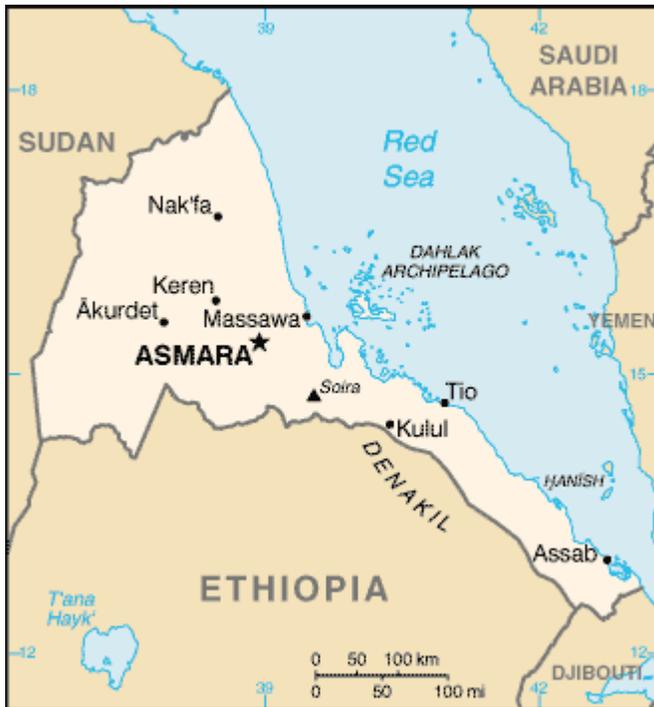


Eritrea



Population: 6,086,495 (July 2012 est.)
Population Growth Rate: 2.418% (2012 est.)
Birth Rate: 32.1 births/1,000 population (2012 est.)
Life Expectancy: total population: 62.86 years; male: 60.73 years; female: 65.06 years (2012 est.)
Literacy Rate: total population: 58.6%; male: 69.9%; female: 47.6% (2003 est.)
Net Migration Rate: 0 migrants/1,000 population (2012 est.)
Unemployment Rate: n/a
Gross Domestic Product per Capita: \$700 (2011 est.)
Religions: Muslim, Coptic Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant
Languages: Afar, Arabic, Tigre and Kunama, Tigrinya, other Cushitic languages
Ethnic Groups: Tigrinya 50%, Tigre and Kunama 40%, Afar 4%, Saho 3%, other 3%
Capital: Asmara¹

Trafficking Routes

Eritrea is a country of origin for trafficking in persons; citizens fleeing the country's compulsory military service are frequently captured by traffickers in areas such as the Sudan desert.² Eritrea's borders are not easily crossed by fleeing citizens,³ but nevertheless Ethiopia and Sudan are along the trafficking routes for smugglers transporting Eritreans to Egypt, Israel, or Europe.⁴ Eritrean refugees in Sudan, many of which are children, are especially vulnerable to trafficking.⁵ Eritrean citizens have also been trafficked through Egypt to the Sinai desert in a reportedly complex smuggling network.⁶

¹ CIA, THE WORLD FACTBOOK. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>

² Eritrea: People Traffickers Stalk Eritreans In Sudan Desert, ALL AFRICA, Jan. 14, 2012, available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201201161946.html>

³ Ben Rawlence, Eritrea: Slender land, giant prison, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, May 8, 2009, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/05/06/eritrea-slender-land-giant-prison>

⁴ Sudan: End Mass Summary Deportation of Eritreans, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, October 25, 2011, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/25/sudan-end-mass-summary-deportations-eritreans>

⁵ UN Agency seeks solution for long-term refugees in eastern Sudan, UN NEWS CENTRE, Jan. 13, 2012, available at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=40936&Cr=Sudan&Cr1=>

⁶ Egypt: End Traffickers' Abuse of Migrants, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, December 9, 2010, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/12/09/egypt-end-traffickers-abuse-migrants>

Factors That Contribute to the Trafficking Infrastructure

Eritrea's government is recognized as one of the world's most repressive regimes, marked by the arbitrary imprisonment of civilians and a mandatory labor and military service system. The national service system in Eritrea contributes to trafficking rates; service is compulsory, indefinite, and minimally compensated. As a result, significant numbers of Eritreans flee the country at a rate of approximately 3,000 a month.⁷ Corruption within the government is a factor as well: military officers have exploited citizens' desperation to escape service by charging high fees to smuggle individuals out of Eritrea.⁸

Severe gender inequality is a factor contributing to human trafficking in Eritrea. Gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, economic discrimination, and ignorance regarding women's rights perpetuate this disparity and thus facilitate human trafficking.⁹

