

**Remarks by Ambassador Sophia T/Mariam at the Interactive
with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Eritrea on 25
October 2023**



Eritrea is committed to the promotion and protection of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. Eritrea reiterates that human rights are indivisible and mutually reinforcing, and rejects cherry-picking approach and politicization of human rights, in contradiction with the principles of non-selectivity, sovereignty and constructive cooperation among States.

The original Resolution against Eritrea was sponsored by African countries presumably to imbue it an African “face”. For over a decade, the politicized unjust and unfair country specific approach masked as an “African Initiative”, continued. With time, however, many Member States had come to realize the hollowness of the charges leveled against Eritrea. It is worth mentioning that this latest resolution to renew the mandate did not garner the support of a single African State.

The resolutions that called for renewal and extension of the SRs mandate were not supported by a single African country. The Western countries who were the original architects of the scheme, now carry the annual assault on their own. The charade has been unmasked.

Eritrea's stance remains the same. It did not recognize the ill gotten politically motivated mandate back then, and does not do so today. Eritrea has been targeted through politically-motivated, country specific, resolutions and mechanisms of the HRC for over a decade.

Mr. Chair,

The Committee is once again presented with a flawed report by the Special Rapporteur (SR) on Eritrea. The report repeats many of the same unsubstantiated allegations that have characterized the many reports since 2012. The underlying purpose and objectives of these productions were, and remain, the vilification, isolation and destabilization of the country for wider political aims. The Special Rapporteur's Report has not changed.

The latest report is yet another collection of unsubstantiated allegations and hearsay, the usual vitriol repeated each year, and the deplorable witch-hunting campaign against Eritrea continues. These reports continue to ignore key contextual factors and deliberately downplayed Eritrea's earnest progress and achievements.



Human Rights underpins Eritrea's development and nation-building strategy. Ensuring social justice and the dignity and welfare of all citizens is the foundation of all policies and laws in Eritrea, as enshrined in the National Charter, national policies and regulations. The country remains vigilant and steadfast in its efforts to implement all civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights for all its citizens.

Human Rights are the bedrock of social justice, the very principle that underpins Eritrea's development and nation building strategy. Eritrea continues to make significant strides in improving educational and health services, agricultural productivity, reducing poverty, and developing its economic and social infrastructures.

Mr. Chair,

As with previous SR reports on Eritrea, the lack of reliable data, and heavy dependence on biased sources, non-verifiable approach, and ignorance of Eritrea's ground realities renders the methodology and the essence of the allegations tenuous and unacceptable. UN General Assembly Resolution 75/151 emphasizes that the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality, and objectivity apply for all bodies in the UN system, including "special rapporteurs and representatives, independent experts and working groups" when carrying out their mandates. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea is marred by extreme bias, selectivity, and partiality. Allow me to present one egregious example.

The Rapporteur maliciously reported that Somali soldiers training in Somalia were deployed by Eritrea in the conflict in Ethiopia. This lie, a regurgitation of unverified reports by Eritrea's detractors, caused unnecessary anxiety amongst the Somali people. The Government of Somalia dispelled the lie, but this Rapporteur did not retract the lie.

The mendacious allegations of the Special Rapporteur are in contravention of the Code of Conduct for Special Procedure Mandate-holders of the HRC. In particular, the SR's conduct is in breach of **Article 6 (a) on Prerogatives**, which stipulates: "*The mandate holders must establish facts, based on objective, reliable information emanating from relevant, credible sources that they have duly cross-checked to the best extent possible*". The SR has also violated the provisions of **Article 8 (a) on Source of Information** and failed to be guided by "*the principles of discretion, transparency, impartiality and even-handedness*".

Eritrea called on the SR to accept responsibility for submitting a fallacious report to the HRC in violation of “*the principles of accountability.... in which the principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity are compromised*”.

The indelible fact is, the SR has failed in his duties to collect objective and reliable information from a wide range of primary and secondary sources. The same can be said of his allegations today.

Eritrea’s exemplary customs and traditions of ethnic and religious respect and tolerance has been grossly misrepresented by the SR in his latest report. It is shameful that the SR chose to insert infounded insinuations to try to create a wedge between the various ethnic groups in Eritrea.

The Rapporteur went to great lengths to malign the Eritrean National Service Program. Allow me to state for the record the true essence of Eritrea’s very successful National Service Program.

National Service was introduced immediately after Independence as the government embarked on a massive demobilization programme at the time. Eritrea’s National Service was established through Proclamation No. 82 of 1995 with a commitment to human dignity, empowering new generations critical to nation-building and development. It promotes national unity and citizenship.

By law, every Eritrean, 18yrs of age and above, is required to complete National Service, which includes 6 months of training and education and 12 months of participation in development activities. In times of peace, National Service members do not have any other obligations once they fulfill their duty of service for 18 months. They remain part of the reserve army eligible for recall if and when they are needed. A significant number of national service members have been integrated into the new remuneration system which improved the salary scale of the civil service. National Service in Eritrea preserves Eritrea’s values and principles, maintains the unity of our people, promotes ethnic and religious tolerance and respect, and most importantly, promotes stability and security of our young nation.

Mr. Chair,

Against the backdrop of these unacceptable realities and in view of deplorable practices of maligning Eritrea on the basis of false accusations often prepared in cahoots with Eritrea's arch-enemies, Eritrea once again requests once again for:

- Full retraction of the false Report (A/HRC/47/21) submitted by the SR to the UNHRC Session
- Application of appropriate punitive measures, including dismissal, of the SR for dereliction of duty;
- And the termination of this unwarranted tool of harassment

We just celebrated the UN's 78th Anniversary and the 75th Anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights, but our world remains unjust and unequal, and the politicization of human rights only further aggravates the dire state of current affairs.

The need to establish a unity of thinking, practice, and organization against politicization that endangers the importance of the HRC as a body that emerged as a result of the failed experience of its predecessor, is still of critical importance for consideration.

Our world needs a sound system that truly works for the improvement of human rights for all. Eritrea remains committed to the UN Human Rights Council and has worked tirelessly with all members on the Council to redeem the Council's eroding credibility, efficacy and integrity.

I thank you

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