

Eritrea



Introduction Eritrea

Background: Eritrea was awarded to Ethiopia in 1952 as part of a federation. Ethiopia's annexation of Eritrea as a province 10 years later sparked a 30-year struggle for independence that ended in 1991 with Eritrean rebels defeating governmental forces; independence was overwhelmingly approved in a 1993 referendum. A two-and-a-half-year border war with Ethiopia that erupted in 1998 ended under UN auspices in December 2000. Eritrea currently hosts a UN peacekeeping operation that is monitoring a 25 km-wide Temporary Security Zone on the border with Ethiopia. An international commission, organized to resolve the border dispute, posted its findings in 2002 but final demarcation is on hold due to Ethiopian objections.

Geography Eritrea

Location: Eastern Africa, bordering the Red Sea, between Djibouti and Sudan

Geographic coordinates: 15 00 N, 39 00 E

Map references: Africa

Area:	<i>total:</i> 121,320 sq km <i>land:</i> 121,320 sq km <i>water:</i> 0 sq km
Area - comparative:	slightly larger than Pennsylvania
Land boundaries:	<i>total:</i> 1,626 km <i>border countries:</i> Djibouti 109 km, Ethiopia 912 km, Sudan 605 km
Coastline:	2,234 km (mainland on Red Sea 1,151 km, islands in Red Sea 1,083 km)
Maritime claims:	<i>territorial sea:</i> 12 nm
Climate:	hot, dry desert strip along Red Sea coast; cooler and wetter in the central highlands (up to 61 cm of rainfall annually, heaviest June to September); semiarid in western hills and lowlands
Terrain:	dominated by extension of Ethiopian north-south trending highlands, descending on the east to a coastal desert plain, on the northwest to hilly terrain and on the southwest to flat-to-rolling plains
Elevation extremes:	<i>lowest point:</i> near Kulul within the Denakil depression -75 m <i>highest point:</i> Soira 3,018 m
Natural resources:	gold, potash, zinc, copper, salt, possibly oil and natural gas, fish
Land use:	<i>arable land:</i> 4.78% <i>permanent crops:</i> 0.03% <i>other:</i> 95.19% (2005)
Irrigated land:	210 sq km (2003)
Natural hazards:	frequent droughts; locust swarms
Environment - current issues:	deforestation; desertification; soil erosion; overgrazing; loss of infrastructure from civil warfare
Environment - international agreements:	<i>party to:</i> Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species <i>signed, but not ratified:</i> none of the selected agreements
Geography - note:	strategic geopolitical position along world's busiest shipping lanes; Eritrea retained the entire coastline of Ethiopia along the Red Sea upon de jure independence from Ethiopia on 24 May 1993

People	Eritrea
Population:	4,786,994 (July 2006 est.)
Age structure:	<i>0-14 years:</i> 44% (male 1,059,458/female 1,046,955) <i>15-64 years:</i> 52.5% (male 1,244,153/female 1,268,189) <i>65 years and over:</i> 3.5% (male 82,112/female 86,127) (2006 est.)
Median age:	<i>total:</i> 17.8 years <i>male:</i> 17.6 years <i>female:</i> 18 years (2006 est.)
Population growth rate:	2.47% (2006 est.)
Birth rate:	34.33 births/1,000 population (2006 est.)
Death rate:	9.6 deaths/1,000 population (2006 est.)
Net migration rate:	0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2006 est.)
Sex ratio:	<i>at birth:</i> 1.03 male(s)/female <i>under 15 years:</i> 1.01 male(s)/female <i>15-64 years:</i> 0.98 male(s)/female <i>65 years and over:</i> 0.95 male(s)/female <i>total population:</i> 0.99 male(s)/female (2006 est.)
Infant mortality rate:	<i>total:</i> 46.3 deaths/1,000 live births <i>male:</i> 52.22 deaths/1,000 live births <i>female:</i> 40.2 deaths/1,000 live births (2006 est.)
Life expectancy at birth:	<i>total population:</i> 59.03 years <i>male:</i> 57.44 years <i>female:</i> 60.66 years (2006 est.)
Total fertility rate:	5.08 children born/woman (2006 est.)
HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:	2.7% (2003 est.)
HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:	60,000 (2003 est.)
HIV/AIDS - deaths:	6,300 (2003 est.)
Major infectious	<i>degree of risk:</i> high <i>food or waterborne diseases:</i> bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A,

diseases: and typhoid fever
vectorborne disease: malaria is a high risk in some locations (2005)

