

## PRESS RELEASE

Today, Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2004, a number of Eritreans demonstrated in Geneva, London and Stockholm to highlight the deteriorating human rights violations in Eritrea and the plight of Eritrean refugees.

The day of action consisted of demonstrations and the submissions of letters to the various governments.

### **Geneva:**

Eritreans demonstrated outside United Nations offices and delegates met representatives of two UN agencies, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR).

Over 150 Eritreans and friends of Eritrea participated in the demonstration. Members of the Eritrean Community from Switzerland, civil society members of NECS-Europe and members of the Eritrean opposition political organizations took part in the demonstration.

The demonstrations were:

- To appeal to the UNHCR and the international community on behalf of Eritrean Refugees in general and those in Libya and the Sudan in particular;
- To expose the Eritrean Government's massive human right violations to the international community and address the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The event was covered by the biggest News paper in Geneva called Tribune de Genève and journalists interviewed participants and leaders.

Two delegations composed of the civil societies and opposition organizations went to attend a meeting organised weeks in advance with the officials of the UNHCR and UNHCHR at the highest level. The meeting with UNHCR officials also discussed UNHCR's role in Malta before the Eritreans were deported.



## **London:**

Over 100 Eritreans demonstrated in White Hall (Opposite Downing Street) in order to highlight the human rights abuses that are currently taking place in Eritrea. Members of the various opposition groups also attended the demonstration. The demonstrators were calling for justice, democracy and for the release of all political and religious prisoners in Eritrea. They also called for the protection of all Eritrean asylum seekers. The demonstration was good spirited and reflected the diversity of the Eritrean society. Representatives of the organising committee then presented a letter to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (see below for details).



## **Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and United Kingdom**

Member societies of NECS-Europe presented a letter to the Foreign ministries of their respective countries. The letters were either presented in person or were sent to the offices of the Foreign Ministers. The campaign was designed to highlight the plight of Eritrean asylum seekers in the various European countries and in other countries and also to highlight the various human rights violations that are taking place in Eritrea today.

The letter urged the governments to take the lead by:

- Protecting newly arriving asylum seekers and giving them all the protection that they need;
- Not forcibly deporting any Eritreans back to Eritrea and by urging other governments, especially Libya, to stop forced deportation;
- Increasing the pressure on the Eritrean government by means of targeted travel bans on the high ranking government and party officials;
- Calling for the immediate release of all political and religious prisoners;
- Demanding the establishment of a genuine democratic government, which respects all the basic freedoms of worship, association and speech under the rule of law.

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