



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

Eritrea

ERI/01 - Ogbe Abraha
ERI/02 - Aster Fissehatsion
ERI/03 - Berhane Gebregziabeher
ERI/04 - Beraki Gebreselassie
ERI/05 - Hamad Hamid Hamad
ERI/06 - Saleh Kekiya
ERI/07 - Germano Nati
ERI/08 - Estifanos Seyoum
ERI/09 - Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo
ERI/10 - Petros Solomon
ERI/11 - Haile Woldetensae

*Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 197th session
(Geneva, 21 October 2015)*

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

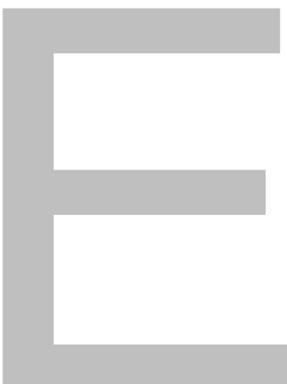
Referring to the case of the above-mentioned parliamentarians, former members of Eritrea's National Assembly, and to the resolution adopted at its 193rd session (October 2013),

Recalling the following:

- The parliamentarians concerned (often referred to as the "G11") were arrested on 18 September 2001, after publishing an open letter calling for democratic reform, and have been held incommunicado ever since, accused of conspiracy and attempting to overthrow the legitimate government, without ever being formally charged or tried;
- In November 2003, upon examination of a complaint concerning their situation, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights found that the State of Eritrea had violated Articles 2, 6, 7(1) and 9(2) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which address the right to liberty and security of person, the right to a fair trial and the right to freedom of expression, and urged the State of Eritrea to order the immediate release of the former parliamentarians and to pay them compensation; the Eritrean authorities have rejected that decision,

Recalling that, according to non-governmental sources, on 3 April 2010 Mr. Eyob Bahta Habtemariam, a former prison guard who fled Eritrea, stated in an interview with Radio Wegahta that only two of the 11 former parliamentarians were still alive, namely Mr. Petros Solomon and Mr. Haile Woldetensae, the others having died between 2001 and now, and that he provided details in this respect,

Recalling that this information is unconfirmed and that, according to one of the sources, no concrete evidence exists to support the prison guard's statements; *recalling also* that the European Commission regularly raises the case of the former parliamentarians concerned with the Eritrean authorities, particularly in the framework of political dialogue, but that the Eritrean side refused to discuss individual cases during the September 2010 session of political dialogue on human rights,



Recalling resolution 23/21 of the United Nations Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, which calls upon the Government of Eritrea, without delay, to account for and release all political prisoners, including members of the G11; that resolution being adopted by the Council on 25 June 2013 upon presentation of the first report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, wherein the Special Rapporteur highlights the gravity of the human rights situation in Eritrea, refers to the 11 members of parliament arrested in 2001 as being among the most prominent cases of enforced disappearances and incommunicado detentions; states that the Government has refused to provide any information on their fate and points out that “The basic tenets of the rule of law are not respected in Eritrea owing to a centralized system of Government where decision-making powers are concentrated in the hands of the President and his close collaborators”; that “The separation of powers among the various arms of the State is inexistent”, “Legislative functions accorded to the National Assembly by the unimplemented Constitution have been assumed entirely by the Government”, “The National Assembly has not been convened since 2002” and “the court system is weak and prone to interference”,

Considering that, in June 2014, the Human Rights Council decided to establish a Commission of Inquiry to conduct in-depth investigations into the human rights situation in Eritrea; the complainants and other relatives of the G11 were able to submit written submissions and to be heard by the Commission (which conducted 550 confidential interviews overall with witnesses and received 160 written submissions); the Commission presented its final report in June 2015 and concluded that systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been, and continue to be, committed in Eritrea under the authority of the Government, some of which may constitute crimes against humanity; the Commission has highlighted the case of the G11 (referred to as G-15) as follows: “In the area of freedom of expression, the Government systematically silences anyone who is perceived as protesting against, questioning or expressing criticism of the Government and its policies, even when such statements are genuine and legitimate in the context of a democratic public debate. The most visible sign of such repression was the purge in 2001 of the G-15 reform group and of its supposed supporters, who were in their majority either killed or disappeared”; the Commission called for their immediate and unconditional release,

Considering that the Eritrean authorities never granted access to Eritrea to the Commission of Inquiry; fully denied the content of the report, denouncing manipulations orchestrated by subversive groups to discredit Eritrea; and claimed that Eritrea was taking concrete steps to improve the human rights situation and that the bleak human rights narrative portrayed by the Commission ignored this reality and constituted a huge travesty of justice,

Further considering that, in the resolution adopted on 30 June 2015, the Human Rights Council welcomed the report of the Commission of Inquiry and strongly condemned the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations committed by the Government of Eritrea in a climate of generalized impunity and urged the Government to take immediate and concrete steps to implement recommendations made by the Commission in order to address the dire situation of human rights in the country,

Taking into account that the lives of relatives of the G11 prisoners have been deeply affected by this situation, that their children have all fled Eritrea and grown up without their parents and that families continue to demand to know the truth about the fate of their loved ones,

1. *Is deeply concerned* at the conclusions of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on human rights in Eritrea, as they not only confirm its own findings with regard to the G11 prisoners, but also give a comprehensive account of the horrendous backdrop of repression against which those conclusions have to be considered;
2. *Deplores once more* the Eritrean authorities’ continued contempt for the most basic human rights of 11 former parliamentarians by keeping them incommunicado for the last 14 years for exercising their right to freedom of expression by calling for democratic reform;
3. *Continues to be appalled* by the persistent silence of the authorities, all the more so in light of the uncorroborated information that only two of the 11 former parliamentarians may still be alive and the fact of the continued uncertainty about the fate of the former parliamentarians leaves their families in absolute agony;

4. *Once more urges* the Eritrean authorities to provide information on the fate of the G11 prisoners and to release them forthwith;
5. *Can but consider* that the international community, including the global parliamentary community, cannot remain silent in the face of these violations; and *renews its invitation* to all IPU members to exert insistent pressure on the Eritrean authorities for the release of the persons concerned, including by making representations to the diplomatic missions of Eritrea in their countries and raising the case publicly; *as well as its appeal* to the African Union, the Pan-African Parliament, the European Union and the European Parliament to continue doing everything in their power to achieve this objective;
6. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the Eritrean authorities, to the complainants, to the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea and to the United Nations Commission of Inquiry, as well as to any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information, and to continue making every effort to draw international attention to this case;
7. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.