Nationality: *noun:* Eritrean(s)
adjective: Eritrean

Ethnic groups: Tigrinya 50%, Tigre and Kunama 40%, Afar 4%, Saho (Red Sea coast dwellers) 3%, other 3%

Religions: Muslim, Coptic Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant

Languages: Afar, Arabic, Tigre and Kunama, Tigrinya, other Cushitic languages

Literacy: *definition:* age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 58.6%
male: 69.9%
female: 47.6% (2003 est.)

Government	Eritrea
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Country name: *conventional long form:* State of Eritrea
conventional short form: Eritrea
local long form: Hagere Ertra
local short form: Ertra
former: Eritrea Autonomous Region in Ethiopia

Government type: transitional government
note: following a successful referendum on independence for the Autonomous Region of Eritrea on 23-25 April 1993, a National Assembly, composed entirely of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice or PFDJ, was established as a transitional legislature; a Constitutional Commission was also established to draft a constitution; ISAIAS Afworki was elected president by the transitional legislature; the constitution, ratified in May 1997, did not enter into effect, pending parliamentary and presidential elections; parliamentary elections had been scheduled in December 2001, but were postponed indefinitely; currently the sole legal party is the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)

Capital: *name:* Asmara (Asmera)
geographic coordinates: 15 20 N, 38 53 E
time difference: UTC+3 (8 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions: 6 regions (zobatat, singular - zoba); Anseba, Debub (Southern), Debubawi K'eyih Bahri (Southern Red Sea), Gash Barka, Ma'akel (Central), Semenawi Keyih Bahri (Northern Red Sea)

- Independence:** 24 May 1993 (from Ethiopia)
- National holiday:** Independence Day, 24 May (1993)
- Constitution:** a transitional constitution, decreed on 19 May 1993, was replaced by a new constitution adopted on 23 May 1997, but not yet implemented
- Legal system:** primary basis is the Ethiopian legal code of 1957, with revisions; new civil, commercial, and penal codes have not yet been promulgated; also relies on customary and post-independence-enacted laws and, for civil cases involving Muslims, Sharia law
- Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal
- Executive branch:** *chief of state:* President ISAIAS Afworki (since 8 June 1993); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government and is head of the State Council and National Assembly
head of government: President ISAIAS Afworki (since 8 June 1993); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government and is head of the State Council and National Assembly
cabinet: State Council is the collective executive authority; members appointed by the president
elections: president elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held 8 June 1993 (next election date uncertain as the National Assembly did not hold a presidential election in December 2001 as anticipated)
election results: ISAIAS Afworki elected president; percent of National Assembly vote - ISAIAS Afworki 95%
- Legislative branch:** unicameral National Assembly (150 seats; term limits not established)
elections: in May 1997, following the adoption of the new constitution, 75 members of the PFDJ Central Committee (the old Central Committee of the EPLF), 60 members of the 527-member Constituent Assembly, that had been established in 1997 to discuss and ratify the new constitution, and 15 representatives of Eritreans living abroad were formed into a Transitional National Assembly to serve as the country's legislative body until countrywide elections to a National Assembly were held; although only 75 of 150 members of the Transitional National Assembly were elected, the constitution stipulates that once past the transition stage, all members of the National Assembly will be elected by secret ballot of all eligible voters; National Assembly elections scheduled for December 2001 were postponed indefinitely

Judicial branch: High Court - regional, subregional, and village courts; also have military and special courts

Political parties and leaders: People's Front for Democracy and Justice or PFDJ, the only party recognized by the government [ISAIAS Afworki]; note - a National Assembly committee drafted a law on political parties in January 2001, but the full National Assembly has not yet debated or voted on it

Political pressure groups and leaders: Eritrean Islamic Jihad or EIJ (also including Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement or EIJM (also known as the Abu Sihel Movement)); Eritrean Islamic Salvation or EIS (also known as the Arafa Movement); Eritrean Liberation Front or ELF [ABDULLAH Muhammed]; Eritrean National Alliance or ENA (a coalition including EIJ, EIS, ELF, and a number of ELF factions) [HERUY Tedla Biru]; Eritrean Public Forum or EPF [ARADOM Iyob]

