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Open letter

To: Permanent Representatives of Member and Observer States of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (Geneva, Switzerland)

Subject: Renew the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea

Excellencies,

We, the *Daerona Global Community*, write to you not only as advocates but as witnesses to the enduring suffering of the Eritrean people, families whose loved ones have disappeared, youth forced to flee their homeland in fear, and citizens whose voices have been silenced by a regime founded on repression. In solidarity with the wider Eritrean diaspora, we respectfully urge the United Nations Human Rights Council, at its 59th session, to renew and reinforce the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea for at least one more year.

To end this mandate now would be to silence the only international mechanism still listening to Eritrean victims. The Eritrean government is not seeking justice, it is demanding silence. And the international community must not comply.

In June 2025, the Government of Eritrea formally requested the termination of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur. This request is not a sincere appeal for fairness, it is a dangerous and calculated maneuver. No country has ever succeeded in dismantling a country-specific human rights mandate without demonstrating substantial cooperation or meaningful reform. Eritrea, on the contrary, has consistently denied access to the Special Rapporteur and has never recognized the legitimacy of the mandate.

If allowed to succeed, this move sets a perilous precedent: that a state can commit grave human rights violations, refuse scrutiny, and be rewarded with impunity. What message does this send to other abusive regimes?

This Council is being tested. Will it stand by its founding principles and the victims of oppression, or will it lend legitimacy to those who perpetrate abuse?

The Evidence is Overwhelming and Ongoing

The latest report by the Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/59/24, May 2025) offers detailed and credible documentation of continuing, systematic human rights violations in Eritrea, including:

- Arbitrary detention of thousands, many held without charge or trial
- Indefinite national service, widely recognized as a form of state-sponsored forced labor
- Widespread use of torture, surveillance, enforced disappearances, and collective punishment
- Absence of press freedom, civil society, or an independent judiciary

These are not historical allegations—they reflect the current reality. In 2016, the UN Commission of Inquiry concluded that crimes against humanity were being committed in Eritrea. Nine years later, these violations remain entrenched and institutionalized.

To eliminate the mandate now would not only obstruct truth and justice, it would erase these crimes from the international record. It would signal to victims: *You no longer matter*.



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Eritrean Youth Are Dying to Escape, And the World Is Watching

The most damning evidence is not found only in reports, but in the desperate journeys of Eritrean youth fleeing repression each year. They flee from indefinite conscription, mass surveillance, and the complete absence of freedom. They cross deserts, suffer torture in detention camps, and drown in the Mediterranean, not in search of opportunity, but because the alternative is unbearable.

The 2013 Lampedusa shipwreck, which claimed the lives of more than 368 mostly Eritrean refugees, remains a haunting symbol of this tragedy. Survivors spoke of burning flesh, suffocation, and helplessness. Many bodies were never recovered. Families were denied even the dignity of mourning.

Yet, the exodus continues. Eritreans are not emigrating, they are escaping. They are fleeing from a state that denies them personhood and future.

Will the United Nations now abandon even the memory of those it failed to save?

Silence Is Not Neutrality-It Is Complicity

Eritrea's request is not a routine administrative motion, it is a deliberate effort to shut down scrutiny, suppress survivors, and escape accountability.

The Council must respond with clarity, courage, and conviction. We urge you to:

- Reject Eritrea's request to terminate the mandate
- Renew and strengthen the mandate of the Special Rapporteur
- Demand full access for UN investigators and special procedures
- Establish an independent accountability mechanism to investigate past and ongoing violations
- Call for the immediate release of all those arbitrarily detained
- Implement the Council's prevention mandate, as outlined in paragraphs 75, 80, and 86–88 of A/HRC/59/24

These are not political choices, they are moral imperatives.

To Abandon the Mandate Is to Abandon the People

The Special Rapporteur is not merely a title, it is a lifeline. It is the last remaining international mechanism offering visibility to Eritrean victims. It connects their voices to a global audience that too often looks away. To yield to Eritrea's demand would be to:

- Reward impunity over justice
- Betray the hopes of Eritreans still suffering under authoritarian rule
- Signal to the world's worst regimes that truth can be buried and accountability avoided

This is more than a vote. It is a moment of moral clarity. It is a chance to affirm whether the Council stands for the dignity of the oppressed, or for the convenience of those who oppress.

We call on you, stand with the people of Eritrea. Stand with the truth. Stand for justice.

With deep respect,

Daerona Worldwide Eritrean Community

NB: The *Daerona* community is a network of Eritrean human rights defenders and political activists in the diaspora.

References

1. United Nations Human Rights Council. Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea: Report of the Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/59/24). May 2025. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g25/068/95/pdf/g2506895.pdf>
2. Reuters. Eritrea seeks to end mandate of UN expert investigating abuses. June 25, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/eritrea-seeks-end-mandate-un-expert-investigating-abuses-document-shows-2025-06-25/>