



# DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

## UN Human Rights Council – 50<sup>th</sup> regular session

### Item 2: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea

#### Oral statement

*Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini*

Mr. President, Mr. Special Rapporteur,

Your [report](#) provides compelling evidence of ongoing grave human rights violations committed in Eritrea and atrocities Eritrean forces have committed in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

In some areas, the situation has deteriorated. For instance, as you write, “[t]he round-up of individuals for the purpose of military conscription (*‘giffa’*) has dramatically intensified,” and “conscripts have been forced to fight in a gruesome war in [Tigray].” Refugees who were living in Tigray were kidnapped and forcefully returned to Eritrea. Some of them have then been forced to go back to Tigray to fight.

As Eritreans are “trapped in cycles of poverty and vulnerability,” and “the right to education continues to be severely affected,” the government refuses to meaningfully cooperate with the UN human rights system. As of 2022, Eritrea is among the very few countries that have never received any [visit](#) by a special procedure.

Mr. President,

After the former sponsors of resolutions on Eritrea decided to drop their initiative based on reasons that were unrelated to human rights, in 2019, we [welcomed](#) the initiative six states took to maintain scrutiny of the country.

We [believe](#) that it is now time for the Council to move beyond procedural resolutions and to clearly describe and condemn violations Eritrean authorities commit at home and abroad.

The Council should extend the Special Rapporteur’s mandate and enshrine the Special Rapporteur’s “benchmarks for progress,” as well as recommendations made by UN bodies and mechanisms, which form a road map for reforms.

Thank you for your attention.