



10 September 2021

H.E. Motaz Zahran
Ambassador
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
3521 International Court, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador,

We, the undersigned, are a group of organizations and individuals, advocates, scholars, faith leaders, practitioners and non-practitioners that share a common interest in the promotion of universal human rights.

We are writing to express our concern about the case of two Eritrean refugees in Egypt which the Egyptian Immigration Authorities are planning to send back to Eritrea where they would risk imprisonment and torture.

Authorities have detained the two asylum seekers Alem Tesfay Abraham and Kibrom Adhanom at Al Qanater prison in Cairo since March 2012 and 2014 respectively, in poor conditions and without due process. Mr Adhanom and Mr Tesfay Abraham are both former conscripts in the Eritrean National Service and survivors of persecution in Eritrea.

Human Rights Concern Eritrea (HRCE) reported that Egyptian authorities were in touch with the Eritrean government in August to plan the forcible return of the two asylum-seekers to Eritrea.¹ On 9 September, HRCE received news that the Egyptian authorities took the asylum-seekers to an immigration office where they beat them and forced them to sign documents in Arabic, a language they cannot read or understand. The UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea has been clear that asylum seekers who are returned to Eritrea, especially former conscripts, risk, "severe punishment" if forcibly returned including, "prolonged periods of incommunicado detention, torture and ill-treatment."² If Egypt were to send the two men

¹ HRC-Eritrea, "EGYPT: Two Vulnerable Eritreans in Imminent Danger of Forced Return to Eritrea." *HRC-Eritrea*, 17 Aug. 2021, hrc-eritrea.org/egypt-two-vulnerable-eritreans-in-imminent-danger-of-forced-return-to-eritrea/.

² Human Rights Council, *Situation of human rights in Eritrea: Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea*, 12 May 2021, para. 52.

back to Eritrea, Egypt would be breaching its international law obligations of *non-refoulement*.

We therefore call on you, Ambassador, to immediately contact the immigration authorities to ensure the imminent refoulement of the Alem Tesfay and Kibrom Adhanom does not take place. We also urge the Ambassador to ensure the rights of the asylum seekers under the Refugee Convention are protected and that they are able to have their asylum claim tried by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Sincerely,

Signatories

Organizations

The America Team for Displaced Eritreans

Anglican Persecuted Church Network

Christian Freedom International

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

CSW UK

Forum for Religious Freedom Europe

GAFCON Suffering Church Network

Global Peace Foundation Kurdistan

Human Rights Concern Eritrea

Jubilee Campaign

Katartismos Global

Save the Persecuted Christians

Set My People Free

Individuals

Lauren Homer

President
Law and Liberty Trust

Faith J. H. McDonnell
Director of Advocacy
Katartismos Global

Scott Morgan
Chair Africa Working Group