

An Eritrean Appeal to the International Humanitarian Community

To: H.E. Mr. Filippo Grandi
High Commissioner, UNHCR, Geneva,

To: H.E. Dr. Tedros Adhanom,
Director General, WHO Geneva

CC:

Other Concerned UN Bodies,
Host Countries of Eritrean Refugees

March 31, 2020

Subject:

**An Appeal for Protection of Eritreans at Home
and abroad from the Scourges of Corona virus**

Dear UNHCR Commissioner, Mr. Filippo Grandi,
Dear WHO DG, Dr. Tedros Adhanom,

We, the undersigned entities representing the ensemble of Eritrean political organizations in exile, felt the obligation of sending this earnest appeal to Your Excellencies at UNHCR and WHO, with copies to concerned UN organs and countries hosting Eritrean refugees, on top of them Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, Israel and Libya, in order to draw the attention of the international humanitarian community to the plight of Eritreans in many countries of the world.

We are deeply concerned, Sirs, that the pandemic caused by COVID-19 has now reached our ill prepared country and the countries in the region that provide shelter to most of the Eritrean refugees in one of world's most conflict ridden and sensitive regions. We are worried that, given the situation where many of our people lack access to hand washing facilities and detergents - the most effective preventive treatment, the pandemic would leave an even bigger number of people killed and cause more societal disruption than in any other country in the world. For that we need the timely and immediate attention and support of the international community led by appropriate initiatives from your esteemed organizations, the UNHCR and WHO.

We believe you are well aware of the problems in Eritrea where young people flee the country in thousands leaving the old and vulnerable at home. Local community structures, charities and long-established religious support institutions and other societal safety networks have been systematically demolished and exist no more. Most of the UN humanitarian organizations and INGOs have not been active in Eritrea for decades.

Excellencies,

The general public in today's Eritrea is left pauperized and helpless. The reported over 300 dungeons in the country where thousands of political prisoners languish under inhuman conditions are congested and poorly equipped to handle the current pandemic. Divisions of the Eritrea's huge army of conscripts and "national service" forced-labor workers living in spartan and overcrowded camps will be an easy prey to the pandemic.

On the other hand, Eritrean refugees in camps and urban concentrations in Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen and Israel are likely to be ravaged by this pandemic without an effective intervention of international humanitarian actors. Eritrean refugees in reception camps and temporary shelters in many countries, including in many European countries, shall be exposed to danger unless the host countries are advised and supported by concerned bodies, especially the UNHCR and WHO.

We, therefore, strongly appeal for your most urgent measures that could prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Eritrea, and in particular in the refugee camps and urban concentration of Eritreans in several countries, especially in Africa. Needless to say, the topmost priorities of action will include:

- Making sure that health clinics in those areas have access to adequate supply of water, detergents, disinfection liquids, gloves, masks and napkins;
- Looking to it that local health centers and agencies have check-up facilities for timely identification of persons infected with the vicious corona virus;
- The international humanitarian community to do what it takes to help people inside Eritrea from the scourges of this pandemic.

Dear Sirs,

We very much feel that you understand the essence of this modest call to you to seriously look at the precarious situation of the estimated four million Eritreans at home and about two million Eritreans in the diaspora who are exposed to the looming danger facing our world today.

Sincerely yours,

(Signatories) Chairpersons of

1. Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change (ENCDC)
2. Eritrean National Front (ENF)
3. Eritrean People's Democratic Party (EPDP)
4. Organization Unity for Democratic Change (UDC)
5. United Eritreans for Justice (UEJ)
6. Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO)