



# ASSOCIATION OF GREEKS OF ETHIOPIA

Established in 1975

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To : **Her Excellency Mrs Demitu HAMBIS ABONSA**  
Ambassador of F.D.R. of Ethiopia in Rome  
[info@ethiopianembassy.it](mailto:info@ethiopianembassy.it)

Athens, 07 July 2023

**Your Excellency,**

On behalf of the Greeks who were born and lived in Ethiopia, which left your Country due to the circumstances of the Derg regime in 1975-76, presently residing in Greece and other countries, (organized under our Association which represents the majority of the families that had to flee), **by the present Plea**, we wish to inform you about certain very unfortunate events that are taking place in Ethiopia against the Hellenic Greek Community Association in Ethiopia (HGCA) which is existing since 1910, and to bring to your attention some critical issues that are threatening the continuation of the existence of the Greek Nationals in the **friendly since centuries**, Country of Ethiopia.

Our **two proud Nations** met each other for thousands of years and build up co-operation of **mutual respect and trust**. Needless to recall that the very name of your Country derives from the Greek Homeric word **Aethiops**. In more modern times, in the past two centuries Greeks coming out from the Ottoman rule, and trying to consolidate their independence, looked with love and sympathy at the proud People of Ethiopia, who had never known foreign occupation. The **Greeks were never colonialists**, and they **stood by your Country** when your Country's freedom was endangered in Adwa and the attack by Mussolini's fascist regime (of which we were also victims). We also met at important historical moments when we were given a significant help from your Country after the 1922 Asia Minor catastrophe, when children and minors were assisted and helped both then and later during the second world war. Greeks, sharing a common religious background, came to Ethiopia to offer their skills and knowledge to help build important churches, monuments, hotels, other buildings, the Railway, etc. In addition, they had made significant investments in the economy (coffee, mills, viticulture, textile industry, building materials, etc.). We were also active at assisting your Nation during the Great Famine that struck Ethiopia. Relationships that, among other things, continue to this day with the existence of a

large Ethiopian community in Greece, the construction of a monument in the Abyssinia Square in Athens, the studies of Ethiopians in Greek Universities, the provision of scholarships for postgraduate studies in Greece with the support of the Greek Diocese of Axum, the special relations with the Greek Church (provision of churches for use by the Ethiopian community, studies of the Ethiopian clergy in Greece), with cultural exchanges (performance of "Socrates barefoot" at the Herodes theatre, under Acropolis), with the participation of Greek films in the Ethiopian Film Festival, with bilateral trade forums, etc, etc. A really glorious relationship.

**Your Excellency,**

Since the Autumn 2022, Professor Birhanu Nega, Minister of Education, **was pressing and in fact threatening** the HGCA to accept the establishment of a CHARITY ENDOWMENT Entity, to which the HGCA is requested to participate by Donating in Kind its' School Buildings!

Obviously, this unacceptable demand was in "unanimously rejected" in October 2022, by the General Assembly of the HGCA, which instead decided the present Greek Community Schools (GCS) to become, as per the law in force, **an International School**.

Based on the above decision, the HGCA Executive Board **submitted** in February 2023 all the required documents for the establishment of an International School.

It should be noted that the English Section, where the teaching is in English Language following the Cambridge International System, is considered to be the best in Addis Ababa, and today hosts more than 1.300 students from 52 nations, the majority being Ethiopians or of Ethiopian origin.

In an unethical manner, on April 19 2023, based on a letter written by the Ministry of Education on March 21 2023, **the legally elected Community Executive Board of the HGCA was informed** in writing by the Authority for Civil Society Organization (ACSO) of the F.D.R.E. that, "the Ministry of Education has realized that the HGCA **cannot LEGALLY Manage** the GCS [the HGCA is operating the present Greek Community Schools (GCS), continuously since 1960 !] with an annually renewed Permit, and hence until the School is registered as an ENDOWMENT, it **was decided to impose** (!!!) a Temporary Interim Administration Board consisting of 6 members (with no one appointed from the HGCA!) to take over the School".

The Interim Administration Board (IAB) appointed by the request of the Minister of Education, indeed **took over** the Greek Community Schools (GCS), accompanied by Federal Armed Policemen and, in addition **broke the doors trespassing** the Greek Community Offices, **threatening at gun-point Board members of the HGCA, employees, the professors, the parents and their kids** (entering in the classes with weapons), **as well as the Ambassador of the Greek Republic in Ethiopia Mrs Anna Farrou** (the policemen pointed their guns against her – there is a video of the issue) and confiscated the Embassy's car and unlawfully denied access to the Executive Board Members of the HGCA.

