

Addis Ababa, December 4 (WIC) -Eritrea's national football team has disappeared in Uganda in what would be potentially the fourth team to abscond from their authoritarian country, officials said Monday.

Ugandan police were alerted after 16 football team members disappeared after losing to Rwanda 2-0 in a regional tournament, according to the Council for East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA).

"The police have been notified," said Ugandan CECAFA official Moses Magogo, adding that the players failed to return to their hotel after a shopping trip in the capital, Kampala.

Thousands leave the Red Sea nation every month, according to the United Nations, fleeing conscription and a hard line government that jails critics in harsh desert labor camps, and is ranked worst in the world for press freedom.

In 2007, six national players sought asylum in Angola after a game there, while in 2009, 12 Eritrean national football players sought asylum after a game in Kenya.

Last year 13 members of Eritrea's Red Sea football club asked for asylum in Tanzania.

"When they flew in there was an alert from CECAFA secretariat about the history of attempts to disappear by the team," Magogo said. "We shared the information with the Ugandan police to keep an eye on them."