



Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change
The Executive Office

**Statement of Executive office of the Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change
[E.N.C.D.C.] on first year remembrance of 3rd October Lampedusa Island disaster**

Last year, on this day of the 3rd of October, a tragic incident happened that wrecked the hearts of Eritrean people in an unprecedented way. Near the Lampedusa Island, of Italy, on 3rd October 2013 a boat carrying more than 500 refugees capsized and sank. Many of these refugees were Eritreans on their way from Libya to Italy. The cause for the incident, as reported later, was a fire that broke out on-board the boat. Besides the initial effort that rescued 155 refugees alive, no other further efforts were able to save the lives of the refugees. In fact the confirmed death toll rose to more than 360 in just about a week's time after the incident. The whole world and specially Italians and Europeans have expressed their sympathy.

The pain that this incident has caused us, and specially, to the families and loved ones of the victims is ever unforgettable. This is one of the situations that exemplify how our people are surviving an unthinkable agony with tremendous courage. Unfortunately, however, as we remember our last year victims from one of the most unforgettably horrific tragedies ever happened, yet our sorrows still remain as more of young Eritreans have not yet got any better option than risking their lives crossing the vast desert plains and stormy seas in search for a better life in Europe. And yes, they are still losing their lives in the process.

Even if it had a limited impact on the overall situation, a healthy debate concerning the refugee crisis has sparked because of the Lampedusa Island incident in Europe. The help from International community and specially from the Western Governments in Europe and North America in terms of accommodating refugees has been substantial and commendable. However, this is not a sustainable approach as it is mainly tackling the "Refugee Crisis" itself and not the reason behind the refugee crisis and what is driving all these refugees out of their home countries in search for new life to other parts of the world via life threatening dangerous routes.

In the case of Eritrea, mainly the youth has been fleeing the country in enormous numbers to escape the brutal treatment of the PFDJ regime for about a decade. The situation in Eritrea is simple. The people are denied of their basic civil liberties. There is no respect for the most fundamental human rights in Eritrea. The right to work and make a living, the right of making one's own life choices, the right to free movement, the right of freedom of expression, the right for justice and access to fair trial, the right of association out of free will and many more rights are plainly denied. These might seem like a story from the dark ages for those who

have luckily been taking these rights for granted in their societies. But this is truly the daily life of the Eritrean people.

The mass out flux of refugees from Eritrea and the fate of the young trafficking victims and survivor refugees can only be changed for the better, only if Eritreans, with the help of the International community, possess the capacity to stop the limitless barbarity and socio-political repression imposed by the PFDJ Regime over the Eritrean people. This way the cause of the refugee crisis can be cured instead of focusing on the symptom that is the refugee crisis itself. The ENCDC would, therefore, like to call on the international community and especially to the nations of European Union, the United States, Canada and Australia to take in to account the suffering of the Eritrean people and engage in strengthening the possibility of birth of democracy in Eritrea and in exerting political and diplomatic pressures over the PFDJ regime to force it to finally allow the establishment of an open and democratic society in Eritrea.

A special call also, from ENCDC, goes to all Eritreans that this is the time to critically think of our country's future and the future of our generations to come. We should embrace the new culture of questioning what political leaders impose on us and fight back against any form of tyranny and repression. We believe, at this moment, that there is a situation that recalls the bravery we have showed during our struggle for independence once again, in order to eliminate rule of dictatorship once and for all from our nation. Let's fight back together in the name of justice and democracy to save our people and our nation!!

Executive office of the ENCDC

3 October 2014.