

Abuse of religious groups spurring Eritrea migrants, UN report says

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#) in the [July 8, 2015](#) issue

Eritrea, a country in the Horn of Africa known for having the second-largest number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean, after Syria, is committing serious religious freedom abuses, according to a UN investigation.

The religious abuses are among a host of widespread human rights violations that are forcing Eritrea's citizens to undertake deadly voyages to Europe through North Africa, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights said.

Islamic State militants who control parts of Libya have grabbed Christian migrants passing through the country and are posing the biggest danger to fleeing Eritreans.

Early this year, the militant group kidnapped and later killed 21 Egyptians and 28 Ethiopians.

The latest reports indicate that Islamic State fighters have kidnapped 88 Eritreans traveling with smugglers across Libya. The report details deaths, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture, coercion, and forced conversions.

"They were coming from Eritrea, and they were escaping from a very difficult situation," said David Curry, Open Doors USA president, in a June 10 statement.

The Eritrean government recognizes only four religious groups: Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Sunni Muslims.

"All religious communities and their members are nevertheless to varying degrees targeted by restrictions and attacks by the government," the UN said.

Interference in religious affairs is rampant, with religious materials often confiscated.

The Eritrean government dismissed the report as unfounded and devoid of merit.

—Religion News Service

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