

September 18th 2015

*Dear Representative of the Eritrean regime,*

We citizens of the world concerned with Eritrea's prisoners of conscience, demand the release of these Eritrean heroes. We know tens of thousands remain incarcerated in hundreds of underground prisons across the country. Old and young, men and women, ex-fighters and ordinary citizens, sheikhs and priests and religious leaders – no group escapes the crocodile's jaws.

Among these tens of thousands of victims of this suppressive, atrocious and illegitimate regime are the senior leaders of the liberation struggle who have been imprisoned since the 18th of September 2001. The only apparent fault of these popular national leaders was that they stuck out their necks, consistent with the *raison d'être* of the liberation struggle they were committed to since their early youth in the mid 1960s to the early 1970s. Among them were wives and husbands, forced to leave their children orphaned. These heroes spoke up against the illegitimate government's vicious dictatorship. They advocated for policies that institute justice, focus on development, recognize political diversity, and strive for cohesion while also recognizing the diversity in Eritrea. They called for a constitutional government, a government that puts the welfare of the people at the centre of its domestic and foreign policies. These heroes called for an end of the Eritrean dictatorship and campaigned for policies that unleash the people's potential to build a stable and peaceful Eritrea through the exercise of their natural freedom.

After 14 years, Isaias' regime has not responded to the call for the release of these heroes and of those tens of thousands of their compatriots who still remain incarcerated. Eyewitnesses testify inhuman treatment of prisoners including physical and psychological torture, lack of any medical treatment and holding prisoners incommunicado for decades in tiny prison cells. At the moment, the fate of the heroes who fought so bravely is unknown. We are extremely concerned with the effect that these undemocratic practices have on our country and its people. This illegal imprisonment of individuals has destroyed entire families, leaving children orphaned to be looked after by their distraught and elderly grandparents. Families are displaced from their neighbourhoods, many flee in search of security. There are family members who still suffer from psychological trauma and depression.

The effects of this injustice is not only felt by the prisoners and their closest family. The Eritrean community at large is equally subjected by the indiscriminate and blanket suppressive measures taken by the regime. Communities are under constant threat of the regime's security forces if they show sympathies towards families of political prisoners. When the families of prisoners are isolated they are forced to take riskfull measures to escape the country to anywhere they could feel relatively safer.

This month marks the 14th anniversary of the G15 and journalists' arrest. Our heroes have suffered under harsh conditions without even getting the chance to defend themselves in trial. In their plight for a democratic, just and peaceful Eritrea our heroes have lost 14 years of their lives. For all of this time, they have been denied their right to meet their own families.

We demand their immediate release.

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