



QALNA ERITREAN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

July 19, 2008

The Honourable Diane Finley
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1
Email : Minister@cic.gc.ca.

Re: Eritrean refugees in Libya and Egypt

Your Excellency,

We are members of Qalna- Eritrea Human rights group, a Toronto based non profit organization, established by concerned citizens to advocate for rights of people of an Eritrean origin. We are writing to call your attention to the desperate situation of Eritrean refugees in Egypt and Libya. As you might be aware, Eritrea has recently become one of the highest refugee producing countries. The political crisis and human right condition in Eritrea have forced a number of refugees to leave their country and seek refugee protection in neighboring and other countries.

Eritrean refugees are facing great difficult and living in horrible conditions. In particular, the situation of refugees in Libya and Egypt is direr. Recently, the government of Egypt has deported a number of refugees. Despite the plea of the Amnesty International, UNHCR, US government and other governments, the Egyptian government sent refugees to Eritrea where they would face imprisonment, torture and possible execution. Besides, there are a number of refugees who are still imprisoned and in danger of being deported.

In addition, in Libya, there are Eritrean refugees, who have been imprisoned for many years, are at risk of deportation to Eritrea. A while ago, Libya has deported a number of Eritrean refugees and they were immediately imprisoned, tortured and some of them executed.

So far, UNHCR has urged Canada and other countries to grant international protection including resettlement to those who are inhumanely treated and tortured in Libya and Egypt prisons. However, the international community and our Canadian government have not responded to the call to our satisfaction.

Therefore, we are humbly requesting your esteemed office:

1. to exert international pressure on Egyptian and Libyan governments and urge them to:
 - a. stop deportation of Eritrean refugees immediately,
 - b. release imprisoned refugees, and
 - c. give unhindered access to UNHCR;

2. to offer resettlement possibility to Eritrean refugees in Libya and Egyptian prisons and detention centers and save their life;
3. to expedite ongoing refugee resettlement applications of Eritrean refugees in Libya and Egypt especially those who have family or relatives in Canada.

We are very devastated by the gravity of the refugee crisis and we are unable to live in comfort while our brothers and sisters are ill treated in foreign prisons and deported to danger. On our part, we will undertake to provide advise to your office and offer all necessary settlement and integration assistance to the refugees should they are allowed to come into Canada.

We thank you for your time and attention and we would welcome an opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to discuss about this matter in near future.

Sincerely,

Chair person of Qalna-Human Rights Group-Toronto
Rev. Semere Sibhatu