

ተጋድሎ ሓርነት ኤርትራ  
ሰው-ራዊ ባይቶ  
ቤ.ጽ. አቦ መንበር



جبهة التحرير العرترية  
المجلس الشورى  
مكتب الرئيس

Eritrean Liberation Front – RC  
Chairman's Office

## ***Eritreans Reclaim Their Denied Refugee Status and Rights***

*(An appeal submitted electronically to the below mentioned UN  
officials in the occasion of UN SG's visit to the Sudan).*

*Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, UN SG, currently in Sudan,  
Your Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres, High Commissioner, UNCHR*

On behalf of myself and my colleagues in the of leadership of the ELF-RC, one of the leading Eritrean opposition organizations struggling for change and democratization in Eritrea, I am writing this appeal to UNHCR and to the UN Secretary General taking the opportunity of H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-Moon's visit to the Sudan these days.

This appeal, demanding the restoration of denied refugee status to Eritreans in the Sudan and elsewhere, is a follow up of our letter of 27 March 2006 addressed to Mr. Kalunga Lutato, the UNHCR Representative in the Sudan, with copies to UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva, to which no response has been considered.

Mr. UN Secretary General and  
Mr. High Commissioner for Refugees,

This appeal wishes to draw your kind attention to the situation of **Eritrean refugees whose number is increasing by the day in the Sudan and elsewhere but whose status and rights as refugees continue to be denied by UNHCR since 31 December 2002.**

Under the dictatorial regime of Isaias Afwerki, human rights abuses in Eritrea are undoubtedly among the worst in the world. In fact, it was from the early 1990s that the regime in Asmara proved to be anti-people and anti-democratic. The UNHCR therefore had no reason to declare in December 2002 that Eritrea is a "safe place" to its old and new cases of refugees and thus deny them refugee status.

.

Many Eritreans and their friends are still asking: how can one see the situation in Eritrea other than what it is? More importantly, how can the UNHCR continue justifying its denial of status of refugee to Eritreans, a declaration that biased the rest of the world against Eritrean asylum seekers fleeing from the ruthless regime in Asmara?

It was clear that in December 2002, Eritreans in the opposition camp, and especially the refugees in the Sudan, were stunned to receive UNHCR decision denying the status of refugees to Eritreans under a wrongly applied **“ceased circumstances”** clause while the circumstances in Eritrea were not changed to the better.

Contrary to what has been going on in Eritrea since the early 1990s, the UNHCR stated in its wrong conclusion of 2002 that: The ending of the war with Ethiopia and the attainment of independence by Eritrea represented fundamental and durable changes which may be said to have removed the root causes of the Eritrean refugee problem... The High Commissioner is of the opinion that refugees from Eritrea, who fled their country as a result of the war of independence which ended in June 1991, as well as those who fled as result of the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea which ended in June 2000, should no longer have a well-founded fear of persecution or other reasons to continue to be regarded as refugees.”

Dear Sirs, UNHCR’s application of the “cessation clause” to Eritreans has severely affected the old and new cases of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan. The decision also affected Eritrean asylum seekers in the rest of the world because many host countries were influenced by UNHCR’s decision to apply the “cessation clause” against Eritreans and, as a result, many Eritreans were denied the status of political refugees.

We have been on record calling on UNHCR to rescind the cessation clause and to try to respond in an adequate manner to the basic humanitarian needs of Eritrean refugees. We want to repeat that because of wrong perceptions and conclusions, humanitarian assistance to Eritrean refugees in the Sudan went down to dismally low levels, and was worsened following the untimely departure of many humanitarian organizations from Eastern Sudan.

Today, the situation of our compatriots in the refugee camps of the Sudan is extremely depressing. We therefore call on you, Mr. UN Secretary General on visit to the Sudan, and Mr. High Commissioner of the UNHCR to help in doing the right things, which include the following:

1. To immediately rescind the UNHCR decision that denied the status of refugee to Eritreans since 31 December 2002.
2. To start providing adequate relief assistance to Eritrean refugees in the refugee camps of Eastern Sudan, and to kindly invite other humanitarian organizations to come and provide support to the old

- and new cases of Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan and in northern Ethiopia.
3. To resume basic services like provision of water and sanitation.
  4. To advise and ask donor countries that suspended development assistance to the rogue regime in Asmara to reroute the assistance so that young Eritreans in the Sudan, Ethiopia and other places can benefit from it by developing their skills to build post-dictatorship Eritrea.
  5. To resume enhanced elementary education to children as a fundamental right of refugee children, and to support the technical training of adult refugees in various skill formations. Most social services have tragically come to a halt in several refugee camps in Eastern Sudan.
  6. To support income-generating and self-reliance projects for poor households.
  7. To involve the refugees in all decisions that affect their fate, especially in the plan of 'integrating' of the camps, and the on-and-off repatriation programmes arranged with the unpredictable and unreliable regime in Eritrea.

With kind regards



Woldeyesus Ammar,  
Chairman, ELF-RC  
Khartoum, 3 September 2007

UN Headquarters, New York, [Ki-moon@un.org](mailto:Ki-moon@un.org), [Ki-moonB@un.org](mailto:Ki-moonB@un.org)  
Spokeswoman Michele Montas, [Montas@un.org](mailto:Montas@un.org), [MontasM@un.org](mailto:MontasM@un.org)

Copies to:

CC: UN Deputy Secretary-General Mark M. Brown, [Brown@un.org](mailto:Brown@un.org),  
CC: Mr. Antonio GUTERRES, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR),  
Geneva ([GUTERRES@unhcr.org](mailto:GUTERRES@unhcr.org) )  
CC: Ms. Louise ARBOUR, High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR),  
Geneva ([ARBOUR@unhchr.org](mailto:ARBOUR@unhchr.org), [Larbour@unhchr.org](mailto:Larbour@unhchr.org),  
[webadmin.hchr@unog.ch](mailto:webadmin.hchr@unog.ch)).