



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME  
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

**Egypt : Deportation of 1400 Eritrean asylum seekers**  
- Serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment -

Copenhagen, 17 June 2008

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) totally repudiates the decision of Egyptian authorities to forcibly return not less than 1400 Eritrean asylum seekers to their country of origin. According to information received by Amnesty International, nearly 690 asylum seekers have thereby already been deported, since the 11 June 2008. The remainder are awaiting deportation, in the South of Aswan.

At first, the Egyptian authorities refused to grant access to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to these asylum seekers. However, on 15 June, Egyptian authorities allegedly announced that the UN agency could, from then on, access asylum seekers still held in detention, in order to assess their claims.

The EMHRN recalls the Guidelines published by the UNHCR in which the agency opposed the forcible return of asylum seekers (even rejected ones) to Eritrea on the grounds of evidence of serious violations of human rights in Eritrea. The EMHRN is therefore highly concerned by the fact that the persons thereby returned, and more particularly those accused of fleeing the Eritrean military service, are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment in Eritrea.

« Most of these asylum seekers are likely to be put into solitary confinement, tortured and arbitrarily detained, in inhumane conditions, for weeks or even for years » **Kamel Jendoubi, President of the EMHRN, deplored.** « In deporting these persons, the Egyptian authorities violate the principles of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and of the UN Convention against Torture » he added.

**The EMHRN therefore urges the Egyptian authorities to immediately refrain from undertaking any forcible return of asylum seekers to Eritrea.**

**The EMHRN further urges the Egyptian authorities to ensure that civil society organisations, along with UNHCR, can have free access to all Eritreans still held in detention; It also urges that all recognised refugees be immediately released.**

**The EMHRN recalls that Egypt is bound to the European Union by an Association Agreement which provides in Article 2 that the respect of human rights constitutes an essential element of the cooperation between the two parties. The EMHRN therefore urges the Commission and the Council , in line with the EU Guidelines to combat torture, to take any necessary step to make sure that Eritrean asylum seekers are not subject to any ill-treatment or torture.**