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To: Refugee coordinators, Eritrea coordinators
From: Eastern Africa Team

ERITREA

Asylum seekers and conscription – a clarification

Amnesty International's report, "*Eritrea - Religious Persecution*" of December 2005 (AI Index: AFR 64/013/2005), contained a reference to exemptions from military conscription (p15) where it was reported that among other provisions there was an exemption "*for a family to retain a young person to remain at home when all other siblings have been conscripted*".

In light of further information received by Amnesty International, it has become clear that there is no legal or official exemption in such cases, nor an informal practise to this effect. There was no such exemption during the early years of conscription, or during or after the 1998-2000 war when conscription became more stringent. There is no such exemption at the present time.

Amnesty International has reviewed the above statement in relation to a recent asylum application where this point was relevant. It has not been able to find any source to confirm cases of such exemption. It concludes that there may have been isolated instances in the past where a person may have escaped conscription on this ground as a result of a particular sympathetic decision but that this was in fact arbitrary and unlawful.
