

## ASPER

ASPER works at the national and international level with other organisations, such as Amnesty International, which are committed to the protection of human rights, with the object of creating a network of non violent action to:

- support a constant campaign of information and condemnation regarding human rights violations in Eritrea
- ensure greater availability of information and monitoring regarding the management of projects concerned with the reception of and assistance towards Eritrean immigrants in Italy, and regarding humanitarian assistance in Eritrea
- exerting pressure on the appropriate institutions (the Italian parliament, the European parliament, the United Nations, the African Union..) to bring about concrete measures against all abuses committed by the dictatorial regime in Eritrea against the Eritrean people.

### A VOICE TO THOSE WHO CAN NOT SPEAK

ASPER appeals to all people to express their opposition to those who directly or indirectly deny the rights of the Eritrean people or who support the dictatorial Eritrean regime.

Anyone can contribute to stopping this injustice by informing relations, friends, institutions and journalists with all the means at their disposal, and in this way they give

ASPER is independent from any and all organisations, trade union, professional and political groups, though it wishes to maintain a special relationship with those organisations directly interested in Universal Human Rights.

ASPER, as well as being the acronym of "The Association for the Safeguarding of the Human Rights of the Eritrean People", is a Latin term which indicates something "bitter, tortuous and difficult", exactly like the path we need to follow to break the wall of silence which (also owing to the ambiguous role of Italy) continues to cloak the tragedy of the Eritrean people.

ASPER has around 200 members, living in Italian and other European cities. Some are relatives and friends of the disappeared in Eritrea, others are first-hand witnesses of abuses committed by the Eritrean regime. Some are activists whose role is well-known, while others work behind the scenes, because a more open role might be dangerous for them or for their families who still live in their home country.

ASPER is assisted from the legal point of view by legal experts and researchers from the CNR of Naples (National Centre for Research - International Law).

ASPER: A non-profit association, registered with the Court of Naples in October of 2004.



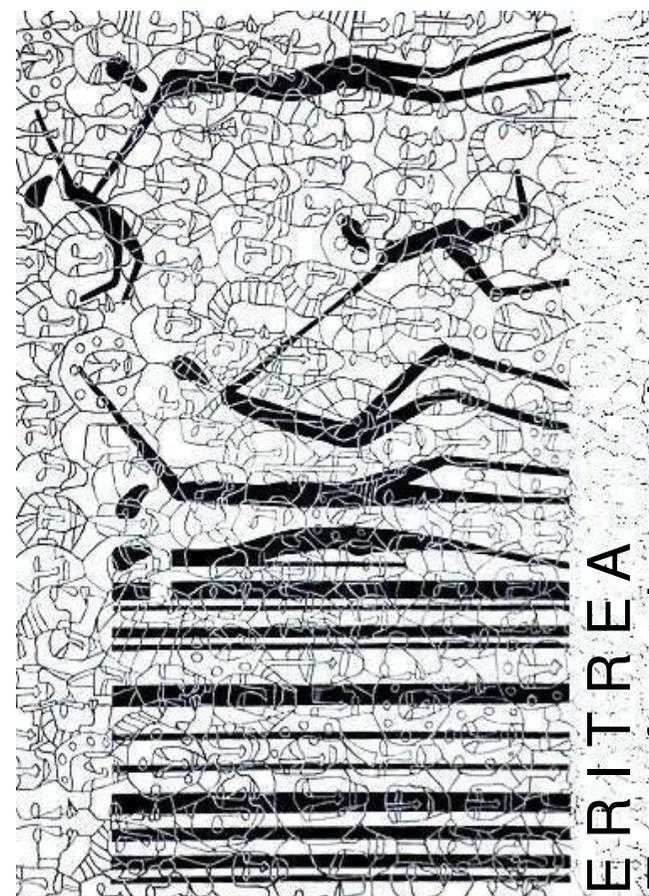
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Association for the Protection of the Human Rights of the Eritrean People

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## Eritrea

In 1993, after a thirty year-long war of liberation from Ethiopian domination, led by the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front, Eritrea, thanks to the favourable result of a referendum, became the 53rd African state, and a process of democratisation was initiated which should have led to a future of peace and development. In 1998 a senseless and unexplainable war against Ethiopia blocked the democratisation process and economic growth.

At the end of the war in the year 2000, with the Treaty of Algiers, President Isayas Afeworki took advantage of problems bound up with the demarcation of borders to suppress the Transitional National Assembly, put off the laying-down of a Constitution sine die, together with a multi-party system and elections...

In May 2001, through an open letter, 15 members of the Central Committee of the PFDJ (Popular Front for Democracy and Justice) asked for reforms, democratic elections and the abolition of special courts...

