

H.E. Mr. Tesfamicael Gerahtu
Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Ireland
Embassy of the State of Eritrea
96 White Lion Street
London N1 9PF
ENGLAND

26 May 2011

Your Excellency,

We have gathered today, representing thousands of Christians in the United Kingdom and Ireland, to mark the ninth anniversary of the forced closure of all churches in Eritrea, apart from those belonging to the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions.

Standing in solidarity with fellow Christians in Eritrea, we once again call for the granting of full religious freedom, and for the unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience in Eritrea.

We are dismayed at the continuing imprisonment without charge or trial of tens of thousands of Eritrean citizens, including several thousand Christians, detained solely on account of their faith. We are also deeply troubled at the increasing harassment of authorised churches, as illustrated by the illegal dismissal and indefinite detention of Abune Antonios, the canonically-ordained Orthodox patriarch, and the imprisonment, dismissal and forcible conscription of scores of Orthodox clergymen.

Credible reports continue to emerge from Eritrea of Christians being incarcerated in inhumane conditions, physically and mentally abused, and deprived of access to adequate food, potable water and medication. We are aware that over a dozen have died following mistreatment and/or denial of medical attention, and are particularly concerned at the continuing practice of requiring prisoners to sign statements renouncing their faith as a prerequisite to obtaining their freedom.

We assure you, once again, that these Christians pose no threat to the government in the peaceful practice of their faith, and can affirm that the teachings and principles of their faith encourage good citizenship and loyalty to one's country. We are confident that Christians in Eritrea are committed to strengthening the nation, and to contributing positively towards its development.

We urge you to convey to your government our appeal for swift and positive action to ensure the release of all prisoners of conscience, regardless of their creed, and to facilitate every human right outlined in Eritrea's commendable national constitution, including the right to religious freedom.

Please be assured of our continued prayers for the well-being and prosperity of your people and nation. We remain committed to the people of Eritrea, and seek to support the nation's progress towards a just and equitable future.

Yours respectfully,

Metropolitan Seraphim of Glastonbury