

Eritrea's Withdrawal from IGAD



On December 12, 2025, Eritrea formally withdrew from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), marking the end of a brief, inactive membership reactivation that began in June 2023. This decision reflects Eritrea's return to its long-standing policy of isolation, prioritizing absolute national sovereignty and regime preservation over regional integration amidst escalating regional tensions regarding Red Sea power dynamics.



Eritrea Withdrawal from IGAD

Eritrea's withdrawal from IGAD was rather an anticipated event than shocking news. On December 12, Eritrea's foreign minister announced its formal withdrawal from IGAD, following a two-year reactivation of its membership status. Although in theory Eritrea resumed its membership with IGAD in June 2023, Eritrea has not participated in any programs, meetings, events, or activities ever since. Eritrea's membership reactivation seemed like one final step towards closure rather than it was rejuvenation. Eritrea's foreign minister announced that a series of disappointments had influenced the reason behind Eritrea's withdrawal, as Eritrea has played a critical role in IGAD since its revitalization in 1993, with aims to support economic integration and promote regional peace by closely working with other member states to strengthen the effectiveness of IGAD. However, particularly since 2005, IGAD has strayed away from its founding objective, failing to meet the aspirations of the people in the IGAD region and targeting member states like Eritrea as having partisan roles.

IGAD's Executive Secretary, Workneh Gebeyhu, has expressed regret over Eritrea's decision to withdraw from the regional bloc and emphasized that Eritrea was welcomed to IGAD with open

arms back in June 2023, and he further reaffirmed that means of dialogue are still open. In a press statement release, IGAD stated that, "IGAD further regrets that the decision to withdraw was taken without the submission of tangible proposals or engagement on specific institutional or policy reforms."

Eritrea was a founding member of IGAD after it transitioned from IGADD, which focused on curbing drought in the Horn of Africa. Pre 2007, Eritrea has played an active role in numerous in activities such as leadership, institutional architecture, and significant contributions to regional peace mediation. Tensions arising with neighboring country Ethiopia have been the cause of Eritrea's temporary unilateral suspension in 2007 and the recent formal withdrawal from IGAD on both occasions. The 1998-2000 border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia soured Eritrea's relationship with IGAD for years to come. In 2007, Eritrea accused IGAD of undermining regional peace and explicitly stated its disapproval over IGAD's decision to support Ethiopia's military intervention in Somalia. Eritrea alleged that IGAD "has adopted repeated and irresponsible resolutions that undermine regional peace and security". Although Eritrea has claimed it was disappointed in IGAD's support of the Ethiopian military intervention, the real frustration was coming from the failure to implement the



Algeris agreement of 2000. IGAD didn't pressure Ethiopia to fully implement the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission (EEBC) ruling, which was initially in Eritrea's favor. The Algeris Agreement, which formally ended the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, was the basis for the establishment of the EEBC, which guaranteed that the town of Badme would be included in Eritrea's territory.


The formal withdrawal of Eritrea reflects more than a retreat from multilateralism and a shift in security in the Horn that will reshape diplomatic relations among states. By abandoning IGAD after two years of reactivation, Eritrea has gestured that its primary objective is to preserve sovereignty over regional integration. The contemporary implications of this move highlight the escalating tensions with Ethiopia regarding Red Sea power dynamics.

Ultimately, Eritrea's formal withdrawal from IGAD serves as a definitive signal of a return to its familiar policy of strategic isolation. While the

2023 membership reactivation was a hopeful step towards reintegration, the lack of participation and abrupt withdrawal suggest that Eritrea views multilateral institutions as areas of interference rather than as platforms of cooperation. In contemporary global politics, this move carries significant weight. By distancing itself from the regional bloc, Eritrea has prioritized absolute sovereignty and regime preservation over collective integration frameworks.



Annex:
Eritrea's Press Release¹



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Press Release: Eritrea has withdrawn its Membership from IGAD

Last Updated: Dec 12, 2025

GENERAL

PRESS RELEASE

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دولة إرتريا
وزارة الشؤون الخارجية

The State of Eritrea
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Eritrea has formally informed the IGAD Secretary General of its decision to withdraw from the Organization.

