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المجلس الوطني الإرتري للتغيير الديمقراطي
المكتب التنفيذي

Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change
The Executive Office

Press Release

The exasperated Eritrean refugee crisis in search of safety and survival beyond national borders, this human tragedy and loss of life falls on the responsibility of the Eritrean Government. On the other hand, the indifference of the International community and the competent institutions so far have not shown due care to alleviate the plight of Eritrean refugees and their salvation.

The situation of Eritrean refugees in Djibouti, especially in the latter period, requires the mobilization of all stakeholders and takes responsibility to protect the lives of Eritrean refugees who are in desperate conditions. In this context, on the basis of our national responsibility towards the life of every citizen of our people, the Executive Office conscious of the dangerous experience that Eritrean refugees experience in Djibouti, despite insurmountable obstacles sought with stakeholders to find immediate solutions to their problems since time ahead.

In due time, more than five hundred Eritrean refugees due to the outbreak of the conflict between the two countries have crossed the border with Djibouti. Most of them are young people who were involved in compulsory service for an indefinite period and after that the system has them unwittingly involved in absurd wars and conflicts in the region.

Following the relocation elsewhere in several countries, the number of refugees in Djibouti at the present time does not exceed 225 people. We have noted with regret that there are some nineteen who were captured by the army of Djibouti during the conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti. The Authorities of Djibouti have expressed full willingness in accordance with the Geneva Convention, which regulates the issues of prisoners of war, their voluntary repatriation to Eritrea, which the Government of Eritrea has absolutely refused this request forwarded by the ICRC.

As for the remaining number most of them have crossed the border, forced to enter the territory of Djibouti. These young people trained to arms fall within the scope of prisoners of war for security reasons despite not caught in the act of war. This consideration by the Authorities of Djibouti was based on the fact that the two countries are still in a situation of unresolved prior conflict. This has by itself complicated the matter on the ground.

The position of the Authority of Djibouti was based on the following three proposals to serve as immediate solution:
1. Required: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), take all the necessary steps to take care of them through their transfer outside the territory of Djibouti.
2. Required: Their immediate relocation to third countries, and where this was possible that the receiving country take responsibility for their relocation.
3. In the absence of any other solution, the final option was to send them back to Eritrea.

In a positive development, the Government of Djibouti, days ago announced the laudable decision to relocate refugees from the prisons where they are kept as inmates to the refugee camps set up by UNHCR. Additionally, the Government will provide the legal proceedings related to their transfer so that henceforth UNHCR will assume full responsibility. The Executive Office extends to the Government and all the Authorities of Djibouti, appreciation and heartfelt gratitude for their sensible decision.

Faced with this difficult situation, the Executive Office has sought to contribute by all means to resolve the plight of our refugees. Previously, the Executive Office has sent several memorandums to

the President of the Republic of Djibouti urging him to do everything in his power to resolve the situation of the Eritrean refugees in Djibouti. We renew our appeal to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for an appropriate solution in cooperation with all parties concerned in the matter.

Executive Office of the Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change