

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

9th September 2009

Brussels: **Prioritising Human Rights in Eritrea**

Eritrea has had no independent civil society or media to speak of since 2001 when the authorities responded to calls for transparency and democratic change by clamping down on reformist members of the ruling party, members of the country's nascent civil society and on the few private media houses. The resulting absence of human rights reporting and critical voices has allowed the dire human rights situation in a country where freedom of speech and press are inexistent; freedom of association regularly and violently clampdown on and freedoms of movement, religion and opinion harshly restricted to further deteriorate in a more or less obscured manner.

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), along with Human Rights Concern Eritrea (HRC-E), EHAHRD-Network focal point organisation for Eritrea, and Human Rights Watch (HRW) will mark the anniversary of clampdown by organising a roundtable on Eritrea to speak out against the on-going human rights crisis in the country and to highlight the need for the EU, as one of the main donors, to place human rights at the top of their agenda in Eritrea.

The roundtable will offer an overview of the human rights situation in Eritrea, with a focus on the situation of human rights defenders and the risks facing Eritreans asylum seekers that are returned to their country. It will also seek to offer clear and concrete recommendations to both the EU and other stakeholders aimed at ensuring that what is rapidly becoming one of the worst human rights situations in the world is not allowed to further deteriorate.

The event will be held tomorrow, **Thursday 10th September from 14h-16h** at

For more information please do not hesitate to contact Ms Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at EHAHRDP on + 256 775 141 756 or advocacy@defenddefenders.org or for information on the location of the event please contact Claire Ivers, EU Associate Advocate at HRW, on + 32(0) 7371483

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