Eritrea's decision stems from, and is predicated, on the following poignant facts and events:

1. As it will be recalled, Eritrea played a pivotal role when IGAD was revitalized in 1993, and subsequently worked, in collaboration with other Member States, for its transformation and effectiveness so that it would serve as the primary vehicle for enhancement of regional peace and stability thereby paving the ground for viable regional economic integration.
2. Unfortunately, over time and especially since 2005, IGAD has not only failed to meet the aspirations of the peoples of the region, but instead played a deleterious role becoming a tool against targeted Member States; particularly Eritrea. These unwarranted acts prompted Eritrea to suspend its membership in April 2007.
3. Eritrea re-activated its membership in IGAD in June 2023, hoping that the Organization would heed Eritrea's call for reform and rectify its past records. Regrettably, IGAD has and continues to renege on its statutory obligations thereby undermining its own relevance and legal mandate.

In the event, Eritrea finds itself compelled to withdraw its membership from an organization that has forfeited its legal mandate and authority; offering no discernible strategic benefit to all its constituencies and failing to contribute substantively to the stability of the region.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Asmara
12 December 2025

¹ <https://shabait.com/2025/12/12/press-release-eritrea-has-withdrawn-its-membership-from-igad/>





IGAD Regrets Eritrea's Decision to Withdraw from the Organisation

Decemembr 12, 2025 (DJIBOUTI, Djibouti): The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has taken note of the decision by the Government of the State of Eritrea to withdraw from the Organisation, as communicated through a formal Note Verbale to the IGAD Secretariat.

IGAD recalls that Eritrea had self suspended its participation in the Organisation for nearly two decades before formally rejoining following the 14th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government held in June 2023. On that occasion, Eritrea was unanimously and warmly welcomed back by all Member States, reflecting a collective commitment to inclusivity, regional solidarity, and renewed cooperation.

Since June 2023, IGAD notes with regret that Eritrea has not participated in IGAD meetings, programmes, or activities. Throughout this period, the Secretariat has exercised patience and goodwill, while remaining open and available for constructive engagement.

IGAD further regrets that the decision to withdraw was taken without the submission of tangible proposals or engagement on specific institutional or policy reforms. The Organisation has consistently remained open to dialogue through its established consultative mechanisms.

In this spirit, the IGAD Secretariat will continue its outreach to the Government of the State of Eritrea and encourages it to reconsider its position and to fully rejoin the Organisation in good faith, in order to advance shared objectives for peace, stability, and development across the region.

IGAD remains firmly committed to its mandate of fostering regional cooperation, dialogue, and collective action for the benefit of the peoples of the Horn of Africa.

END

SCAN TO VERIFY



² <https://igad.int/igad-regrets-eritreas-decision-to-withdraw-from-the-organisation/>





BRIDGE Research & Innovation



BRIDGE Profile

Bridge Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace (BRIDGE) is an independent, non-profit think tank based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Registered under the FDRE Civil Society Organization Proclamation No. 1113/2019, which specializes in parliamentary affairs, peace, and development in the IGAD region.



Mission

To advance democratic governance and enhance peace through evidence-based research and innovative policy analysis.



Vision

To be a leading research hub and trusted source of analysis on parliamentary affairs, peace, governance, and development in the IGAD region.



Core Values

Rigor: Delivering high-quality, evidence-driven research.

Innovation: Pioneering creative and adaptive solutions for governance and peace challenges.

Trust: Upholding credibility through transparent and reliable analysis.



Objectives

It aims to be a knowledge hub on the affairs of IGAD and strengthen peace and socio-economic development throughout the Horn of Africa by:

- Conducting rigorous, evidence-based research that informs policy and practice on the IGAD subregional organization and on the Horn of Africa.

- Delivering specialized training programs on the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and regional dynamics in the Horn of Africa.

- Monitoring IGAD's activities for knowledge dissemination and engagement with academicians, the diplomatic community, and pertinent stakeholders, to amplify IGAD's impact and reinforce its commitment in the region.

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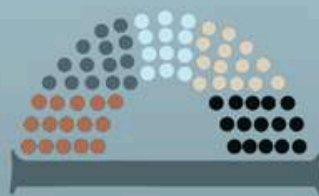
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OCCASIONAL PAPER

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