



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 59th regular session

Item 2: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea

Oral statement

Delivered by: Estella Kabachwezi

Mr. President, Mr. Special Rapporteur,

We thank you for your report – once again, it is comprehensive and relevant. Eritrea remains one of the most closed countries on the African continent. Civic space is virtually non-existent and impunity for violations is total.

Ahead of this session, over 30 NGOs **called** on the Council to adopt a strong resolution that extends the Special Rapporteur's mandate, moving away from a “procedural” approach and clearly spelling out and condemning the grave human rights violations committed by Eritrean authorities. As regional tensions are **mounting** and violations are ongoing, maintaining scrutiny of the country's human rights situation is critical.

Mr. President,

Since the 2016 findings of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Eritrea, which detailed a litany of violations, some of which may amount to crimes against humanity, the Council has mandated no adequate follow-up. Yet, Eritrea's human rights situation has not fundamentally changed. Throughout the country's Council **membership** (2019-2024), Eritrean authorities refused to engage in a serious dialogue with the international community (and with African mechanisms) or to cooperate with the Council's mechanisms.

Dr. Babiker,

With this and the absence of improvements in mind, how can the Council address Eritrea's domestic situation and its impact abroad, including extraterritorial attacks against the diaspora?

How can the tenth anniversary of the first report of the COI be leveraged to stock-take on accountability options?

Thank you for your attention.