



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 57th regular session

Item 6: UPR adoptions – Eritrea

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Mr. President,

Last July, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 56/17, which extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea. Doing so, a majority of states made clear that Eritrea's attempts to use its seat on the Council (2019-2024) to cover up its abuses and evade scrutiny had failed.

DefendDefenders sees the UPR as a complementary process, which should not divert attention from country-specific scrutiny and reporting.

The government's replies to the recommendations received during its fourth review show an appallingly low rate of acceptance: 44%. This reflects the 126 fully supported and 155 fully noted recommendations (an additional seven were partly supported, and another five noted with clarifications). If anything, after four cycles and despite the official discourse praising the UPR as the "only legitimate" process to review a country's record, Eritrea is less and less open to engagement with the international community.

Mr. President,

A look at supported recommendations takes you to a parallel dimension, where Eritrea accepts to "[m]aintain full cooperation with the [Council] and its mechanisms" (132.60); "[c]ontinue to strengthen measures to improve the conditions of prisoners" (132.111); or "[i]ncrease the school enrolment rate for girls" (132.226).

In practice, cooperation is non-existent; prisoners suffer unspeakable abuses, when they are lucky not to be held incommunicado for decades; and the last year of high school, served at Sawa military camp, means sexual harassment and exploitation for female students.

A look at noted recommendations takes you back to reality, as you understand that the government is not ready to "[a]dopt legislation criminalizing violence against women" (132.258-.261); "[e]nd [...] prolonged detention without charge and trial" (132.105); "end [...] all forms of reprisals against civil society [...]" (132.131); or even "[a]llow independent civil society organizations to operate" (132.135).

Thank you for your attention.