

UN agency dismayed by Sudan's deportation of Eritrean refugees



Eritrean children at Shagarab camp in eastern Sudan

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The United Nations refugee agency today condemned the deportation of more than 300 Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers by Sudan after weeks of detention and in spite of a previous agreement with the UN.

Adrian Edwards, a spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), [told](#) reporters at a press briefing in Geneva that his agency was concerned that the rights of refugees were not being respected, even though Sudanese authorities had assured otherwise, and said Sudan's actions breached the agreement between his agency and the Government.

"The deportation took place despite an agreement between UNHCR and the Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees that the Eritreans would be transferred to Khartoum for joint screening – the aim being to identify people in the group who already had refugee status and to allow others the opportunity to lodge asylum claims," he said.

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Upon arrival, the refugees were convicted on charges of illegal entry and movement in Sudan, and were subsequently detained for several weeks in Dongola in the country's north, before being deported yesterday.

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Mr. Edwards said deportations like these violate the [1951 UN Refugee Convention](#) as well as the 1974 Sudanese Asylum Act.

According to UNHCR, Sudan has recently forced asylum-seekers on various occasions to return to Eritrea, where they risk persecution.