

URGENT ACTION

ERITREANS AT IMMINENT RISK OF FORCED RETURN

Hundreds of Eritrean nationals are at imminent risk of forcible return to Eritrea where they would face a real risk of torture, arbitrary detention and other serious human rights violations. Reports indicate that around 300 Eritreans recently detained in Türkiye without adequate access to communication or legal support have been deported to Eritrea. The authorities must immediately halt any plans to forcibly return Eritrean nationals from Türkiye and grant them access to asylum procedures, in line with international law.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mr Atilla Toros

Head of Migration Management
Çamlıca Mahallesi 122. Sokak No:4 Yenimahalle
Ankara/Türkiye
Email: atilla.toros@goc.gov.tr
Fax: 90 (312) 920-06-09
X: @Gocidaresi

Dear Mr Atilla Toros,

I write to express my concern about the authorities' imminent plans to forcibly return **Eritrean nationals** who are detained at Aydın Removal Centre. A civil society representative told Amnesty International that around 180 Eritreans were deported from Türkiye in the past weeks. Most of them are now detained at Adi Abeto prison, a major prison complex outside Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. A further 100 individuals have been deported in the previous months. Eritrean nationals currently detained in Türkiye have alerted their family members via phone calls and letters that the authorities are preparing to deport them as well and that it can happen any time now.

Amnesty International believes that these individuals have not had the opportunity to challenge their deportation decisions before a court or to apply for international protection in Türkiye. According to information obtained by Amnesty International, people in the group of detained Eritrean nationals were also held in inadequate conditions, due to a lack of access to water, adequate food, poor sanitation, and very limited access to legal assistance and phones, making it hard to communicate with family and loved ones. Amnesty International has documented in the past that people returned to Eritrea have been detained incommunicado and tortured upon return because leaving the country without authorisation is a crime. The Turkish authorities must immediately halt all deportations of Eritrean nationals to Eritrea where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations including torture.

I urge you not to forcibly return people to Eritrea, where they would face a real risk of serious human rights violations. I also urge you to respect Türkiye's international obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the UN Convention Against Torture and customary international law to uphold the principle of non-refoulement, which is binding on all states. Pending their release, ensure that Eritreans detained in Türkiye are given access to fair and effective asylum procedures, and are held in conditions meeting international standards on the detention of migrants and asylum-seekers.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Türkiye is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. However, Türkiye retains a geographic reservation to its ratification of the Convention, so that only citizens from Council of Europe member states are allowed to apply for refugee status. People who do not qualify for refugee status in Türkiye, can request conditional refugee status or subsidiary protection under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection of 2013. The conditional refugee status was created for people originating from “non-European” states and provides more restrictive rights than the ones granted to refugee status holders.

Amnesty International has found that the Eritrean authorities regard the act of applying for asylum abroad as evidence of treason, and a reason to detain anyone forcibly returned to Eritrea. Appalling detention conditions in Eritrea amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has [noted](#) that “Eritreans who are forcibly returned may, according to several reports, face arrest without charge, detention, ill-treatment, torture sometimes death at the hands of the authorities. They are reportedly held incommunicado, in over-crowded and unhygienic conditions, with little access to medical care, sometimes for extended periods of time” and that “For some Eritreans, being outside the country may be sufficient cause on return to be subjected to scrutiny, reprisals and harsh treatment. Individuals may be suspected of having sought asylum, participating in diaspora-based opposition meetings or otherwise posing a (real or perceived) threat to the Government, particularly where they have exited the country illegally.” Furthermore, in 2015, the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry on human rights in Eritrea [found](#) that “with a few exceptions, those who have been forced to return to the country have been arrested, detained and subjected to ill-treatment and torture.”

According to a 2016 Amnesty International [report](#), deserters are likely to face prolonged arbitrary detention, inhumane detention conditions and torture and other-ill treatment. National service is compulsory for all men and women between the ages of 18 and 40 in Eritrea, with additional mandatory reserve duties up to age 50. There is no limit on length of service. Initially 18 months long, it generally includes six months’ military service followed by 12 months’ deployment in military or government service. However, this is frequently extended indefinitely. National service often involves forced or involuntary labour in state projects. Conscripts perform construction labour on government projects such as road building, work in the civil service or work for companies owned and operated by the military or ruling party elites. Conscripts are paid minimal salaries that do not meet the basic needs of their families. Much of the adult population of Eritrea is currently engaged in mandatory national service. There is no exemption from military service for conscientious objectors, and no alternative non-military service. The usual punishment for evading military service is detention and torture.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Turkish, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 December 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Detained Eritrean nationals at risk of return (ALL)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Minister of Interior
Ali Yerlikaya
T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, Bakanlıklar
Ankara/Türkiye
Email: ozelkalem@icisleri.gov.tr

His Excellency Mr Osman Koray Ertas
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary
Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye
43 Belgrave Square SW1X 8PA
020 7393 0202
Fax 020 7393 0066
embassy.london@mfa.gov.tr
london.emb.mfa.gov.tr
Salutation: Your Excellency