

H.E. Ms Sophia Tesfamariam

Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations in New York

H.E. Mr. Adem Osman Idris

Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations in Geneva

29th September, 2021

Your Excellencies,

Questions from Human Rights Council Elections Pledging Event 2021

On 8th September 2021, Amnesty International and the International Service for Human Rights held an online pledging event for candidate States to the Human Rights Council for the membership term 2022-2024.

This year's event had over 200 online attendees and an overwhelming number of questions posed to candidates, providing an opportunity for candidates to present their visions for membership and to engage with a range of stakeholders on their human rights commitments and pledges.

Despite representatives of Eritrea regrettably declining to participate in the event, questions were raised regarding your candidature to the Human Rights Council. With the goal of furthering dialogue, as well as improving adherence to Council membership standards and accountability, as articulated in UN General Assembly resolution 60/251, please find below the questions addressed specifically to Eritrea as well as questions for all candidate States.

The questions, as well as your responses, will be shared on ISHR's website. We request that you please send your responses to Maithili Pai at m.pai@ishr.ch by 8th October 2021.

Questions addressed specifically to Eritrea

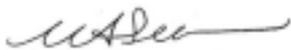
1. *Human Rights Watch*: Eritrea has continued to conscript school students into military service. What reforms has the government taken during its first council membership to ensure students, including children, no longer have to spend their last year of high school in a military camp?
2. *Genoveva Sotirova (Twitter user)*: What actions will your State take to keep women safe from domestic violence and ensure access to education, healthcare and information about in-vitro fertilisation procedures?
3. *Human Rights Watch*: Eritrea has repeatedly refused to engage with key UN rights mechanisms, including with the UN Special Procedures on Eritrea, in blatant disregard of council membership obligations. How will this change if it were to be re-elected?
4. *Joseph Alafa*: Will you establish prompt, thorough, independent, impartial and effective investigations into the alleged violations and breaches of International Humanitarian Law and/or International Human Rights Law? Will you commit to respect the norms and principles of International Humanitarian Law?

5. *Human Rights Watch*: Eritrean troops have committed atrocities in Tigray, including massacres of Tigray civilians and abuses against Eritrean refugees. Human Rights Council members should be willing to hold those responsible for abuses, including those in positions of command and responsibility to account. Will Eritrea be willing to support credible, international investigations and accountability in this regard? What steps has Eritrea taken, if any, in this regard?

Questions posed to all candidate States:

1. *Outright International*: The Human Rights Council continues to be a vital resource for LGBTI communities to bring visibility to the human rights violations they face based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics. However, questions related to LGBTI persons are also unfortunately highly politicized at the Council. How would the candidates present today ensure that politics does not get in the way of promoting and protecting the human rights of LGBTI persons?
2. *CIVICUS*: What are the steps you will take to ensure full NGO participation in the Council, its mechanisms and resolutions, and to engage with national and international civil society as a Council member?
3. *Human Rights Watch*: NGOs have been banned from UN headquarters since March 2020. Although UN employees, diplomats & media representatives (resident correspondents) can now enter UN headquarters (with restrictions), NGOs remain under a total ban. What will you do to ensure COVID-19 isn't used as a convenient excuse for those who are not fans of civil society to bar NGOs from UN headquarters? Will you support allowing accredited NGO representatives to participate in UN headquarters activities in line with all UN guidelines and restrictions like other UN stakeholders?
4. *Child Rights Connect*: What are your plans to mainstream and advance child rights at the Human Rights Council?
5. *Permanent Mission of the Principality of Liechtenstein to the United Nations*: Ensuring accountability for human rights violations should be a priority for all States, especially Human Rights Council members. The support of the ACT Code of Conduct is an important factor for Liechtenstein's support of a candidature, in addition to its human rights record, pledges and commitments. To what extent are you prioritising strengthening accountability and supporting the ACT Code of Conduct?
6. *Genoveva Sotirova (Twitter user)*: What are your plans in order to improve access to healthcare to low-income individuals?
7. *Genoveva Sotirova (Twitter user)*: What is your plan to promote the right of access to education of Muslim and Roma women refugees?

We look forward to hearing from you.



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