



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
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## **Eritrea - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Friday 14 December 2012**

### **Information on religious freedom**

In September 2012 a report published by the *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office* notes that:

“The government of Eritrea has taken no concrete steps to improve its poor human rights record, including on key issues such as religious freedom, freedom of the media and freedom of speech” (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (30 September 2012) *Human Rights and Democracy: The 2011 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report -Quarterly Updates: Eritrea*).

A report published in July 2012 by the *United States Department of State* points out that:

The constitution and other laws and policies provide for religious freedom; however, in practice the government did not implement these protections or respect religious freedom. The government demonstrated a trend toward deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom. The government continued to harass and detain members of registered and unregistered religious groups, some of whom reportedly died as a result of torture and lack of medical treatment while in detention” (United States Department of State (30 July 2012) *2011 Report on International Religious Freedom - Eritrea*).

A document issued in July 2012 by the *United Nations Human Rights Council* notes the:

“The severe restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including the detention of journalists, human rights defenders, political actors, religious leaders and practitioners in Eritrea...” (United Nations Human Rights Council (17 July 2012) *Situation of human rights in the Eritrea: resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council*, p.2).

In May 2012 a report published by *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* notes that:

“Between 2,500 and 3,000 Christians are currently detained indefinitely at any given time. Although some were initially released after pledging to renounce their faith, none have been formally charged or tried and all are held pending similar denials of faith. Reports persist of prisoners dying after torture, or after being denied life-saving medication for refusing to deny their faith” (Christian Solidarity Worldwide (18 May 2012) *Eritrea – Summary of Concerns and Recommendations*).

In March 2012 the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* states:

“The religious freedom situation in Eritrea under the regime of President Isaias Afwerki remains extremely grave, with an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 religious

prisoners and reports of torture and other inhumane treatment of religious prisoners. The situation is particularly dire for Jehovah's Witnesses and members of other small and non-traditional religious groups, such as Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians" (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (30 March 2012) *USCIRF Annual Report 2012 - Countries of Particular Concern: Eritrea*).

## References

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (18 May 2012) *Eritrea – Summary of Concerns and Recommendations*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/eritrea-summary-concerns-and-recommendations>

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United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (30 September 2012) *Human Rights and Democracy: The 2011 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Quarterly Updates: Eritrea*

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

## Sources Consulted

Amnesty International

BBC News

Electronic Immigration Network

European Country of Origin Information Network

Freedom House

Google  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
International Crisis Group  
IRIN News  
Lexis Nexis  
Minority Rights Group International  
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