



22 October 2021

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

Dear Mr. 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 eight Eritrean refugees in Egypt which the Egyptian immigration authorities are planning to send back on Saturday, 23 October 2021 – now rebooked to Thursday 28 October, 2021 with Egyptair at the time of writing - to Eritrea where they could risk imprisonment and torture.

In 2019, Egyptian authorities arrested 10 children and eight adults who fled Eritrea as refugees into Egypt via Sudan. Authorities have been detaining the 18 Eritrean asylum seekers since October 2019. The UNHCR is not allowed to register refugees who are detained there, so they had no opportunity to register their claims for asylum. They are being held in Aluqsur prison, where they have been suffering from lack of medical attention.

In August 2021 Egyptian authorities cooperated with the Eritrean government to issue travel documents for the Eritrean asylum seekers, including the children, in order to send them back to Eritrea against their will.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea has been clear that asylum seekers risk, “severe punishment” if forcibly returned including, “prolonged periods of incommunicado detention, torture and ill-treatment.”¹ If Egypt were to send the eight Eritrean asylum seekers back to Eritrea on Saturday, Egypt would be breaching its international law obligations of *non-refoulement*.

¹ 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.

We therefore call on you, Ambassador, to immediately contact the immigration authorities to ensure the imminent refoulement of the eight asylum seekers held in Alugsur prison does not take place.

We also urge you to ensure the rights of the 18 Eritrean asylum seekers are protected, as well as the rights of the two [Eritrean asylum seekers](#) [Alem Tesfay Abraham and Kibrom Adhanom] authorities are detaining in Al-Qanater prison, who remain at risk of being *refouled*. We urge the Government of Egypt to immediately release the Eritrean asylum seekers and secure access for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to review the Eritreans' asylum claims under the Refugee Convention.

Sincerely,

Signatories

Organizations

The America Team for Displaced Eritreans

Christian Freedom International

CSW UK

Forum for Religious Freedom Europe

GAFCON Suffering Church Network

Human Rights Concern Eritrea

Jubilee Campaign

Katartismos Global

Save the Persecuted Christians

Set My People Free

Individuals

Dede Laugesen

Executive Director

Save the Persecuted Christians

Faith J. H. McDonnell

Director of Advocacy

Katartismos Global

Scott Morgan
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