

Human Rights Council: 26th Session
Universal Periodic Review: Eritrea

20th June 2014

Oral Intervention

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)

Delivered by Mr. John Foley

Thank you Mr. President,

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project welcomes the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Eritrea, and the constructive recommendations made by many member states.

Mr. President, there is, once again, a vast disconnect between the government of Eritrea's stance on paper, and the lived reality for the many millions of Eritrean civilians who continue to suffer egregious and systemic human rights violations at the hands of one of the most repressive and closed regimes in the world.

Earlier this week, the Human Rights Council heard from the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea. In her most recent report, she describes indefinite national service, forced labour and migration, arbitrary arrests and incommunicado detention in inhumane prison conditions lasting for years, and complete impunity for the perpetrators of these wholesale violations of international law.

And yet, Mr. President, the government of Eritrea exists in a perpetual state of denial.

On the margins of the Human Rights Council this week, former child military conscripts have described the horrors of their experiences. And yet, Eritrea rejects Switzerland and Australia's recommendations to abolish military conscription for children, claiming to the international community that no children are recruited into the military.

Also this week, Mr. President, victims of torture, including children who have been detained in shipping containers have provided heart rending testimony about their experiences. And yet, Eritrea rejects the recommendations of Djibouti and Tunisia, to put an end to the widespread use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments, with the wholly implausible claim that no such practices exist in Eritrea.

Mr. President, the systemic, widespread and grave human rights violations committed by the Eritrean state against its own citizens can no longer be tolerated by the international community. We reiterate our thanks to the Working Group, and to the many states who have attempted to constructively engage with Eritrea throughout this process. Finally, we reiterate our previous public call for the Human Rights Council to establish a Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea.

I thank you Mr. President.