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# Eritrea

**Total area:**

117,600 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:**

5,869,869 (2016)

**Literacy:**

20%

**Official languages:**

Arabic, English, Tigrinya

**GDP (PPP) per capita:**

\$1,349 (2017 est.)

**Life expectancy:**

61 years

**Religions:**

49% Muslim, 44% Eritrean Orthodox, 4% Catholic, 2% indigenous beliefs, 1% other religions

## Prayer points

### The Horn of Africa and Yemen

For some time, WEC has had a goal of establishing work among the peoples of the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalis. Initially, workers would be seconded to other organisations. We long for the Lord to send us people with a calling to this part of the world. Please ask the Lord of the harvest to raise up workers. Please pray for the many women who have been raped, divorced and left by their husbands, and the many children who have been smuggled out of Somalia and into exploitation or abandonment. Many of them are in camps in other parts of the Horn of Africa and are in desperate need of hope. Ask God to touch the hearts of Christians in northern Ethiopia so that they will be willing to share God's love with the Somalis in the southern provinces. Pray that his love will break down any cultural divisions. Pray for WEC's leaders in Africa as they seek to see the work advance among Somalis. Pray for tools for mobilising new workers and for highlighting the needs of the region. Thank the Lord for the work already being done among Somalis in the UK and the USA, and pray that these initiatives will be the first fruit of a mighty harvest. There are very small believing communities in various cities and towns in Yemen. Pray for God to knit these communities together in Christ as they care for one another in practical ways. Pray for God's protection upon them. Years of war in Yemen have created a nation of people who have buried loved ones, been injured physically and suffered extreme psychological trauma. Pray that God will stabilise the situation in Yemen, and bring peace to any Christians there who are living in the midst of huge upheaval. Pray for the people of Yemen to hear God's word and come to follow Jesus. Please pray for Somalis in the UK: that they will come into contact with the gospel while there. Pray for Christians in the UK to be good witnesses and to show God's love towards all in their communities. Pray that this witness will provide opportunities for good conversations about faith. (WEC International - January 2020)

### **Standing firm in faith**

Eritrea has outlawed churches, arrested pastors, and continues to round up and torture Christians. Facing a hopeless future of menial army work, Eritrean young men are fleeing the country by the hundreds. Typical military conscripts face mistreatment, poor working conditions, and an endless term of service, but Christian draftees who are open about their faith fare worse. One Christian conscript, Hagos, was hung from a pole while his commander beat him all over his body. He told him, "You must abandon this American religion." Hagos said, "When they untied me, I couldn't walk anymore. I was bruised and bleeding all over. They carried me away on a stretcher". Pray for Christian conscripts and prisoners, some of whom have been locked away for 14 years. (Release International - September 2018)

### **Arrested and rounded-up**

The Eritrean government has started a fresh crackdown against Christians. What's made this persecution different is that whole families have been arrested. Our partner reported that about 160 Christians had been arrested, including families with children. In the capital, Asmara, 49 people from Enda Korea were arrested during a wedding celebration. Christians in the northern Red Sea region have also been rounded up. Twelve children, one as young as two months, were believed to have been sent to prison with their parents in Adi Quala. Pray for the 30 plus children left without parents or guardians with the security police who are monitoring them to make sure they do not receive support from the Christian community. (Release International - September 2017)

### **Imprisoned without trial**

The Eritrean Government runs a campaign of open persecution against Christians: about 1,500 believers, including several pastors, are said to be in jail currently. Many are imprisoned indefinitely and without trial. Conditions are often inhumane and many inmates suffer ill-treatment, sometimes torture. For some the only hope of being released is to sign documents declaring that they will no longer practise their faith. (Release International - January 2014)

### **Mass arrests**

Since the Eritrean government outlawed religious groups (other than Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran or Islam) in 2002, many believers have been arrested. Although none have been charged, most of them face severe punishment in the form of physical and emotional torture. Mass arrests over the past few years have meant that many thousands of Christians have been held in police stations, military camps, metal shipping containers and jails across Eritrea with an estimated 1,500 currently imprisoned. Pray that the newly arrested would remain firm in the faith and for God's protection for them as they face difficult times ahead. Ask that God would use their faithfulness to convict their persecutors of their need for salvation in Christ. Pray also for comfort and peace for their families and for provision for those who have lost their breadwinner. (Open Doors UK and Ireland - September 2012)

### **The Tigre**

The Tigre people converted to Islam as a result of Arab missionaries in the 1800s. They profess to be Sunni Muslims, although most practice a form of folk Islam which includes extra-Islamic practices such as sacrifices and rain-making rituals. Pray that the Lord will strengthen, encourage and protect the few known Tigre Christians in Eritrea. Ask too for more long-term workers to go and live amongst them and for strong, local fellowships of Jesus followers to be formed. (Frontiers - March 2010)