



Eritrean Government Arrests Dozens of Eritrean

13 January 2020

On the 28th November 2019, more than 21 Eritreans from the towns of Mendefera, Adi- Quala and nearby villages in the southern region, were rounded up from their businesses, work places and homes by the government security personnel and detained. The reasons for their arrest are unknown. They have not been released, and their whereabouts are also unknown; in effect, they are the victims of enforced disappearance.

With regard to these recent events, it is relevant to recall that, in 1994 and 1995, more than 150 Eritrean Muslims were rounded up from their work places and homes and disappeared. It is also worth noting that on the 20th October 2017, government moves to seize and close the Al Diaa Islamic School in the Akria district in the capital were followed by the arrest of the Chair of school's board of directors, Sheikh Hajji Musa Mohamed Nur. He believed to have passed away in detention on March 1st 2018, after he was illegally detained for four months. Following his arrest, there was a student demonstration in the streets of the capital city, was met with violent gunfire by soldiers. It is believed many of those arrested then are still being kept in prisons with no access to a lawyer or visits from family. During the extended Al Diaa school protests in October 2017, Hajji Ibrahim Younus was also arrested and imprisoned; he was never charged with any offences, and died whilst still in detention on 30th January 2019.

Observers still have no clear idea as to the motives for the arrest and disappearance of the following persons on the 28th of November 2019:

From the town of Mendefera and surrounding villages

1. Nesredin Ahmed, owner of Mendefera Plastic Bottle Factory;
2. Beyan Abdela, owner of one of the biggest bakeries in Mendefera;
3. Mahmoud Mantay, worked at the government's regional Finance office
(His brother was also arrested years back & disappeared without trace);
4. Abdelkadir Juhar, Chair of Mendefera Association of Fruit & Vegetable vendors;
5. Hamed Imam, Store keeper at Mendefera Association of Fruit & Vegetable Vendors;
6. Semir Safi, a youth;
7. Adem Eshete;
8. Berhanu Siraj and his brother, from the village of Adi-Gedesho, Meraguz;
9. Mohammed Nur Siraj, from the village of Adi-Gedesho, Meraguz.

From the town of Adi Quala and surrounding villages

1. Sheik Abdella, Imam at the mosque in Adi Quala, aged 70;
2. Abdelhafiz Mohammed, aged 65;
3. Sheik Aramosh (nickname), aged 80;
4. Jemal Abdella Feli, aged 60, owner of a tailor shop;
5. Abdusemed Mohomednur, aged 45, owner of a tailor shop and religious teacher;
6. Aman Seid Aman, aged 26;
7. Yasin Seid Aman, aged 23;
8. Seid Abdu Mohammedtehar, teacher, aged 27;
9. Ahmed Mohammed (age unknown);
10. Rizkey Adem, aged 33, was taken with his brother-in-law and a third person from the village of Adi Wederki, around Adi Quala.

Any independence of thought or assertion of the right to religious freedom in Eritrea is swiftly followed by arrests, whether the faith be Christian or Muslim. It appears that the governing regime is currently asserting its authority by brute force over religious schools and medical facilities, often taking over the premises and evicting staff. Recent forcible expropriation of Catholic Medical Clinics has been part of this process.

Elizabeth Chyrum, Director of Human Rights Concern-Eritrea, commented, “Disturbing evidence keeps emerging from Eritrea that government persecution of citizens for their religion, and activities connected with it, is extending far and wide, whatever the faith, be it Christianity or Islam. Strict government control over religious activities which benefit the poor and needy seems to be ever more rigorously asserted. Furthermore, arrests as part of this appear to be outside the legal system; victims have no charges made against them, but disappear into a lawless underworld where they may be tortured and abused. National governments and the international communities should be objecting strongly to these dangerous enforced disappearances of believers and raising the issue urgently at the United Nations, African Commission and in other international forums!”

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