



EMBASSY OF THE STATE OF ERITREA

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Press Statement:

Eritrea rejects US Country Report on Human Trafficking

The Embassy of Eritrea finds the US State Department's Human Trafficking Report on Eritrea to be subjective and inaccurate, not based on well defined evidentiary standards or fact, and therefore rejects its findings and conclusions.

Eritrea is a country whose citizens have been deliberately lured and victimized by certain quarters and as such, the ranking is meaningless as it seeks to punish the victim for crimes committed by others.

The Government of Eritrea considers human trafficking to be a serious national security issue and as such, has taken multiple measures to address the problem, but as with any transnational crimes, it will need the concerted effort of all concerned parties, especially the governments in the destination or transit countries.

The Report does not give an accurate picture about Eritrea's policy for under-age military service. Eritrea's policy is clear, consistent and transparent, and has been discussed with US officials in the past. Eritrea's record today, and during the long armed struggle for independence, is impeccable. Eritrea never has, and does not permit under age military service. Eritrean Government officials aboard USS Roosevelt in 1997 were struck by the fact that the average age of the crew was only 17 years old.

In 1999, the US Government sought Eritrea's support or abstention at the International Labor Organizations (ILO) conference on a resolution that sought to ban military enrollment for people less than 18 years of age. Eritrea declined to support the US position then because it ran counter to Eritrea's domestic law and the provisions of the National Service Act.

Due to the covert nature of the crime, accurate statistics on the nature and prevalence of human trafficking are difficult to calculate and many cases of human trafficking go undiscovered and unreported. Trafficking is often associated with organized crime; therefore, gaining access to traffickers and information about routes, key persons involved, and practices is severely limited, if not impossible. When such crimes are discovered and reported, the Government of Eritrea conducts full investigations and prosecutes perpetrators when apprehended.

There is need for constructive dialogue on a number of issues and human trafficking is one area. Eritrea welcomes the opportunity to discuss these and other issues relating to the human trafficking that directly impact the United States and its policies:

- The United States Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV) policy, in the case of Eritrea, allowing potential candidates to process applications from neighboring countries.
- The unprecedented categorization of the Kunama population group as “persecuted” and therefore eligible for re-settlement in the USA.

Without accurate data and information, the Report cannot adequately address Eritrea’s prosecution, protection and prevention record. The Report is in variance with the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons launched by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on 12 February which, clearly states that, "...State authorities provide legal protection, medical services, and housing and shelter for trafficking victims..."

- Eritrea has successfully prosecuted many persons for human trafficking. When in country prosecution was not possible, as in the case of the members of United Nations Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE), the cases were referred to the United Nations and the perpetrators were asked to leave the country.
- Eritrea has had numerous awareness campaigns on the issue of human trafficking and related issues.

The Government of Eritrea has also introduced immigration regulations designed to check human trafficking and forgery

It is not that Eritrea does not have laws and regulations, but rather, that they are constantly undermined by willful encouragement of illegal immigration and human trafficking by some States.

The US State Department, if it wants to be taken seriously, ought to consider putting better effort at getting the facts instead of relying on dubious and disinterested sources. Human trafficking is too serious an issue to be used as a tool for furthering illicit political agendas.

The Embassy of Eritrea remains ready to engage constructively and welcomes all questions and requests.

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