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COI QUERY RESPONSE

ERITREA- CONSCRIPTION

A report released in May 2024 by the *European Bureau for Conscientious Objection* states that: “...draft evaders continued to be subjected to arbitrary detention in highly punitive conditions, enforced disappearance and torture.”¹

A report issued in February 2024 by *Amnesty International* states that: “Young people in Eritrea face arbitrary detention and other forms of punishment if they avoid military service, mandatory for citizens after finishing high school. Upon joining, they are subjected to an indefinite term of compulsory national military service, where allegations of forced labour, torture, and sexual violence have been documented. Every year, thousands of citizens flee their country via dangerous routes to avoid forced conscription.”²

The *United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* states in February 2024 that: “Deserters of military service are detained and punished.”³

In April 2024 the *United States Department of State* reporting on events of 2023 comments on: “...harsh detention conditions in police stations and in prisons for persons held for evading national service and militia duties.”⁴

¹ European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (15 May 2024) Annual Report: Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe 2023/24 [Eritrea excerpt], p.2

² Amnesty International (29 February 2024) Oral Statement, Item 2: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue On The Situation Of Human Rights In Eritrea

³ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (28 February 2024) Dire human rights situation in Eritrea, p.2

⁴ United States Department of State (22 April 2024) *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Eritrea*, p.4

In 2024 *Freedom House* issued a report reviewing events of the preceding year which included stating that: “Arbitrary arrests and detentions are common; targets include those who evade military service, try to flee the country, or are suspected of practicing an unauthorized religion.”⁵

This document also states that: “Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers who are repatriated from other countries are subject to detention under harsh conditions”⁶

In December 2023 the *Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs* states that: “Based on article 6 of the 1995 National Service Proclamation, all Eritreans between the ages of eighteen and forty are required to perform national service. Only people who fought in the liberation struggle against Ethiopia (article 12) and the disabled, visually impaired and mentally ill (article 15) are fully exempted.”⁷

This document also states that: “Persons who returned to Eritrea and were still subject to compulsory national service were still required to perform this national service on arrival if they did not have an exemption...”⁸

A report issued in October 2023 by *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* points out that: “The military service regime remains indefinite. Recruits receive minimal wages and are subject to forced labour. Young female recruits can face sexual harassment and violations by senior officers. Random military roundups continued to occur.”⁹

In August 2023 the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* states that: “Eritrean law requires all Eritreans between the ages of 18 and 50 to serve in the military for 18 months. Authorities grant exemptions only to pregnant women and people with a physical disability. Eritrea’s government imprisons those who refuse to serve, including on the basis of their religious beliefs.”¹⁰

In May 2023 the United States Department of State notes that: “By law, all citizens between ages 18 and 50 must perform 18 months of national service, with limited exceptions, including for health reasons such as physical disability or pregnancy. In times of emergency, the government may extend the length of national service indefinitely, and the country officially has been in a state of emergency since the beginning of the 1998 war with Ethiopia. There is also a compulsory militia for all men not in the military, including many who had been demobilized from National Service, otherwise exempted from military service in the past, or are elderly. The government may detain those who fail to participate in the militia or national service Militia training primarily involves occasional marches and listening to patriotic lectures. The law does not provide for conscientious objector status for religious reasons, nor are there alternative activities for persons willing to perform national service but unwilling to engage in military or militia activities.”¹¹

⁵ Freedom House (2024) *Freedom in the World 2024: Eritrea*, p.6

⁶ *ibid*, p.7

⁷ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1 December 2023) General Country of Origin Information Report on Eritrea, p.40)

⁸ *ibid*, p.56

⁹ Christian Solidarity Worldwide (11 October 2023) Eritrea: submission to the 46th session of the Universal Periodic Review, p.5

¹⁰ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (31 August 2023) Country Update: Eritrea, p.3

¹¹ United States Department of State (15 May 2023) 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Eritrea, pp.3-4

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