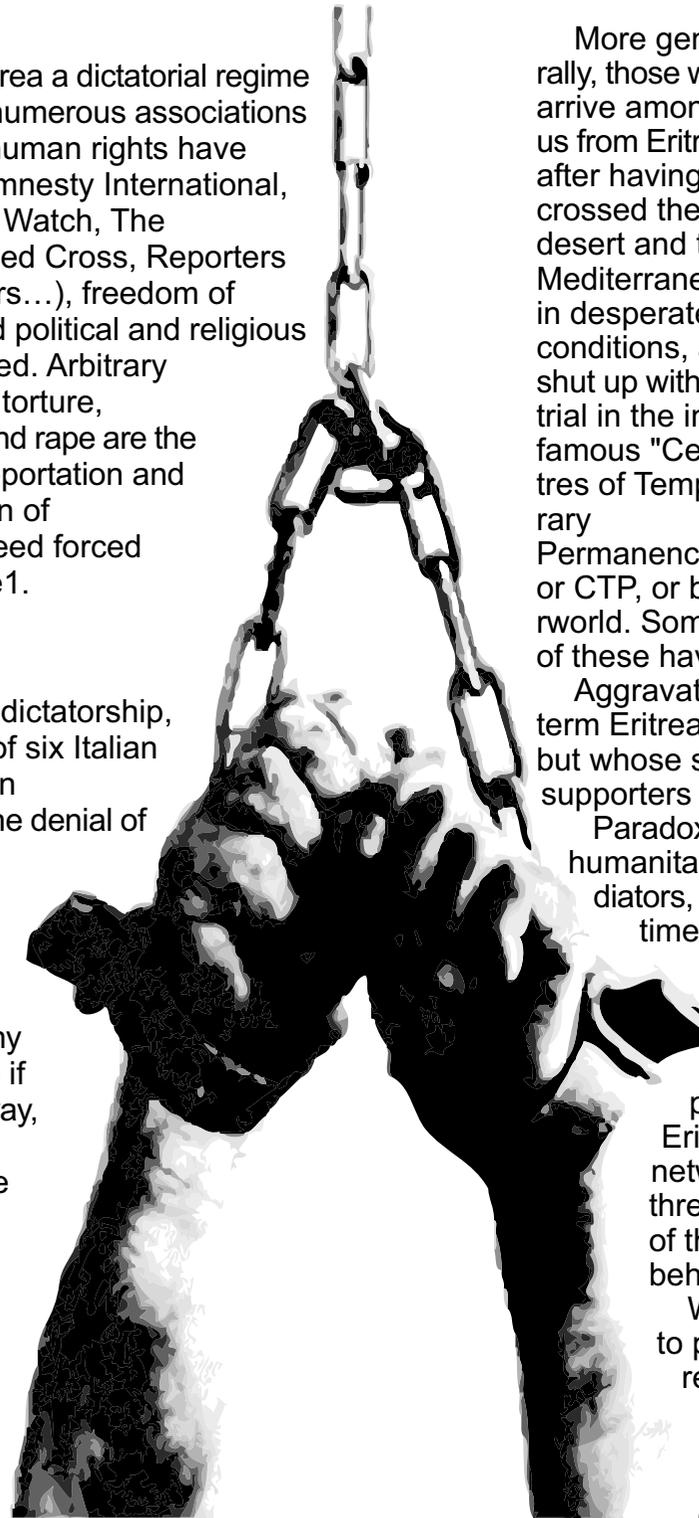
On 18th September 2001 11 signatories of the letter were arrested, together with 18 journalists. 2000 students were shut in concentration camps, and several of them lost their lives. The Italian ambassador, official spokesperson of the European Community, handed a letter of protest to Isayas Afeworki: within 48 hours he was expelled from Eritrea.



Today in Eritrea a dictatorial regime is in force. As numerous associations committed to human rights have denounced (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, The International Red Cross, Reporters Without Borders...), freedom of expression and political and religious rights are denied. Arbitrary imprisonment, torture, mistreatment and rape are the norm. Mass deportation and roundups (even of adolescents) feed forced military service<sup>1</sup>.

### Italy

Despite the dictatorship, the expulsion of six Italian NGOs, fourteen missionaries, the denial of visas to numerous journalists... relations between Italy and its ex-colony continue, even if in a confused way, and almost nothing is done by Italian institutions to take in with dignity those who seek political asylum.



More generally, those who arrive among us from Eritrea, after having crossed the desert and the Mediterranean in desperate conditions, are shut up without trial in the infamous "Centres of Temporary Permanence"

or CTP, or become prey to exploiters or the underworld. Some refugees end up in prison, and some of these have committed suicide.

Aggravating the situation in Italy there is a long-term Eritrean community which is well-integrated but whose spokespeople are in the majority active supporters of the dictatorial regime.

Paradoxically, some of these work together with humanitarian associations and, as cultural mediators, with Italian institutions, while at the same time being activists of the Single Eritrean Party (PFDJ).

These characters are the spokespeople of the regime, and blackmail Eritrean immigrants who denounce persecution and outrages, using the Eritrean Embassy and a well-structured network present in numerous Italian cities, threatening consequences for the relatives of those who speak out who have stayed behind in Eritrea...

What is more, all Eritreans are obliged to pay a tax of 2% of their salaries to the regime, and those who do not will find their visas denied or their passports not renewed, without which they cannot renew their stay permit or their work contract.

