



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 44th regular session Item 2: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea Oral statement

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Madam President, Madam Special Rapporteur,

As Eritrea has entered the second year of its membership term, its domestic human rights situation remains dire. The main issues, including violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, are summarised in a letter dozens of civil society organisations, including Eritrean, African and international NGOs, made public ahead of this session.

Our analysis is shared by African and international human rights mechanisms. These include the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which issued detailed concluding observations in 2018, the Special Rapporteur, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UN treaty bodies.

We welcome the fact that in February 2020, a dialogue took place between the Eritrean government and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in a more constructive spirit than during Eritrea's 2019 review by the Human Rights Committee. Unfortunately, despite the window of opportunity provided by this review, Eritrea continues to refuse to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur and reject findings of ongoing grave violations and rights-based recommendations, including in relation to the Covid-19 crisis.

As a Council member, Eritrea has an obligation to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" and to "fully cooperate with the Council." The Council should urge Eritrea to make progress towards meeting its membership obligations. It should not reward non-cooperation by, but rather maintain scrutiny of, one of its members. We call on it to extend the Special Rapporteur's mandate for a further year.

Madam Kravetz,

Are there any areas where progress is more likely to happen, including with regard to the benchmarks for progress you identified? If so, what would be the key drivers of change?

Thank you.