

General allegation

111th session (6-10 February 2017)

Eritrea

6. The Working Group received information from credible sources alleging obstacles encountered to implement the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in Eritrea.

7. According to such sources, Eritrean officials have committed crimes against humanity in a widespread and systematic manner, including enforced disappearances. It is reported that these crimes were committed in Eritrean official and unofficial detention facilities, military training camps and other locations across the country over the past 25 years for political, religious and sometimes unknown reasons. The same information shows that the exact number of people who have been subjected to enforced disappearance remains unknown.

8. People have been allegedly whisked away from the streets, mosques and workplaces by masked Eritrean security agents, either in uniform or civilian clothes driving military vehicles without license plates.

9. Some witnesses described various forms of torture inflicted on them to obtain information, to punish for alleged wrongdoings, or to create a general climate of fear. Witnesses also reported that those detained were subject to enforced disappearance and that high profile cases of enforced disappearance include:

- Former fighters of the Eritrean Liberation Front, detained in 1992;
- Jehovah's Witnesses detained in 1994;
- Muslim teachers in Keren detained in 1994;
- Members of the Afar ethnic group, detained in 1998-1999;
- The G-15 political critics and journalists detained in 2001;
- Members of Muslim community detained for protesting the appointment of a Mufti in 2007;
- Djiboutian prisoners of war detained in 2008;
- Those alleged to have participated in the attempted takeover of the Ministry of Information building at Forto, detained in 2013.

10. It is reported that despite their efforts, many witnesses have not been able to obtain official information about the fate of their relatives. Some were reportedly able to obtain information unofficially, for example, by bribing a prison guard or from released fellow detainees.

11. Information received indicates that enforced disappearances have had a particular impact on wives, mothers and children of the disappeared. It is reported that they are threatened or subjected to actual detention if they continue to seek from government authorities the establishment of the whereabouts of their husbands and fathers.

12. It is reported that gross violations of human rights continue to occur in the country and that almost all arrested were detained in violation of fundamental rules of international law.