

**Meeting with Yemane Gebreab, President's Adviser and UK delegation from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. 9 December 2014.**

Mr Gebreab stated during discussions:

Language:

"There is not a state language, all 9 languages are spoken. In education for the first five years language is geographical to where people live – English is taught – and from the middle school onwards English is the language of the school."

Economy:

"We want to reduce the push factors affecting migration and we think the main problem is the economy. With this in mind we have a 3 to 5 year plan to improve and increase mining (copper, gold, silver, potash), agriculture (people can obtain land from the government to farm), infrastructure (blackouts are a problems but we are working on solar and wind power and small scale hydro power), transport."

National Service:

"In public service people don't get proper salaries. This is because salaries have not risen in National Service since 1997 and the Nafka is now one seventh of its value in 1997.

"From November 2014 national service is reverting to a duration of 18 months. This will now be all based in the military (although there are some civilian type jobs within the military). This has started with the 27<sup>th</sup> round and people have been informed. We have had meetings with students and families at SAWA. We do not want to publicise this by a presidential announcement – this is not how we wish to do things.

"Everyone still in education will benefit from this along with anyone who has not yet reported for national service. There are currently 7000 people in Eritrea who have not reported for national service and we are trying to get them to report. We are trying to make reporting more regular. Those who started before November 2014 and currently doing national service, will stay as they are at the moment. We hope in 18 months' time to have a smaller, highly efficient and well paid civil service.

"If people say they don't want to do national service there is a theoretical punishment of 18 months' imprisonment. However there have been no cases."

Returns:

"We don't like forced returns as it affects a person's dignity. However we may be prepared to accept a few."

**Meeting with Osman Saleh, Foreign Minister and UK delegation from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. 9 December 2014.**

Mr Saleh stated during discussions:

Military service

“We have 18 months’ military service now. Meetings have been held in the governorates to inform the whole population throughout the country”

Returns

“If someone has left Eritrea illegally, without completing national service and returns before getting status in the UK they will face no problems if they return voluntarily. We accept those who are willingly repatriated. We don’t want those who don’t want to return.”

**Meeting with Yeman Gebremeskel, Director of the President's Office and UK delegation from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. 10 December 2014.**

Mr Gebremeskel stated during discussions:

Returns

"There are no extra-judicial retributions on people who return having left illegally without doing national service. There is no clemency, but no harsh measures against them.

"We do not accept forced removals – it is not proper."

Nationality Testing

"We could, if required, send government officials to the UK to do screening to determine nationality of those claiming to be Eritrean."

**Meeting with three officials from the Department of Immigration and Nationality and UK delegation from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. 10 December 2014.**

ID Cards

“From June 2014 we have introduced a new ID card which can’t be forged. This card has fingerprints stored electronically on a chip, a photograph and is machine readable. It is being gradually introduced and has a validity of 10 years (the previous ones had indefinite validity). Everyone over 18 is supposed to have an ID card, but this is not enforced.

“We are taking the fingerprints of the entire population, although all will not get a new ID card for some time. We have details of every Eritrean in our department. The old data base has photographs of everyone, although these are of limited use as people change with age. The number on the ID card is important.”

Process on return

“If someone has an Eritrean ID card or passport they are free to come back into Eritrea. We have informed airline companies that an ID card is enough.

“If someone needs a passport whilst abroad, the embassy would check the person’s details via the immigration service who would send a passport back to the country where the person is.

“People who have left illegally as children or born abroad will have no problems on return – they need to prove their citizenship and get documents from the embassy.”

Exit Visa

“Everyone (all ages, including young children) requires an exit visa to leave the country. There is no problem for someone who has completed national service to get an exit visa for travel abroad.

“To get one someone should apply to the ministry with a demobilization certificate (available from ministry of defence) and 100 Nafka.”