

Anglais / discours 1

Réunion : Conseil des droits de l'Homme

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Difficulté : niveau 1

Introduction : Bonjour et bienvenue au concours de recrutement d'interprètes de langue française. Vous allez à présent entendre le premier discours : il s'agit d'une intervention d'une représentante des Nations Unies sur les droits de la personne en Erythrée.

Éléments à fournir (vocabulaire) :

Special Rapporteur	Rapporteuse spéciale
Gender-based violence	violences fondées sur le genre

Mr. Vice-President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to address the Human Rights Council this morning and present my first annual report on the situation of human rights in Eritrea. Before turning to my report, I would like to make some brief remarks about the current situation in the country.

It has been a year since the signing of the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Since July 2018, the two countries have continued to strengthen their efforts to promote regional peace and security. Eritrea has also worked towards improving its relations with its other neighbors. Additionally, Eritrea has begun normalizing its bilateral relations with various countries beyond the Horn of Africa region.

Despite these positive developments, there has been no tangible improvement in the situation of human rights in the country. The dividends of peace are not yet benefitting ordinary Eritreans. Nor are there any signs to suggest they will. As a result, hundreds continue to flee the country every month.

Since finalizing my report, I have received troubling news about developments in Eritrea. In May, I received reports of arrests of Christians at different locations in and around Asmara at prayer gatherings, and, in late June, there were reports of further arrests of Christians, including women and children. In mid-June, security forces reportedly arrested five Orthodox priests. Also in mid-June, the authorities seized all health facilities managed by the Catholic Church in the country, many of which had existed since the 1990s and provided health services to remote rural communities. Based on updated information, 21 health services and clinics and health centers were affected by this measure. Many were located in religious houses, and in some instances, security forces arrived, intimidated the staff and ordered patients to vacate the facilities. The authorities have defended this measure by stating that a 1995 regulation banned religious institutions from carrying out development activities. However, the authorities' decision to enforce this 1995 regulation came only weeks after the Catholic Church in Eritrea called on the authorities to adopt a comprehensive plan of truth and reconciliation, promote dialogue and implement reforms to prevent further mass departures from the country.

These regrettable developments are examples of the restrictions imposed on religious communities in Eritrea, and they show that the Eritrean authorities remain unwilling to tolerate any expression of dissent.

Turning to my report, last year in its resolution 38/15, this Council invited the Special Rapporteur to develop benchmarks for progress in improving the human rights situation in Eritrea. After extensive consultations during the course of my mandate, I set out five benchmarks and related indicators in my report. These benchmarks represent minimum human rights standards required to address the human rights concerns identified in my report, and they are aimed at assisting the Government in developing its human rights agenda. Since I continue to have no access to the country, I have been unable to discuss these benchmarks with the authorities in Asmara.

Benchmark 1 concerns the need to strengthen the rule of law and justice and law enforcement institutions. I remain deeply concerned about the continued use of the practices of indefinite and arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in Eritrea and by the lack of basic due process rights for detainees. Several cases are summarized in my report. One example is that of an Eritrean-American national who was arrested when she was only 15 years old as she tried

to flee the country without an exit visa in December 2012. This past April, she turned 22. A more recent case of arbitrary arrest is that of the former finance minister and his wife who are 74 and 60 years old respectively. Both have been in custody since last year and family visits are not allowed in either case. The Eritrean authorities have given no indication that they will release those arbitrarily and unlawfully detained.

Benchmark 2 concerns the need to reform the national and military service. As I have explained in detail in my report, the national service remains one of the main drivers of migration from Eritrea. As I have done so in my report, I urge the Eritrean authorities to seek both technical and financial assistance from international donors to put in place a multi-year plan to reform the national service, to progressively demobilize conscripts and to create jobs with fair and dignified working conditions for conscripts.

Benchmark 3 deals with the need to guarantee basic freedoms - freedoms of religion, association and expression, and of the press. And I have already referred to this benchmark in my earlier remarks. By creating and maintaining a safe environment in which civil society, journalists, religious groups and other

actors can operate freely, the Government of Eritrea will demonstrate that it's embarking on a new chapter of respect for human rights.

Benchmark 4 concerns the need to address all forms of gender-based violence and promote the rights of women and gender equality. While the authorities have made some progress in this area, much work remains to tackle gender-based discrimination and violence against women and to promote women's participation in all sectors of Eritrean society, including in leadership positions of government.

Finally, **benchmark 5** addresses the need to strengthen cooperation with international and regional agencies. Various international organizations and international donors are currently seeking to enhance their technical cooperation with the Government of Eritrea. However, for such cooperation to take place in an effective manner, the Eritrean authorities must lift the access and movement restrictions that are currently in place for international partners and must create an environment conducive for these organizations to carry out their mandate.

Some of the benchmarks set out in my report can be implemented immediately, as the one I've just mentioned, the lifting of access and movement restrictions for international partners and the release of those currently unlawfully and arbitrarily detained.

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