

## IN FOCUS

### USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO BOLSTER CALLS TO ACTION: THE CASE OF EGYPT AND ERITREA

Working in coordination with journalists and NGO partners in North Africa, we launched a multi-pronged awareness campaign about the plight of Eritrean refugees—including children and families—detained in Egypt's abysmal police detention centres.



Egypt has repeatedly deported refugees back to Eritrea despite the fact that many have disappeared upon arrival or suffered severe abuses or torture. Based on information from our partners, the GDP began in September posting messages on Twitter, publishing reports on our website, and reaching out to contacts in the international community to provide updates on the situation of Eritreans facing imminent deportation, which included photos we had received that were taken by detainees. We also tagged the Twitter accounts of Egyptian ministries as well as of various key actors, including regional offices of UNHCR and IOM. As the deportations continued unabated, we issued a series of urgent appeals—in November and December—to UN agencies, which complemented efforts in Egypt by civil society groups, foreign embassies, and UN agencies. In late

November, a group of UN Special Procedures, including the WGAD and the SR on the human rights of migrants, issued a letter to Egypt expressing their “grave concern” about the situation and underscoring the human rights violations of their arbitrary detention and forced deportation. Sadly, while the pressure campaign appears to have led to some delays in deportations, Egypt has pressed ahead with them—including deporting children—into 2022.

#### **UN experts deplore the expulsion by Egypt of Eritrean family seeking asylum in violation of the principle of non-refoulement**

GENEVA (19 November 2021) – UN human rights experts expressed grave concerns about the forced return of seven Eritrean asylum seekers today, including five children, from Egypt, despite the risk of enforced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment, and in violation of international human rights obligations.

"Individuals who have fled Eritrea and subsequently forcefully returned are considered as "traitors" and are often detained upon arrival to Eritrea, questioned, tortured, held in extremely punitive conditions and disappeared," the experts said.

The asylum seekers were part of a larger group of 18 Eritreans – all members of the same family – who entered Egypt through Sudan in October 2019, and who had been detained in Egypt since then. They were denied access to legal representation, to the asylum system and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"We are concerned that instead of being granted protection, this group of asylum seekers has been subjected to what would appear to be arbitrary detention for over two years, and forcibly repatriated to Eritrea without any individual assessment of the human rights violations they may be subjected to upon their return," the UN experts said.