International organization participation: ACP, AfDB, AU, COMESA, FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCt (signatory), IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRC (observer), IGAD, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, ISO (correspondent), ITU, ITUC, MIGA, NAM, OPCW, PCA, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO

Diplomatic representation in the US: *chief of mission:* Ambassador GHIRMAI Ghebremariam
chancery: 1708 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009
telephone: [1] (202) 319-1991
FAX: [1] (202) 319-1304
consulate(s) general: Oakland (California)

Diplomatic representation from the US: *chief of mission:* Ambassador Scott H. DELISI
embassy: 179 Alaa Street, Asmara
mailing address: P. O. Box 211, Asmara
telephone: [291] (1) 120004
FAX: [291] (1) 127584

Flag description: red isosceles triangle (based on the hoist side) dividing the flag into two right triangles; the upper triangle is green, the lower one is blue; a gold wreath encircling a gold olive branch is centered on the hoist side of the red triangle

Economy	Eritrea
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Economy - overview: Since independence from Ethiopia in 1993, Eritrea has faced the economic problems of a small, desperately poor country. Like the economies of many African nations, the economy is largely based on subsistence agriculture, with 80% of the population involved in farming and herding. The Ethiopian-Eritrea war in 1998-2000 severely hurt Eritrea's economy. GDP growth fell to zero in 1999 and to -

12.1% in 2000. The May 2000 Ethiopian offensive into northern Eritrea caused some \$600 million in property damage and loss, including losses of \$225 million in livestock and 55,000 homes. The attack prevented planting of crops in Eritrea's most productive region, causing food production to drop by 62%. Even during the war, Eritrea developed its transportation infrastructure, asphaltting new roads, improving its ports, and repairing war-damaged roads and bridges. Since the war ended, the government has maintained a firm grip on the economy, expanding the use of the military and party-owned businesses to complete Eritrea's development agenda. Erratic rainfall and the delayed demobilization of agriculturalists from the military kept cereal production well below normal, holding down growth in 2002-06. Eritrea's economic future depends upon its ability to master social problems such as illiteracy, unemployment, and low skills, as well as the willingness to open its economy to private enterprise so that the diaspora's money and expertise can foster economic growth.

GDP (purchasing power parity):	\$4.471 billion (2005 est.)
GDP (official exchange rate):	\$1.244 billion (2005 est.)
GDP - real growth rate:	2% (2005 est.)
GDP - per capita (PPP):	\$1,000 (2005 est.)
GDP - composition by sector:	<i>agriculture: 9.9%</i> <i>industry: 25.4%</i> <i>services: 64.6% (2006 est.)</i>
Labor force:	NA
Labor force - by occupation:	<i>agriculture: 80%</i> <i>industry and services: 20%</i>
Unemployment rate:	NA%
Population below poverty line:	50% (2004 est.)
Household income or consumption by percentage share:	<i>lowest 10%: NA%</i> <i>highest 10%: NA%</i>

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 14% (2006 est.)

Investment (gross fixed): 24.5% of GDP (2006 est.)

Budget: *revenues:* \$257.6 million
expenditures: \$424 million; including capital expenditures of \$NA (2006 est.)

Agriculture - products: sorghum, lentils, vegetables, corn, cotton, tobacco, coffee, sisal; livestock, goats; fish

Industries: food processing, beverages, clothing and textiles, salt, cement, commercial ship repair

Industrial production growth rate: NA%

Electricity - production: 276.1 million kWh (2004)

Electricity - production by source: *fossil fuel:* 100%
hydro: 0%
nuclear: 0%
other: 0% (2001)

Electricity - consumption: 256.7 million kWh (2004)

Electricity - exports: 0 kWh (2004)

Electricity - imports: 0 kWh (2004)

Oil - production: 0 bbl/day (2004 est.)

Oil - consumption: 5,300 bbl/day (2004 est.)

Oil - exports: NA bbl/day (2001)

Oil - imports: NA bbl/day (2001)

Natural gas - production: 0 cu m (2004 est.)

Natural gas - consumption: 0 cu m (2004 est.)

