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## **ERITREA: 70 Christians released from three prisons**

CSW (05.02.2021) - <https://bit.ly/36QZVIj> - **CSW has been informed that 70 Christians from evangelical and orthodox backgrounds were recently released from three prisons in Eritrea.**

On 1 February, 21 female and 43 male prisoners were released from Mai Serwa and Adi Abeito prisons, close to the capital city, Asmara. The prisoners had been held without charge or trial for periods of between two and 12 years.

On 27 January, six female prisoners who were detained in September 2020 in Dekemhare, south-east of Asmara, were also released. The women were arrested after worshipping in public as they were walking down a street, an event which was caught on camera and circulated via social media.

While the releases have been warmly welcomed, there is also speculation that they mark the latest effort by the Eritrean regime to distract international attention from the country's active role in the ongoing war in Ethiopia's Tigray region, where Eritrean troops have been accused of violence which may amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes and possibly genocide.

On 4 December 2020, the government released 24 Jehovah's Witnesses, including the high-profile conscientious objectors Paulos Eyasu, Isaac Mogos and Negede Teklemariam, who had been held for 26 years, and whose cases were highlighted by the former UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea in her final statement to the UN Third Committee in New York in October 2020. (...)

CSW's Founder President Mervyn Thomas said: "CSW welcomes the release of these Christians in Eritrea, who were detained without charge or trial, and should never have been incarcerated. However, this good news must not obscure the Eritrean regime's continued complicity in egregious violations of human rights, both within its own borders and now in Tigray. We call on the international community to press Eritrea for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained arbitrarily on account of their religion or belief. We also call for urgent action to arrest the unfolding crisis in Tigray, including by imposing arms embargoes on the warring parties, and sanctions on the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea, who bear ultimate responsibility for human rights violations that are allegedly being committed with impunity by their respective forces."

Photo: Source: US Central Intelligence Agency. The information on this map, including the location of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border, should not be considered authoritative and does not imply endorsement by Human Rights Watch.

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## **Christian prisoners Twen Theodros and Mussie Eyob are free!**

***Human Rights without Frontiers still has over 160 Protestants, 20 Jehovah's Witnesses and 4 Coptic Orthodox in its Database of FoRB prisoners. See <https://hrwf.eu/prisoners-database/>***

**HRWF (26.02.2021) - Twen Theodros and Mussie Eyob** are among the latest number of believers to be released.

Since the end of August last year, 150 Christians have now been freed – some after more than a decade behind bars.

### ***Twen Theodros***

Twen was first arrested in the Eritrean capital Asmara in 2004, and sent to various prisons. Her story is one of remarkable courage. She shared a shipping container with the gospel singer Helen Berhane, and suffered beatings and torture.

Despite her own suffering, she also volunteered to take beatings intended for Helen. Twen, who was a new believer when she was first imprisoned, could have been released had she chosen to renounce her faith. But she refused.

She is described as a precious, lovely Christian who is determined to stay faithful to Jesus.

She has chosen to remain in Eritrea.

### ***Mussie Eyob***

Mussie was arrested in Saudi Arabia in 2011 after preaching outside a mosque in Jeddah.

Because preaching to Muslims is a capital offence the authorities doubted his sanity. But doctors confirmed Mussie was in his right mind.

Eventually he was deported to Eritrea and imprisoned. He told his family he was ready to die for his faith in Christ. Release contacts say Mussie is also doing well.

Photo : Twen Theodros – [releaseinternational.org](http://releaseinternational.org)

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## **21 women imprisoned from underground church raids freed**

By Libby Giesbrecht

CHVN95.1FM (07.03.2021) - <https://bit.ly/3qxJDeu> - **More than 20 female Christian prisoners have been freed in Eritrea but the forces of the country have been accused of attacking churches in a nearby Ethiopian region.**

The 21 women, all reportedly young mothers, had been captured last August and held in an island prison on the Red Sea after being arrested in 2017.

Their arrests were the result of a series of raids on underground churches by authorities in Eritrea, Christian Today [reports](#).

Many of the women's husbands had been conscripted, thus leaving the children without care.

Several instances of spontaneous releases of Christian prisoners have taken place over the past six months. In February, 70 believers were freed in addition to an earlier 27 who were released in Sept. 2020.

171 Christians have been freed since Aug. 2020.

More than 100 Christians remain in Eritrean prisons while about 150 Christian prisoners are believed to be detained by the army, according to Release International.

But attacks on Tigay are said to be overshadowing the releases as Eritrean forces bear down on the Ethiopian region.

In the city of Axum, around 800 people were killed in one attack, including many priests and church members.

The attack was believed to be against the Church of St. Mary of Zion in Axum, which Ethiopians believe is the home of the Ark of the Covenant from the Old Testament.

Eritrea has denied involvement in the Tigray fighting. Local witnesses to the attacks, however, have reported some troops identifying themselves as Eritrean.

Release International CEO Paul Robinson says these attacks make it far too soon to take the prisoner releases in Eritrea as any sign of a change in heart towards Christianity.

"The attacks on churches in Tigray are appalling, and Eritrea continues to hold many senior pastors who have been detained indefinitely—some for up to 17 years ... Until all are set free and the killing of Christians stops, it's too soon to talk of lasting change," Robinson says.

Eritrea is ranked sixth on the Open Doors World Watch List for the religious persecution of Christians. Persecution in the African country takes the form of denominational protectionism and is at extreme levels, according to the faith-based persecution watchdog.

Photo : Open Doors USA

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