

## 57 Eritrean Asylum Seekers Secretly Incarcerated in Libya

57 Eritrean Asylum Seekers Reportedly Saved From a Sinking Boat but Secretly Incarcerated in Libya; Forced Repatriation Said to be a High Possibility

Tesfai Teklezghi, the ELF-RC representative in France, received a call last night, 25 May 2007, confirming to him that over 50 Eritreans who were missing in the Mediterranean Sea are safe but in a very bad condition in a secret detention camp in Libya which may have the intention of sending them back to Eritrea secretly.

One of the detained 50 or so Eritreans has confirmed in a call to his sister in Europe that the missing boat was rescued by Libyan authorities and that the asylum seekers (called "illegal immigrants" in the press) are held in prison which is kept secret from representatives of the UNHCR and other humanitarian and human rights agencies who have been keenly following the fate of Eritrea's "boat people". The caller from the Libyan prison claimed to have obtained access to a mobile phone from a Libyan prison guard who allowed him to make one call at the cost of 50 euros. The caller further informed his sister that their situation in the isolated prison where they stayed for three days is very bad and that the Libyan authorities appear to be preparing to fly them secretly back to Eritrea before the UNHCR, Amnesty International and other concerned human rights organizations know about it. The sister of the caller appealed to Tesfai Teklezghi to alert all Eritrean opposition forces and humanitarian organizations to help stop the possible forced expatriation of the 57 Eritrean asylum seekers detained in Libya. The only good news is that their boat did not sink in the sea as was previously feared.