



Timeline

300-600 - The Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum includes modern day Eritrea.

1500s - Eritrea is annexed by the Ottoman Empire.

1890 - Italy colonizes Eritrea.

1941 - Eritrea is occupied by the British.

1949 - Eritrea is administered as a United Nations trust territory by the British.

1952 - UN formally makes Eritrea a federal state under Ethiopia, yet Eritrean government retains possession of domestic legislative, executive and judicial powers.

1958 - The guerrilla resistance group Eritrean Liberation Front is formed in opposition to Ethiopian rule.

1962 - Ethiopia annexes and turns Eritrea into a province, sparking a 30-year war for independence.

1970 - Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) forms after splitting from the Eritrean Liberation Front.

1974 - Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie is deposed in a coup d'état.

1977-78 - Ethiopian military forces are able to reverse Eritrean guerrilla advances with aid from Soviet advisers and Cuban troops.

1991 - After significant advances by EPLF, a referendum on Eritrean independence backed by Ethiopia is set up by the UN.

1993 - After an almost unanimous vote, Eritrea gains independence and becomes a member of the UN.

1998-2000 - 70,000 people are killed in an Eritrean and Ethiopian war that began over border disputes.

2000 - An Eritrean and Ethiopian peace agreement includes a ceasefire and troop withdrawals monitored by UN peacekeepers.

2001 - Interim president, Isaias Afewerki defers elections indefinitely, and cracks down on political challengers, the media and various religious groups. Private media is abolished. 15 former Eritrean leading figures who fought for the nation's independence are arrested without formal charges after writing an open letter calling for "democratic dialogue" and "for the rule of law and for justice".

2002 - Eritrea's National Assembly denies the formation of any new political parties. The Afewerki government declares that only four religious organizations are allowed to function in Eritrea: the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, Sunnite Islam and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

2005 - After the worst drought in decades, the World Food Program widens operations to aid over 840,000 people. UN helicopters are banned from operating in Eritrean airspace. The UN Security Council threatens sanctions against Eritrea and Ethiopia for failure to implement the 2000 peace plan. Eritrea expels European, North American, and Russian peacekeepers. Further government crackdowns include more arrests of leaders and followers of "unregistered" religious groups. Eritrea is found to have broken international law when it attacked Ethiopia in 1998.

2006 - Five UN staff members are accused of spying and expelled. UN calls Eritrean troop movement into the buffer zone near the Ethiopian border a major ceasefire violation. UN accuses seven nations, including Eritrea of aiding the rival Islamist administration in Somalia

including Al-Shabaab while Ethiopia aids the interim government.

2007 - Government bans female circumcision. According to a US official, the US considers labeling Eritrea as a state sponsor of terrorism.

2007 - 2010 - Eritrea and Djibouti are involved in border disputes over the Ras Doumeira area.

2008 - Eritrea calls for UN to terminate its peacekeeping mission, which is unanimously agreed upon by the UN Security Council.

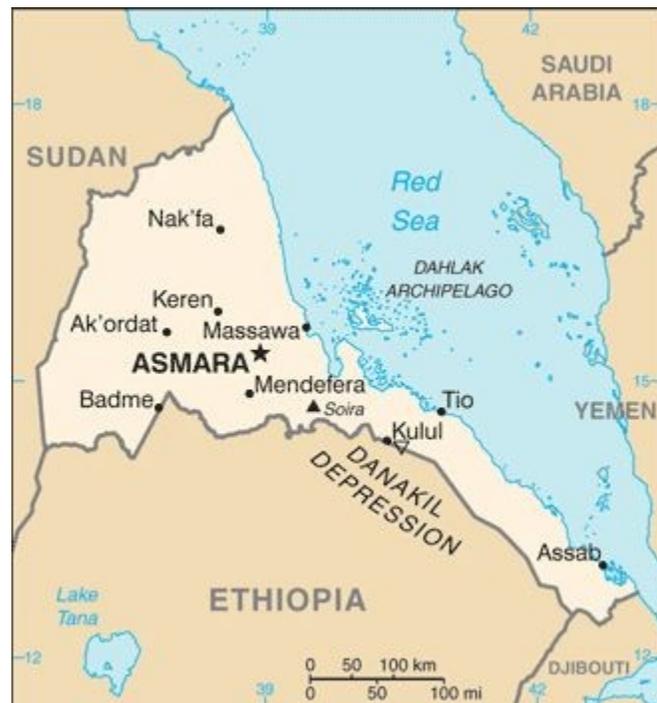
2009 - Human Rights Watch accuses Eritrean government of making the country a "giant prison" due to a lack of individual freedom and the high level of incarceration rates. UN sanctions are imposed on Eritrea for allegedly supporting Islamist insurgents in Somalia.

2010 - Opposition groups working to topple the government of Eritrea claim military successes and agree to the establishment of a parliament in exile. Wikileaks reveals US diplomatic papers which report Eritreans fleeing in large numbers, the economy in shambles, and prisons overflowing.

