



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Watch Country Report: Eritrea May 2021

In 1993, Eritrea declared independence from Ethiopia. Although an Eritrean constitution was proposed in 1997, it was never ratified. Eritrea is totally controlled by President Isaias Afwerki and his People's Front for Democracy and Justice. In 2018, a 20-year border war with Ethiopia concluded when Afwerki made peace with Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali.

Both the [United Nations](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) have named Eritrea as one of the world's most oppressive countries. In 2020, the nation [was ranked](#) as the most censored country in the world, as it has [no independent media outlets](#).

Eritrea has only [four recognized religious dominations](#): Sunni Islam, Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholicism, and Evangelical Lutheran. Other groups face persecution and imprisonment. Jehovah's Witnesses who refuse to serve in the Eritrean military are held at Mai Serwa Asmera Flowers Detention Facility, a labor camp where prisoners are [held in conditions inadequate](#) for survival.

Eritrea forces all citizens to serve for an indefinite period with the military. Students spend their final secondary school year at Sawa military camp. In 2020, despite the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students [were still sent](#) to train at Sawa. This conscription has forced many young adults [to flee to Europe](#).

On November 4, 2020, war began in Tigray between Ethiopian federal forces and the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Force (TPLF). Both Eritrean President Afwerki and Ethiopian President Abiy Ahmed Ali consider the TPLF as their common enemy.

In 2020, the Eritrean military invaded Tigray with the tacit consent of Ethiopia. Eritrea [acknowledged](#) its presence in Tigray in April 2021. Eritrean soldiers have targeted ethnic Tigrayans with pillage, mass rape, and genocidal massacres.

Eritrea has provided food and clothing to Ethiopian soldiers in Tigray. Despite announcing their intent to withdraw at the beginning of April 2021, no Eritrean troops [have left](#) Tigray. They continue to inflict atrocities on Tigrayan civilians.

Due to decrees that grant Afwerki total power, target civil rights, and silence media, Genocide Watch recognizes the situation in Eritrea to be at **Stage 6: Polarization** and **Stage 8: Persecution**. For its genocidal massacres of Tigrayans, Genocide Watch recognizes Eritrea to be at **Stage 9: Extermination**.

To prevent further human rights violations in Eritrea, Genocide Watch recommends:

- The Eritrean army should withdraw from Tigray immediately.
- A U.N. Human Rights Council Fact Finding Mission should investigate Eritrea's crimes against humanity in Tigray, as well as human rights violations in Eritrea.
- The 1997 Eritrean constitution should be ratified, and citizens should be guaranteed freedom of religion, speech, and assembly, and the right to vote.
- All political prisoners should be immediately released, as well as prisoners held without trial.
- Prison conditions should undergo thorough humanitarian reform.
- Under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Eritrean government should allow children to receive their education without requiring any military training.
- Mandatory service by all Eritrean citizens in the Eritrean military must be abolished.