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International Fellowship of Reconciliation

Human Rights Council, 26th Session
20th June 2013

Agenda Item 6:
Adoption of the UPR Report on ERITREA
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On Wednesday, in the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur, the Eritrean delegation referred to its commitment to the UPR process and to the broad range of recommendations which the Government had accepted.

So let us examine the fifteen¹ recommendations made in the Working Group regarding the area on which the Special Rapporteur focussed in her report – that of military service. Taken together, these recommendations called upon Eritrea to abolish military conscription and obligatory militia service; meanwhile to respect the statutory 18 months' duration of National Service and demobilise those who had served longer, to ensure that no person under the age of 18 is recruited, to abolish the requirement that the final year of secondary education is spent in Sawa military camp, and includes military training, to respect the right of conscientious objection to military service, to institute a civilian alternative service for conscientious objectors, and immediately to release all imprisoned conscientious objectors.

All fifteen were among more than 110 (out of 200) recommendations which did not enjoy the support of Eritrea. Specifically, despite all evidence to the contrary, Eritrea denied that children were ever recruited and that any conscientious objectors were imprisoned.

The UPR is important, but its effectiveness depends on how open the State Under Review is to hear and act upon the recommendations made. It is no substitute for the other mechanisms of human rights protection.

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation urges Eritrea to note the recommendations we have quoted, and even though they do not at present enjoy its support, we hope that in four years' time Eritrea's Report for the Third Cycle of the UPR will indicate that some, or better, all of these recommendations have in fact been implemented.

¹ Nos. 55-66, 123, and 186-8.