These unacceptable and shameful actions do not reflect the worldwide presented Ethiopian hospitable Hypostasis and Culture, since they egregiously violate the human rights, including the right to work, the freedom of expression of a differing opinion, and the **enforcement of a decision by the threat of guns** within an Educational and Cultural campus, being all in direct and extreme contradiction with the UN, EU, UAN, UNESCO and Ethiopian Laws. We are astonished by this attempt to **impose a decision** was made without taking into account the HGCA concerns.

In addition, following the **2 Verbal Notes** sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the F.D.R. of Ethiopia (the last given on the 5th of July 2023), we hereby also appeal for your support and engagement in order to be achieved a just and swift resolution, permitting the survival of the Greek Community in your country, the wellbeing and respect of the Greek Nationals in accordance to the International Human Rights Declaration and the EU – Ethiopian (African) Bilateral Agreement.

**Your Excellency,**

today there are approximately 3.000 Ethiopian Nationals residing in Greece (the persons of Greek origin in Addis Ababa are not more than 300!), and they are living in total harmony with the Greeks and other nationals, completely free to decide on their own where to go and where to settle, without any kind of force or pressure by any one, permitting them thus to perform the work they have chosen, to follow their religious orientation, and have their children study at a school of their choice.

Our Association has had a harmonious and fruitful cooperation with Ethiopian organizations in Greece. At the outbreak of the current situation we stated: “The Association of Greeks of Ethiopia (S.E.A.) stresses that the **uninterrupted cooperation** with the Ethiopian Community organizations in Greece must continue, and that the friendly relations and feelings towards them and Ethiopia nurtured by the expatriate former Greek community in Greece and elsewhere **should not be disturbed**, contrary to the current situation towards the HGCA in Ethiopia”.

It is disgraceful the fact that the Nationals and persons of Greek origin living today in Ethiopia, after more than 2 centuries of presence of Greeks in your Country, are not any more equally treated, and in fact they are “**threatened and discriminated**”. This was recorded by an incident that took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2023, when Mr Getachew Tefera, Representative of the Minister of Education and Chairperson of the IAB, in the presence of all school staff, employees and a number of parents, humiliating and threatening the Greek Ethiopians working and teaching at the Greek Community School saying (word by word): “If you the **Biracial/Metis** wish to remain and work here, you **must take off from your soul and spirit anything Greek that you still carry in you**”. Such Racist Declarations have caused serious anxiety among our compatriots of mixed race. We expect that proper measures are taken.

All of these, and numerous other humiliating practices exercised against the Board of HGCA, such as interfering in the HGCA affairs (which beyond the GCS management is following an agenda that includes its social mission towards the needy, its up keeping of our religious institutions: Church, Cemetery, the residence of the Greek Archbishop of Axum, etc.) lead us to the conclusion that some are dreaming **to terminate the presence** of our small Greek community in Ethiopia, in **order to seize its property**.

We furthermore plea that **the current situation** initiated by the Minister of Education (by various actions such as police operation, alienating the Board of HGCA from its natural functions and offices, making non-proven allegations of financial misconduct to justify the action – take into account that the present board was elected only a few months ago) **is solved in friendly manner**, heeding the HGCA's concern that it **does not want to surrender its property** to a Charitable Endowment, **but is willing to co-operate in establishing an International School**, and **ready to be regularly checked by the proper Authorities over its conduct**.

Thanking you in advance for **considering our Plea**, we hereby invite the Representative of the Embassy of the F.D.R.E. in Rome, who will be visiting Athens during the annual cultural celebrations in Abyssinia Square on July 22, to pay a visit to our offices, in order to get to know each other, be introduced to the history and the contribution of the Greeks in Ethiopia as of the last two centuries, and in addition to discuss and provide to you some written documents related to the serious problems that the HGCA is facing at the moment and the real threat to completely vanish the presence of the Greeks in your Country, and at the Horn of Africa in general.

We shall be very grateful if you could forward our letter of Plea to **Her Excellency the President** of F.D.R.E., **His Excellency the Prime Minister** F.D.R.E., **Their Excellencies the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice** of F.D.R.E.

Being at your disposal for any questions and/or additional information that you may require, we are always at your disposal, and so please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

**Yours sincerely,**

For and on behalf of the ASSOCIATION OF GREEKS OF ETHIOPIA,



**Dr. Alexander Grous**  
**President**



**Paraskevi Manoukaki**  
**Secretary General**



cc: Mr Konstantinos Soulios, Acting Director, A8 Directorate for Sub-Saharan Africa  
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