Current account balance: \$-440.5 million (2006 est.)

Exports: \$17.65 million f.o.b. (2006 est.)

Exports - commodities: livestock, sorghum, textiles, food, small manufactures (2000)

Exports - partners: Italy 36.4%, US 13.8%, Belarus 6.8%, Germany 5.3%, UK 4.6% (2005)

Imports: \$701.8 million f.o.b. (2006 est.)

Imports - commodities: machinery, petroleum products, food, manufactured goods (2000)

Imports - partners: Germany 21.3%, Italy 19.5%, France 15.3%, US 12.3%, Ireland 7.9%, Jordan 5.5% (2005)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold: \$30.6 million (2006 est.)

Debt - external: \$311 million (2000 est.)

Economic aid - recipient: \$77 million (1999)

Currency (code): nakfa (ERN)

Currency code: ERN

Exchange rates: nakfa (ERN) per US dollar - 14 (2006), 14.5 (2005), 13.788 (2004), 13.878 (2003), 13.958 (2002)

Fiscal year: calendar year

Communications	Eritrea
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Telephones - main lines in use: 37,700 (2005)

Telephones - mobile cellular: 40,400 (2005)

Telephone system: *general assessment:* inadequate
domestic: inadequate; most telephones are in Asmara; government is seeking international tenders to improve the system (2002)
international: country code - 291; note - international connections exist

Radio broadcast stations: AM 2, FM NA, shortwave 2 (2000)

Radios: 345,000 (1997)

Television broadcast stations: 1 (2000)

Televisions: 1,000 (1997)

Internet country code: .er

Internet hosts: 1,088 (2006)

Internet Service Providers (ISPs): 5 (2001)

Internet users: 70,000 (2005)

Transportation Eritrea

Airports: 17 (2006)

Airports - with paved runways: *total:* 4
over 3,047 m: 2
2,438 to 3,047 m: 2 (2006)

Airports - with unpaved runways: *total:* 13
over 3,047 m: 1
2,438 to 3,047 m: 1
1,524 to 2,437 m: 5
914 to 1,523 m: 4
under 914 m: 2 (2006)

Railways: *total:* 306 km
narrow gauge: 306 km 0.950-m gauge (2005)

Roadways: *total:* 4,010 km
paved: 874 km
unpaved: 3,136 km (1999)

Merchant marine: *total:* 6 ships (1000 GRT or over) 19,506 GRT/23,649 DWT
by type: cargo 3, liquefied gas 1, petroleum tanker 1, roll on/roll off 1 (2006)

Ports and terminals: Assab, Massawa

Military Eritrea

Military branches: Army, Navy, Air Force

Military service age and obligation:	18 years of age for voluntary and compulsory military service; conscript service obligation - 16 months (2004)
Manpower available for military service:	<i>males age 18-49: 893,361</i> <i>females age 18-49: 891,662 (2005 est.)</i>
Manpower fit for military service:	<i>males age 18-49: 555,553</i> <i>females age 18-49: 562,426 (2005)</i>
Manpower reaching military service age annually:	<i>males age 18-49: 50,156</i> <i>females age 18-49: 49,746 (2005 est.)</i>
Military expenditures - dollar figure:	\$220.1 million (2005 est.)
Military expenditures - percent of GDP:	17.7% (2005 est.)

Transnational Issues	Eritrea
Disputes - international:	Eritrea and Ethiopia agreed to abide by 2002 Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission's (EEBC) delimitation decision, but despite international intervention, mutual animosities, accusations, and armed posturing have prevented demarcation; Ethiopia refuses to withdraw to the delimited boundary until claimed technical errors made by the EEBC that ignored "human geography" are addressed, including the award of Badme, the focus of the 1998-2000 war; Eritrea insists that the EEBC decision be implemented immediately without modifications; in 2005 Eritrea began severely restricting the operations of the UN Peacekeeping Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) monitoring the 25km-wide Temporary Security Zone in Eritrea since 2000; Sudan sustains over 110,000 Eritrean refugees and accuses Eritrea of supporting Sudanese rebel groups
Refugees and internally displaced persons:	<i>IDPs: 40,000-45,000 (border war with Ethiopia from 1998-2000; most IDPs are near the central border region) (2006)</i>