



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 58th regular session

Item 2: Enhanced interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights in Eritrea

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Mr. President, Mr. Special Rapporteur, Stakeholders,

We thank you for your updates. Last July, this Council did the right thing by **extending** the Special Rapporteur's mandate. It was important to do so, in line with civil society **expectations**, to cover the entirety of Eritrea's membership in the Council (2019-2024). For Eritrea, six years of membership meant six years of scrutiny.

It was also important to do so to send a message to all states that seek to join the HRC to evade scrutiny. As we highlighted: "Eritrea joined the Council to cover up its abuses, but its manoeuvre failed as a majority of states made clear that membership is not a shield against scrutiny."

In the country, violations continue with impunity. They include arbitrary arrests and incommunicado detention, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, forced labour, sexual and gender-based violence, severe restrictions to civic space, and indefinite conscription into national/military service.

Three years after the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement regarding Tigray, fears are growing over another round of armed conflict in the Horn of Africa. Eritrean authorities have recently issued a **directive** to all regional administrations to register and mobilise citizens under the age of 60 for military re-training. Individuals under 50 are prohibited from leaving the country. Reports indicate that regional administrations have begun the process of informing, registering, and mobilising relevant citizens. We call on states to urge Eritrea and other regional actors to halt any escalation towards war.

Mr. President,

At its next session, the Council should further move away from the approach that has prevailed since 2019, which rests upon an annual resolution that is short and procedural. The next Eritrea-focused resolution should be strong and substantive. It should fully and accurately reflect the country's human rights situation, including the domestic situation and its impact abroad, including extra-territorial attacks against the Eritrean diaspora.

Thank you for your attention.