Forms of Trafficking

Eritrean men, women, and children are victims of human trafficking. Many are smuggled from the country and held for ransom as a form of accruing profit. Eritrean citizens seeking asylum in Egypt, Sudan, and Israel are frequently tortured and abused.¹⁰ Women trafficked from Eritrea to these countries are sexually exploited, raped, and forced into slavery; men are required to work alongside traffickers and are forced into manual labor.¹¹ Eritrean children are frequently sold into prostitution and are reportedly recruited into the armed forces from suspiciously young ages.¹²

Government Responses

The Eritrean constitution prohibits slavery, servitude, and forced labor.¹³ Eritrea's criminal code punishes the practice of slavery in any form with imprisonment for five to twenty years and a fine of up to 20,000 dollars.¹⁴ Associations formed to engage in the slave trade are ordered to disband and must pay a fine of up to 50,000 dollars.¹⁵ Profiting by maintaining a brothel or by procuring prostitutes is punishable by imprisonment and a fine.¹⁶ Trafficking in

⁷ *Eritrea: Free Political Prisoners 10 Years On*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, September 22, 2011, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/09/22/eritrea-free-political-prisoners-10-years>

⁸ HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, ERITREA COUNTRY SUMMARY (2012), available at: http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/eritrea_2012.pdf

⁹ UN General Assembly, Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Women's Anti-Discrimination Committee Takes Up Report of Eritrea; Told Gender Equality Efforts Hindered By Stereotypes, Poverty, War*, UN WOM/1532 (Jan. 24, 2006), available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/wom1532.doc.htm>

¹⁰ HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH *supra* note 6.

¹¹ HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH *supra* note 3.

¹² UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 2007 FINDINGS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR –ERITREA, Aug. 27, 2008, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USDOL,,ERI,,48caa46fa,0.html#_ftn1230

¹³ The Constitution of Eritrea, May 23, 1997, art.16 (3), (Eritrea), available at: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_country=ERI&p_classification=01.01&p_origin=COUNTRY&p_sortby=SORTBY_COUNTRY

¹⁴ Penal Code of Ethiopia 1957, Eritrean Transnational Penal Code, Proclamation No. 158, July 23, 1957, art. 565, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49216a0a2.html>

¹⁵ *Id.* art. 567.

¹⁶ *Id.* art. 604.

women and children, selling them into prostitution, and/or keeping them in poor living conditions results in no more than five years of incarceration and a fine of no more than 10,000 dollars. A simultaneous offense of illegal restraint entails an intensified punishment.¹⁷ Charges of professional human trafficking result in graver consequences when the victim is a minor; a wife, child, relative, or ward of the offender; was coerced or intimidated into the situation; was intended to produce profits as a prostitute; was transported across borders; or was driven to commit suicide.¹⁸

Eritrean refugees seeking asylum abroad who have been sold into the trafficking industry that, should they be deported to Eritrea or attempt reentry, face charges of treason and consequences so severe that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines these punishments as “persecution.”¹⁹

Nongovernmental and International Organization Responses

Civil society organizations are prohibited in Eritrea with the exception of those controlled by President Isaias Afwerki. Political associations are only permitted if directed by Isaias’s party, the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice.²⁰ In 2006, three aid agencies from the United States, Ireland, and the United Kingdom were informed that they no longer met the qualifications for operational permits in Eritrea and asked to leave.²¹

UNICEF has engaged in educational and women’s rights efforts in Eritrea. The Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) targets young girls, typically ages 10-14, who may have missed the opportunity to attend school.²²

Multilateral Initiatives

In 2009, the European Union, the United States, the United Nations, and the African Union collaborated to secure development aid for Eritrea. The EU responded by providing a €122 million assistance package to Eritrea, although corruption within development initiatives on a domestic level remained a concern.²³

UNICEF, World Health Organization, United Nations Population Fund, and United Nations Development Programme worked with the state of Eritrea to improve women’s health in an initiative targeting the reduction of maternal mortality rate. The program has led to significant improvement in women’s healthcare and has increased awareness regarding maternal issues.²⁴

¹⁷ *Id.* art. 605.

¹⁸ *Id.* art. 606.

¹⁹ HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH *supra* note 4.

²⁰ HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH *supra* note 8.

²¹ *Drought-hit Eritrea expels NGOs*, BBC NEWS, March 22, 2006, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4834936.stm>

²² Dawit Azmera, *Complementary education programme puts children back to school in Eritrea*, UNICEF, Nov. 23, 2010, available at: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/eritrea_56989.html

²³ *Eritrea: Repression creating human rights crisis*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, April 16, 2009, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/04/16/eritrea-repression-creating-human-rights-crisis>

²⁴ *Reducing maternal death in Eritrea*, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, available at: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/successstories/eritrea_reducingmaternaldeath/

Eritrea suspended its membership in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a partnership among six eastern African countries focusing on development issues. In 2012, Eritrea applied to be reinstated in the association.²⁵

²⁵ Peter Clotey, *Eritrean President Discusses Path to Development*, VOICE OF AMERICA, May 18, 2012, available at: http://www.voanews.com/content/eritrean_president_discusses_path_to_development/727263.html