

THE ROLE OF ERITREA'S DIASPORA IN REGIONAL PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

Thirty years of conflict in Eritrea (1961-1991) forced almost a million Eritreans to flee their homeland and seek refuge in neighboring and western countries. While in the diaspora, this community significantly supported Eritrea's independence struggle led then by a charismatic front and continues to do so. However, the front that has ruled Eritrea since 1991 has grassed commitments and it has become the worst oppressor of its people, leading to mass exodus again. In the face of this reality, Eritrea's diaspora that has considerable leverage over the government could have been a force to compel the government by making material and moral support conditional to the establishment of democracy. Regretfully, a combination of unawareness, nostalgia, timidity, gross apathy and sheer opportunism has made this community play a negative role in establishing democracy in Eritrea and peace in the Horn of Africa, thereby betraying the safe haven accorded by neighboring countries and western democracies.