

Winston Secures Asylum for Eritrean Refugee Who Fled Violent Religious and Political Persecution

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Ephrem Gebray arrived in the United States in May 2017 seeking asylum from the State of Eritrea—an African nation that Human Rights Watch considers one of the most repressive in the world.

More than four years later, after Winston & Strawn filed numerous affidavits, testimony and other evidence on Mr. Gebray's behalf, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services has finally granted his application for asylum.

"This victory ensures Ephrem can lawfully remain in the United States, safe from the persecution and violence he endured in Eritrea. It also allows Ephrem's wife and children— who are of Tigray descent—to file for derivative asylum and hopefully escape the increasing violence in the region against Tigray persons," said Chicago Associate Alexander Kontopoulos.

The government of Eritrea's persecution of Mr. Gebray began while he was serving in the military and was falsely accused of being a Pentecostal Christian—a religion that is outlawed in the country. As punishment, he was beaten and made to perform hard labor in extreme desert conditions.

Four years later, a government Security Official ordered Mr. Gebray to spy on his employer, British American Tobacco. When Mr. Gebray refused, the Security Official threatened to kill Mr. Gebray and arrest his family. A few months later, Mr. Gebray was arrested, beaten, and held in solitary confinement. Mr. Gebray was released after six months of imprisonment and ordered to check-in with Security Officials every two months.

Mr. Gebray was arrested a second time after he requested a visa to visit a friend in the United States. This time, he was beaten and imprisoned for two months. During his second detention, the government informed Mr. Gebray that he had been classified as a traitor and his life and the lives of his family members were in danger. Following his release from prison, his wife and children fled to Ethiopia to live with his wife's family and Mr. Gebray eventually made his way to Chicago where he filed for asylum.

"I have no words to express my appreciation and thanks for our God and for all of you for your help, assistance, suggestions, guidance, and motivation to make my case accepted," said Ephram Gebray.

The Winston & Strawn team that worked on this matter includes Chicago Partner **Nolan Bolduc**.

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