service;<sup>51</sup> The three who held out have, it is believed, been held under the same conditions ever since.

Subsequently, in view of the harsh treatment to be expected, most conscientious objectors in Eritrea have attempted to evade military service, often by fleeing the country, rather than reporting to the military authorities and declaring their refusal to serve. This even applies to Jehovah's Witnesses, who normally give great importance to publicly testifying to their beliefs. A number of Jehovah's Witnesses, I have nevertheless declared themselves as conscientious objectors in full knowledge of the likely consequences. All have since remained in military detention without release. The full list is given below.

Because of their refusal of military service and to participate in the independence referendum, all Jehovah's Witnesses were stripped of their citizenship in 1994,<sup>52</sup> Many have subsequently been imprisoned for longer or shorter periods for attempting to practise their religion;<sup>53</sup> some have died in prison. No conscientious objector has been released, but it is believed that all remain alive. No new conscientious objectors are known to have declared themselves since 2009.

A recommendations on recognising the right of conscientious objection to military service were received in the first cycle of the UPR from Slovenia,<sup>54</sup> and in the second cycle from Norway, Spain, Germany and Croatia (three recommendations including one calling for the release of all imprisoned conscientious objectors).<sup>55</sup> A further recommendation from Italy was to “ Modify the regulation on conscription and organize it in a way consistent with the respect for human rights”<sup>56</sup>, which might be taken as implying the same.

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IMPRISONED IN ERITREA

---

51 Evidence submitted by the General Counsel of the Jehovah's Witnesses to the OHCHR for its report on “best practices” in the field of conscientious objection to military service, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2003.

52 Amnesty International, Eritrea: Twenty Years of Independence but still no Freedom (London 2013), p.22

53 The total, including the conscientious objectors was 54 at the end of 2015 (Human Rights Without Frontiers, “World Freedom of Religion Report 2015”, Brussels, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016, p35.

54 A/HRC/13/2, op. cit, para 59.

55 A/HRC/26/13, op cit, paras 122.57, 122.58, 122.60, 122.61, 122.62 and 122.64.

56 Ibid, para 122.59

(Source: Fautré, W. (Ed.) Human Rights Without Frontiers International: Freedom or Religion or Belief & Blasphemy Prisoners List 2014, Brussels, December 2014, pp49-55.) (It is not believed that there have been any changes to the list in the subsequent two years.)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Arrest</u>	<u>Approximate Age when arrested</u> <sup>57</sup>		<u>Place of detention</u>
Paulos Eyassu	24 <sup>th</sup> August 1994	21		Sawa Camp
Isaac Mogos	24 <sup>th</sup> August 1994	18		Sawa Camp
Negede Teklemariam	24 <sup>th</sup> August 1994	18		Sawa Camp
Aron Abraha	9 <sup>th</sup> May 2001		25	Sawa Camp
Mussie Fessehaye	june 2003	29		Sawa Camp
Ambakom Tsegezab	February 2004	26		Sawa Camp
Bemnet Fessehaye	February 2005	32		Sawa Camp
Henok Ghebru	February 2005	19		Sawa Camp
Kibreab Fessehaye	27 <sup>th</sup> December 2005		25	Sawa Camp
Bereket Abrahu Oqbagabir	1 <sup>st</sup> January 2006	36		Sawa Camp
Yosief Fessehaye	2007	16		Sawa Camp
Yoek Tsegezab	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2008	30		Meitir Camp
Nehemiah Hagos	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2008	20		Meitir Camp
Samuel Ghirmay	March 2009	25		Meitir Camp

### Suggestions for the list of issues

**Most non-reporting States blame lack of resources; sometimes this may attempt excuse a certain negligence. Sadly, in the case of Eritrea the failure to report is consistent with a complete disregard for its international human rights obligations. Although the State Party ought to be presented with questions which assume a certain willingness to be seen to comply with these obligations, but it will be truly miraculous if helpful replies are forthcoming!**

<sup>57</sup> Calculated from the age in 2014 quoted by the source , and therefore correct within one year in either direction.

**That said, IFOR makes the following suggestions:**

**The imposition of indefinite military service is so unpopular that a large number of citizens clandestinely leave the State Party each year in order to escape recruitment. Under the present system, the SP is thus permanently deprived of the contribution these citizens' talents might make to its development. Many of them avow that they would have been willing to perform a national service of what they would consider a more reasonable nature. Is the SP keeping the ongoing state of permanent military mobilisation under ongoing review? Even within that context, is it examining whether the defence of its borders could be more efficiently secured by a more “professional” military structure, in which any conscripts are called up to a finite period of initial service, even if they have subsequent reserve liabilities?**

**What steps is the SP taking to implement its obligation under the Covenant to recognise the right of conscientious objection to military service – including by the release of at least fourteen conscientious objectors which it is currently incarcerating?**

**Is the SP taking action to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols by removing compulsory military training in schools (including the requirement that the final year of secondary school must be spent adjacent to a military training establishment)? Moreover, are recruitment procedures being regularised so that there is no forced recruitment? What procedures does the SP have to establish that all persons enlisted are above the minimum legal recruitment age of 18?**

**Contact:** Derek Brett  
IFOR Geneva Representative  
derek.brett@ifor.org  
(+41) 77 462 9835