

# Eritrea



Eritrea is located in North Eastern Africa, bordering with Red Sea in the East and North East, Ethiopia in South, Djibouti in South East and the Sudan in West. It lies in the geographical coordinates  $15^{\circ}00'N$  and  $39^{\circ}00'E$ . The name Eritrea is based on the Latin word «Mare erythræum», which means Red Sea,

Eritrea, totally or partially, was part of the Aksumite kingdom, Zagwe Dynasty and under the domination of regional or local powers before the arrival of foreign powers, such as Turks. The Ottoman Turks ruled the coastal area and parts of the highland and lowlands from 1557 until 1868. After that Egyptians controlled the eastern and western lowlands until the advent of Italians. The people in this area are commonly called as 'Habesha'.

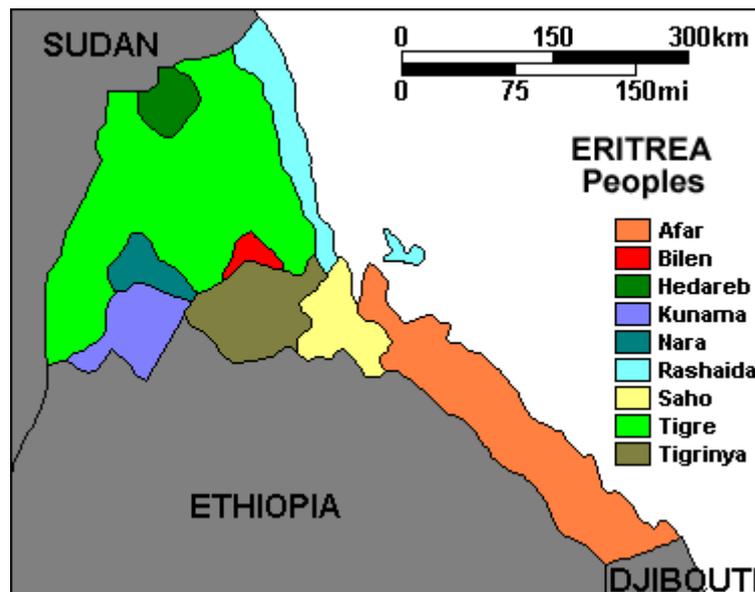
However, today's Eritrea with its current borders was founded on January 01, 1890 by the Italians. They ruled for about 50 years from 1890 until 1941. Between 1941 and 1952 the country was ruled by Britain as protectorate, after which Eritrea and Ethiopia formed a federation under a UN decision. Ten years later, however, was annexed by Ethiopia as its 14 province. This sparked the 30 years independence war, which ended on May 24, 1991 with Eritrean victory. In 1993 a referendum was conducted on whether the country should become independent and victory for the yes side was overwhelming, about 99.98%. September 01 and May 24 are celebrated as the beginning of armed struggle and as a national day respectively.

The total area of the country is 121,144 km<sup>2</sup>. The capital city is Asmara. Other cities and towns include like Adi keyih, Aqurdet, Asseb, Barentu, Keren, Massawa, Mendefera, Nakfa and Tesseney.

Eritrea is bisected by the mountain ranges, which extends from Ethiopian highlands, created by the process of the Great Rift Valley. These highlands descend to coastal desert plains on the East, to hilly terrains in the Northwest and flat plains to the west. The tallest mountain is Mt. Soira with 3015 m above sea level. The lowest point is near Kulul within the Danakil Depression and it is about 75 m below sea level.

Danakil Depression is a location where tectonic plates are pulling away and is susceptible for earth quakes although not so vigorous. Eritrea has about 350 islands spread along a coastline of 1200 km. Of these, Dahlak Archipelago is the largest group made up of more than 100 islands. Dahlak Kabir is the largest island of the archipelago. Other islands include like Dehlak Seqir, Nakura and Fatuma.

The climate is hot and dry along the coast. In the central highlands it is cooler and the annual rain fall can be up to 610 mm. Heaviest rain fall is from June to September. The longest rivers are Anseba, Barka and Gash that flow through Western lowlands towards Sudan. The western lowlands are semiarid and fertile. Longer dry periods are common.



Population of Eritrea is estimated about 5 million and almost equally divided between Christian and Moslems. The society is ethnically heterogeneous and there are nine ethnic groups officially recognized, that speak each their own language. These are Afar, Blin, Hidareb, Kunama (Bazen), Nara (Baria), Rashaida, Saho, Tigre and Tigrigna. Besides, there are also few ethnic groups like Elit and Tekwarir, which are not officially recognized. Tigrigna are the majority and dominant ethnic group and the language is used as *lingua franca*. Arab language is also well recognized and used as means of communication, especially in the western and Eastern lowlands. Thus, it used as *lingua franca* in addition to Tigringa. Moreover, English is used as medium of instruction in middle, secondary and postsecondary education.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eritrea>,  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>