



Human Rights Concern Eritrea

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President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi,
Office of the President,
Al Ittihadia Palace,
CAIRO
ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

6 August 2019

Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg

Your Excellency,

Re: Incommunicado Detention of Five Eritrean Refugees in Cairo

I am writing to you on behalf of five Eritrean refugees arrested in Cairo on 21st July 2019 and held at an undisclosed location without access to legal advice or family members.

On Sunday, 21 July 2019 more than 500 Eritrean refugees in Egypt took to the streets of Cairo to protest the ineffectiveness, alleged corruption and unfair treatment within the UNHCR's Egypt office. The UNHCR personnel did not respond or listen to the refugees' grievances. The refugees conducted a peaceful protest, and did not break any laws.

The Police arrested more than 90 of the protesters. Since then most of them have been released, but five are still detained and their identity papers were confiscated by police during the peaceful march. The five refugees currently being held are: -

- 1) Abdulhadi Mohammed Hamid
- (2) Denden Isamail Abubeker
- (3) Feday Yemane
- (4) Hermon Goytom
- (5) Yonatan Bimnet Gebremedhin

These five Eritrean refugees still have not been allowed to meet lawyers or to talk with their families. The detained persons have not been accused of or charged with any particular crime. They are being held at an undisclosed location, although some reports suggest that they may be detained at the 1st October City Police Station.

The UNHCR is officially responsible for the protection and safety of all such refugees, but its Egyptian office has refused to take responsibility for these detained Eritreans.

Egypt is party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and is also a signatory to the [African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa](#). Under these Conventions, Egypt is in duty bound to make every effort to protect the rights and ensure the safety of asylum-seekers and refugees in need of protection, of whatever nationality.

Article 91 of Egypt's 2014 Constitution stipulates that political asylum must be available to anyone who has been persecuted for defending human rights, peace, or justice. A UN Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights in Eritrea revealed compelling evidence that the rights of Eritrean civilians are violated severely and routinely by the Eritrean government authorities, and that all such citizens require protection from persecution.

We are particularly concerned that there appears to be no maximum length of administrative detention defined in Egyptian law, and that these detained refugees may be held indefinitely without access to legal representation or respect for their rights under international and regional refugee conventions.

We therefore appeal to you respectfully to ensure the safety, liberty and rights of these five men under the UN Refugee Convention. Specifically, we urge your government to: -

- Unconditionally release Abdulhadi Mohammed Hamid, Denden Isamail Abubeker, Feday Yemane, Hermon Goytom, and Yonatan Bimnet Gebremedhin, as they are imprisoned solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression or peaceful assembly;
- Ensure that, while they are detained, due process rights is upheld, including access to legal representation and to family members;
- Ensure that these Eritrean citizens are not deported to their country of origin where they would be in grave danger of persecution;
- Urgently review the practice of prolonged and arbitrary pre-trial detention.

We trust that you will show your sincere concern and respect for these refugees and all seeking sanctuary in Egypt by taking the above recommended actions without delay.

Yours Respectfully,

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Director,
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Copies to:

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2. Mr. Ahmed Ihab Gamal-Eldin, Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt,
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3. His Excellency Tarek Adel, Ambassador, Egypt Embassy in London, UK,
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4. Mr. Filippo Grandi, The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva, Switzerland,
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5. Ms. Daniela Kravetz, Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Eritrea,
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