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The authorities continued to subject journalists, political dissidents, leaders and members of religious congregations to arbitrary detention, in some cases amounting to enforced disappearance. Conscripts to mandatory national service were forced to serve for indefinite periods. Allegations of sexual violence by military commanders against conscripts in the Sawa training camp persisted. Eritrea did not provide information about its Covid-19 vaccination programme.

Background

Despite being a member of the UN Human Rights Council, Eritrea persistently failed to engage with international human rights mechanisms. It did not respond to requests for country visits from the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, a mandate established in 2012, or legislate for the protection of human rights in line with the human rights treaties it had ratified.

Eritrean forces deployed in northern Ethiopia, mainly in Western Tigray Zone, since 2020, were complicit in the ethnic cleansing campaign against Tigrayan residents, carrying out extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, rapes and other forms of sexual violence, and forced displacement (see Ethiopia entry).

Enforced disappearances

The authorities continued to subject journalists, political dissidents, leaders and members of religious congregations to arbitrary detention amounting to enforced disappearance. The fate and whereabouts of 11 members of the G-15 remained unknown since their arrest by security forces in September 2001. The G-15 are a group of 15 veteran politicians who oppose President Afwerki. The 11 members were arrested after writing an open letter to the president demanding that he implement the draft constitution and hold open elections. The whereabouts and fate of a Swedish journalist, Dawit Isaak, and another 16 individuals who were assumed to have worked with the G-15 also remained unknown.

Ciham Ali and Berhane Abrehe disappeared after being arrested in 2012 and 2018, respectively. Ciham Ali, an Eritrean/US national, was arrested when she was 15 at the Sudan border in 2012 as she tried to flee Eritrea after her father Ali Abdu, then a minister of information, had defected and gone into exile. Berhane Abrehe, a former minister of finance, was arrested in September 2018, a few days after

publishing a book called *My Country Eritrea* which criticized the government. Shortly before the book's publication, he had challenged the president to a televised debate.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

Thousands of people were arbitrarily detained. Abune Antonios, the Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, died in February aged 94. He had been held under unlawful house arrest since 2006, after the authorities removed him from his position in the church for openly criticizing government policies. He was never charged with or convicted of a recognizable criminal offence. A day after his funeral on 10 February, the authorities arrested 11 people who had attended his funeral; they were released without charge after four days.

In October, security forces arrested three high-ranking Catholic clergymen. On 11 October, two priests – Abba Mihretab Stefanos, from Saint Michael's Church parish in Segeneity, a southern town, and Abba Abreham, from the western town of Teseney – were arrested. On 15 October, Bishop Abune Fikremariam Hagos, also from Segeneity, was arrested at Asmara International Airport after arriving from Europe. According to multiple sources, they were detained without charge in Adi-Abieto prison. Bishop Fikremariam and Abba Mihretab were released from detention on 28 December.

Forced labour

The government continued to conscript high-school students to the mandatory national military service programme. Conscripts served indefinite periods of service beyond the legal limit of 18 months.

Government forces conducted multiple raids known in Tigrinya as *giffa* in which they rounded up youths from the streets for military service. Government officials allegedly forced parents to bring children who had evaded conscription to register for national service. In July, they transported thousands of high-school students, many of them under 18, to attend their final year at Warsai-Yikealo school in Sawa Military Training Centre. After sitting their school-leaving exams, students continued to be forced into military training at the Sawa training centre. Students accused of minor infractions at Warsai-Yikealo school and conscripts at the training centre were commonly subjected to physical punishments amounting to torture and other ill-treatment. Allegations of sexual violence by military commanders at the centre were also common. The authorities did not allow for conscientious objection to military service.

Right to health

Eritrea remained the only country in Africa, and one of the few countries in the world, not to report on its administration of the Covid-19 vaccine. It did not access vaccines through COVAX, a global risk-sharing mechanism for pooled procurement and equitable distribution of Covid-19 vaccines.

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Eritrea

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