2011 - Ethiopia publicly supports rebels fighting to topple President Afewerki. Eritrea expels all remaining foreign NGO aid groups except for a small UN aid mission after Afewerki accused them of a "pathological compulsion for espionage". Eritrea cancels EU assistance program.

2012 - Eritrea denies entry of a Special Rapporteur on human rights appointed by the UN Human Rights Council. An increase in arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses adds to the growing number of adherents in prison.

2013 - Dissident groups take over the Information Ministry building and demand the release of political prisoners. Thousands are fleeing brutal repression according to a UN human rights report. UN reports some Eritrean military officials found to be participating in human trafficking, as well as illegal weapons smuggling. In June, the report of the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea states the country is in need of "fundamental reform" due to a "blatant disrespect for human rights".



Torture Methods

RESTRICTIONS on freedom of movement, expression, assembly, association and religion have created a climate of intense fear. Questioning authority or criticizing the government result in imprisonment, torture and death. Eritreans are not allowed to gather in groups of seven or more unrelated people. NGOs are prohibited and political organizations are only allowed by the ruling party.

FORCED LABOR and **CONSCRIPTION** force many Eritreans including children into a life of indentured servitude. The government's use of threats of prison, torture, and harm to family members lead many Eritreans to join the military or work indefinitely. Mandatory National Service was implemented in 1994 with the intent to train citizens to defend the nation and for public works. However, pay, health care, housing and treatment is often insufficient and inhumane. Sexual abuse from commanding officers has been reported by many female conscripts. Military officers have also been accused of corruption, smuggling, and using the conscripts as virtual slaves – forcing them to work in dangerous conditions and profiting from contracts without paying for labor.

ARBITRARY DETENTION of national service members and citizens without trial or due process results in victims being detained for weeks, months, or years, often without explanation.

BEATINGS by prison guards are often carried out with sticks, whips, electric wire, and bodily force resulting in vomiting blood and severe internal/external injury. Female prisoners are often beaten for turning down sexual advances.

ELECTRIC SHOCK has been reported to have taken place in government run prisons.

BURNS are caused by dripping burning plastic over victims tied bodies.

SEXUAL ABUSE/HARASSMENT have been reported by female prisoners. Military conscripts are often subjected to sexual harassment and abuse, which include rape and sexual slavery.

TYING, HANGINGS, and **STRESS POSITIONS** are often used to torture victims by binding them in ropes in various painful positions, and leaving them outside in the sun for hours and days. The helicopter is a common method where the victims are hung by their elbows and feet and left hanging face down. Another common technique is to cut off circulation in the hands by tightening handcuffs so that the pain becomes unbearable.

DEATHS IN PRISON occur frequently and result from disease, insufficient food, and torture. Conditions in prisons violate international law – with prisoners being kept in metal shipping containers (and exposed to in-tense temperatures), in underground secret unlit prisons, or left outside in torturous positions for days and nights. Food is often inedible and poor sanitation breeds disease.

Current Situation

Eritreans are routinely subjected to torture, arrest, and forced and indefinite labor and military service. Religious and political freedom are severely restricted. Thousands of Eritreans flee the country each month in order to escape indefinite national servitude.

GOVERNMENT: After gaining independence in 1993, President Afewerki has maintained power. Afewerki was the EPLF's leader during the fight for independence from Ethiopia, and was selected by the Transitional National Assembly to be president until elections were held. Afewerki has ruled Eritrea for the last 20 years by postponing elections indefinitely. The government's attempts to control society have led to a pervasive sense of fear throughout the population. All media is controlled by the government, and internet service is kept under government surveillance. Alternative political organizations are banned and any criticism of the government is dealt with harshly.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING, KIDNAPPING and forced organ removal often occur after escaping government control. Family members are often left to pay inordinate sums of money for the release of the victims. Eritrean officials are reported to be facilitating escapes in order to earn money. A July 2013 report of the UN Somalia and Eritrean Monitoring Group concluded that Eritrean officials and senior military officials were in charge of weapons smuggling and human trafficking and are often the recipients of ransom payments.

DETAINMENT AND TORTURE: It is difficult to determine exactly how widespread torture is in Eritrea because the government is very secretive. They have secret prisons and detention centers, do not enact a system of due process, completely control public information, and refuse to admit international monitoring groups. People are often arrested and detained without charges or access to attorneys.

TAXES LEVIED ON DIASPORA: The two percent taxation of Eritrean citizens living abroad in Canada, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and in other countries with a significant Eritrean population continues despite a Security Council resolution condemning the Diaspora tax in 2011. However, even in countries where formal collections have ceased, an underground network of taxation continues. The refusal or inability to pay the tax results in the denial of passports and visas, the inability to open businesses or to invest in Eritrea or to transfer money to relatives.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS: There has been no prosecution of torture perpetrators, and they continue to practice with few limitations. Freedom House's 2012 report on Eritrea reported that arrests and "arbitrary detention" are common practices of eliminating civil society, and "any independent action by citizens".