



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 20 September 2007
12978/1/07 REV 1 (Presse 201)
P 074/07

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on political prisoners in Eritrea

The European Union remains extremely concerned with the situation of political prisoners in Eritrea and would like to reiterate the main lines of the Declaration issued on the 18th September 2006 as, so far, the situation has not seen any positive developments.

On 18 September 2001 a group of eleven prominent members of Parliament and of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, the only political party in Eritrea, was arrested. A few days later, 10 independent journalists were also arrested. Since then, other individuals have been arrested and detained incommunicado, with no charges and with their right to a due process suspended.

Despite repeated appeals by the International Community, including the EU, and several Governmental and non-governmental Human Rights bodies, these prisoners remain in detention, without having been charged with any offence, and without access to a free and fair trial. None has been brought before a magistrate, although Eritrean laws require this to be done within 48 hours.

P R E S S

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The European Union is deeply concerned about these severe violations of basic human rights and urges the Government of the State of Eritrea to disclose evidence of their place of detention, detention conditions and health status. The European Union also urges the Government of the State of Eritrea to either bring charges against those detained and instruct a due and open process with legal representation or to unconditionally release them.

Furthermore, the EU urges the Government of the State of Eritrea to allow the families, legal representatives and medical doctors of their choice to have access to the prisoners. The Eritrean authorities should ensure that the treatment of these prisoners while in custody adheres to all the conditions set out in Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners, adopted by the UN General Assembly Resolution 45/111 of 14 December 1990.

As far as the EU is concerned, the welfare of the detainees is an important issue. The EU therefore would like to assess their situation and reiterates the request to allow the EU Heads of Mission in Asmara to visit those concerned.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.