

## It's not at war, but up to 3% of its people have fled. What is going on in Eritrea?

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Adam was forced to serve as a child soldier before he escaped – his story is one of many in a totalitarian state where citizens are afraid to leave their homes



Adam is just 16 years old, but the events of his short life illustrate why so many Eritreans are fleeing their country. At 14, he became the oldest male member of his family still living at home, as the others had been called up for indefinite military service.

With no father or older brother to look after his remaining siblings, Adam dropped out of school to help tend the family's land. No longer in education, he lost his right to a permit that allows Eritreans to move in public. Without it, he was soon arrested just for going outside.

Still a 14-year-old child, he was then forced to become a military conscript – a fate that normally befalls Eritreans in their last year of school, and continues for the rest of their life. But after six months of abuse and what amounts to slave labour, Adam escaped for home. There he was arrested again, and spent three months in prison without trial before being returned to military service.

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