

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	274
Land:	Eritrea
Kilde:	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Titel:	Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 – Eritrea
Udgivet:	8. februar 2017
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	30. maj 2017



Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 - Eritrea

The human rights situation in Eritrea continues to be of concern to the UK and there have been no tangible improvements to the situation in the second half of 2016. From July to December 2016 we continued to use our embassy in Asmara and our wider engagement to encourage the government of Eritrea to improve their human rights record. In particular, we wish to see amendments to the way the National Service is implemented so that there are clear, published limits to the term, as well as implementation of the national constitution and increased cooperation with international human rights bodies.

In May 2016, the government of Eritrea signed up to a 4-year implementation programme with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to take forward the 92 accepted recommendations from the 2014 Universal Periodic Review (UPR). This step marked a significant step forward in Eritrea's engagement with the international community on human rights. However, from July to December 2016 there was limited substantive progress in taking this forward. The government of Eritrea continued to deny the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights access to the country. In October, the United Nations General Assembly held an Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Eritrea to receive an update on the human rights situation in the country. We used this to urge the government of Eritrea to strengthen its engagement with international human rights bodies more broadly, including through allowing the Special Rapporteur access to Eritrea.

Eritrea is among the top sources of irregular migration to Europe. The poor human rights environment, in particular the arbitrary extensions of the National Service period, is one of the main drivers of migration from the country. In the second half of 2016, Eritrea has continued to engage with international partners through the African Union/EU Khartoum Process which aims to tackle forced migration and human trafficking. The UK with EU partners are discussing with Eritrea how to stem the flow of irregular migration and developing concrete projects to do so. In particular, we worked with Eritrea to develop projects under the EU Trust Fund (£1.8 billion) agreed at the Valletta Summit in November 2015 which aims to tackle the root causes of migration. Under the Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund (CSSF) we are supporting 2 projects to provide vocational training to improve the skills of young people and their future prospects. These projects enhance the self-reliance and socio-economic participation of Eritrean youth by providing them with access to training and employment opportunities.

One area identified in the UPR recommendations and the UNDP-government of Eritrea programme is capacity building in the judiciary and strengthening the rule of law. Under the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Rules Based International System Fund we are enabling a British foundation to work on this area in Eritrea. In the second half of 2016 the foundation began its engagement with the Eritrean judiciary and provided high-level training, impartial advice and assistance aimed at improving and building the capacity of the justice system and strengthening rule of law. We are also supporting a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) project on the criminal justice system. The UK, through the Department for International Development, has also appointed a seconded national expert to the EU delegation in Asmara who began work in November 2016 on the Economic Governance element of the 11th European Development Fund.

Eritrea is a one-party state and there have been no national elections since 1993. The government of Eritrea has yet to implement its constitution (ratified in 1997) although it is used as a basis for legislation.

The UK remains concerned about the situation for children in Eritrea, in particular the standard of education, limited access to health services and the future prospect of extended National Service. The government of Eritrea has made some progress and taken early steps to improve its offer to young people in Eritrea, but more needs to be done. Through the Department for International Development, the UK is supporting the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) programmes in nutrition, water and sanitation, which help improve the lives of children in Eritrea.

Women in Eritrea are well-protected by law although there are still challenges due to cultural attitudes and a lack of economic opportunity. The National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), which is well represented across the country, continued their work during the second half of 2016 on improving the social, economic and social rights for women in Eritrea. NUEW are exploring possible projects with government ministries to look at improving gender equality within the government. From July to December 2016 we regularly met NUEW to discuss the issues facing women in Eritrea. UNICEF officers and the Ministry of Health have reported that the country has made great strides in the eradication of female

genital mutilation (FGM), which is banned by law. However, statistics suggest that FGM is still carried out on about 35% of females, particularly in remote areas, and we support further action on this important issue by the government of Eritrea.

We remain worried about the government of Eritrea's approach to LGB&T rights. Homosexual activity is illegal and culturally not accepted. Eritrea refuses to develop anti-discrimination legislation which would provide protection for the LGB&T community.

Eritrea continues to be of deep concern in relation to arbitrary and inhumane detention, religious freedom, freedom of expression and assembly, and freedom of movement. In relation to freedom of expression, we remain worried about the case of a group of prominent public figures in Eritrea who were arrested after calling for democratic reforms in 2001. Bilaterally and through the EU we have called on the Eritrean authorities to release all political prisoners unconditionally. In relation to religious freedom, we remain concerned about the rights of individuals who do not belong to one of the 4 officially sanctioned religions, for example Seventh Day Adventists. We also pressed the government of Eritrea to allow discussion between diplomats and religious leaders, to whom access is denied, in order to encourage dialogue. It is deeply troubling that Eritrea remains at the bottom of the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index for 2016. Concrete steps are needed from the government to improve the press environment and other restrictions on freedom of expression. Eritrea remains at the lowest rating (7) "not free" in the Freedom House 2016 report on political, civil and press freedom.