



Q A L N A E R I T R E A N H U M A N R I G H T S G R O U P

July 19, 2008, 2008

The Honourable Abraham Abraham
UNHCR Representatie in Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1
Email: aabraham@unhcr.org

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.

First and foremost, we would like to express our heartfelt congratulate to you for being nominated as UNHCR representative in Canada and wish you success for your new challenge.

We are writing to call your attention to the desperate situation of Eritrean refugees in Libya and Egypt. 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.

Eritrea refugees are facing great difficult and living in horrible conditions in many places. 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 will face imprisonment, torture and possible execution. Moreover, there are still a number of refugees who are imprisoned and in danger of being deported.

In addition, in Libya, there are Eritrean refugees who have been imprisoned for as long as three years and they are at danger of being deported to Eritrea. A while ago, Libya has deported a number of Eritrean refugees and they were immediately imprisoned, tortured and some of them executed. Last month, there was a plan to deport 250 refugees and it stopped by the intervention of UNHCR and other NGOs.

So far, UNHCR has urged Canada and other countries to give international protection to those who are in detention including resettlement possible relocation to safer place until they receive a durable solution. However, the response of the international community has been slow and ineffective to solve the danger these refugees are facing.

Therefore, we are kindly asking your office:

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

2. to urge Canada and other countries to offer resettlement possibilities to Eritrean refugees in Libya and Egyptian refugee centre, to save their life.
3. to urge the Canadian government to expedite ongoing refugee resettlement applications of Eritrean refugees in Libya and Egypt especially those who have families 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. On our part, we will undertake to provide all necessary settlement and integration assistance should these refugee arrive in 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