



PRESS RELEASE

Date: 10 April 2026

Continued grave and systematic human rights violations, forced displacement, torture, and arbitrary arrests against the Red Sea Afar in Eritrea

We, the RED SEA AFAR DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION, hereby express our appreciation for the attention of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to the violations and forms of persecution endured by the Red Sea Afar people in Eritrea, particularly its consideration of the complaint submitted by our organization against the Eritrean regime concerning the systematic ethnic persecution taking place in the Red Sea region.

Since 1993, the Afar people in Eritrea have been subjected, without interruption, to deliberate and systematic policies aimed at depriving them of their fundamental rights and excluding them from exercising their economic activities on land and at sea, particularly fishing and maritime trade, which have historically constituted the backbone of their livelihood and economic survival.

Afar communities have also faced repeated and systematic forced evictions from their lands, villages, and coastal areas, alongside denial of access to ports and islands extending from Massawa to Ras Dumer, over a distance exceeding 700 kilometers—territories that historically formed a vital economic lifeline for generations.

These coercive policies have resulted in widespread economic and social destruction, directly affecting hundreds of thousands of Afar civilians and significantly deepening their humanitarian suffering.

The Eritrean regime continues to deny these crimes and rejects the existence of any ethnic persecution. Such denial is categorically rejected, as substantial evidence, testimonies, and field documentation confirm the existence of a systematic campaign targeting the Afar people, aimed at eroding their cultural, economic, and even existential identity.

Among the most serious violations is the systematic deprivation of their traditional maritime activities, particularly fishing, which constitutes an essential part of their heritage and a primary means of survival for thousands of years. ²

Furthermore, the Afar face severe restrictions on access to marine resources, in addition to enforced conscription, arbitrary detention, killings, and the deliberate spread of fear, which has forced large numbers into displacement and exile in neighboring countries, including camps such as Aseita and Barahile, as well as communities in Yemen, Djibouti, and southern Saudi Arabia.

The Afar people continue to endure multiple forms of human rights violations, including systematic restrictions on their daily lives and denial of basic economic and social rights. They also face ongoing risks of arbitrary arrest and extrajudicial killing since the current regime came to power in Asmara, having been deprived of freedom and security for over three decades.

The regime justifies these violations through false allegations or vague security claims, while the reality clearly demonstrates that the underlying cause is the Afar people's legitimate demand for their fundamental rights.

Moreover, many Afar are systematically deprived of full citizenship rights and denied access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and development, further entrenching structural marginalization and exclusion.

In light of the statement delivered by the Eritrean Foreign Minister at the Geneva Conference (9–10 April 2026), which attributes the deterioration of human rights conditions to unilateral sanctions, it is evident that this narrative reflects a politically selective interpretation of reality and the instrumentalization of human rights discourse to justify internal policies. It systematically ignores well-documented internal violations against the Eritrean population in general, and in particular against the Red Sea Afar people. Accordingly, this narrative lacks both political and moral credibility due to the stark contradiction between external claims and internal realities.

Accordingly, we emphasize the following:

We call upon international and regional human rights organizations to take urgent measures to pressure the Eritrean government to end these violations.

We urge the international community to support the Afar people in their legitimate struggle to obtain their fundamental rights.

We call on governments and relevant authorities to guarantee the rights of the Afar people and enable them to exercise their economic and social activities without arbitrary restrictions.

We demand the establishment of an independent international investigation into the systematic violations committed against the Red Sea Afar people and the determination of legal accountability.

We call for the full recognition of citizenship rights for the Afar people without discrimination or exclusion.

We demand the immediate cessation of forced displacement, arbitrary detention, and forced conscription targeting Afar communities.

We call for unhindered access to humanitarian aid and essential services in affected areas.

We urge that the file of human rights violations against the Red Sea Afar be placed under continuous monitoring by relevant United Nations human rights mechanisms.

In conclusion, we reaffirm the urgent need to stand with the Afar people in their ongoing plight and to defend their rights guaranteed under international law. The Eritrean regime must bear full responsibility for its actions against its Afar citizens.

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