



**The Hellenism of Ethiopia weeps**

## **ASSOCIATION OF GREEKS OF ETHIOPIA (S.E.A.): THE GREEK COMMUNITY OF ADDIS ABABA IN DANGER**

### **SUMMARY**

With actions and claims of the Minister of Education of Ethiopia, an attempt is being made to convert the English section of the Greek Community Schools belonging to the Greek Community AA into a Charitable Endowment, which means the transfer of ownership of the schools through the Endowment to the Ethiopian State, and the dispossession of the Community's property. The Hellenic Community AA has established a new organization (INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL) provided for by the legislation to start from the 2023-24 school year and has requested permission. Permission which was not given. It also communicated its intention to close the English section if the form of INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL was not accepted.

Instead, the Minister has continually smeared Greeks as corrupt, without evidence, to justify his actions and has hastily and eccentrically embarked on the installation of an interim administration of the English section, which has banned entry to the Board members of the Greek Community of AA. And daily he is practicing a regime of intimidation on the staff, teachers, pupils and parents. It also intervenes in actions that concern the Community and not the English section, such as: opening and using the Community's bank accounts, leaving unpaid 29 employees, racist comments to Greek-Ethiopians to choose whether to be Greek or Ethiopian, attempt to dismiss the Community's lawyers, trying to prohibit the Community's social benefits to people in need of such assistance, accounts are blocked and rumors are there that no exit permits to travel abroad will be given to the members of the Board HGCA, etc The intervention extends to the Greek section of the GCS (which are under the Greek Ministry of Education) with unpaid staff (Greek Civil Servants) and various prohibitions, etc. Finally, abusing disruptive actions of a small group (Trojan Horses of the community), an attempt is made to change the composition of the Board of Directors of the Community.

<https://www.ellinoethiopic.gr/elliniki-koinothta-aa-se-kindyno-2/>

## HISTORICAL FACTS

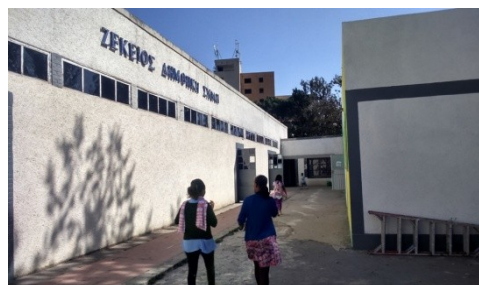
The Greek Community of Addis Ababa-Ethiopia was founded in 1910. At that time a Primary School was started with donations from the Community members. The Greek-speaking mixed semi-gymnasium of the Community (the first 3 classes of the sixth grade high school) was opened in 1944. Its recognition by the Greek State was granted in 1947 by the Decree 2, Government Gazette 152/24-07-1947, Vol.

By the year 1950, all three upper grades were created and thus the semi-gymnasium became a full sixth-grade Gymnasium, which was recognized as equal to the Gymnasiums of the Greece by Decree 5, Government Gazette 177/17-08-1950, vol. The "old" school was built under the presidency of Mr. George Kalogeropoulos and was located in the centre of the town. With a curriculum and teaching staff that came from the Ministry of Education of Greece. These schools were attended by Greeks and Cypriots from Ethiopia and the wider East African region. The New Greek Community Schools were built under the presidency of Athanasios Michos on a plot of 33,000 square meters. The land belonged to an Armenian named Mena, who had Ethiopian citizenship. And according to the Ethiopian laws of the time, he could not sell to a foreign national without the special permission of Emperor Haile Selassie. With the intervention of the president of the Community, Mr. Athanasios Michos and its treasurer, Mr. Alexandros Ganotakis, permission was granted by the Emperor to purchase the land in the name of the Greek Community of Addis Ababa. A fundraiser was held by the prosperous residents of Addis Ababa, which raised the money for the purchase of the land. The Great Benefactors: Athanasios Mihos, Michael Zekos and Nicholas Diamantas, whose names the school community buildings bear, undertook their construction.

In 1961, the Community completed the construction of three school buildings within the community's own land, the "Michio High School", the "Zekio Elementary School" and the "Diamanteio Kindergarten".



MICHIO SECONDARY



ZEKIO PRIMARY



DIAMANTIO  
KINDERGARDEN

The Community Boarding School was also funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when the late Evangelos Averoff was Foreign Minister, following the intervention of Athanasios Michos. In



1961, the building of the Community Boarding School, which at that time housed about 250 students, was completed.

The Community Boarding School is the largest in the African continent and its operating costs have been fully covered by the Community to date, without any financial support. To the young expatriate students the Community offers accommodation in the Community Boarding School for the duration of their studies in the Community Schools (Primary, Secondary and High School), full board, clothing and medical care.

In addition, the facilities of the Greek Athletic Union "Olympiacos" were built on part of the land, with benefactor and under the presidency of Mr. Ioannis Velissariou.



With the great exodus of the community, especially in 1975-76, when the dictatorial military regime of Derg took over, the Greeks were forced to leave Ethiopia, losing their properties. The schools, however, continued to function with the few remaining students.

Since 1985 an English section has been established and has been operating successfully alongside the Greek schools, with approximately 1,000-1,300 foreign students of about 52 nationalities (initially non-Ethiopians and children of diplomatic and administrative staff of African and other countries based in Addis Ababa), who are taught Greek from grade 1 to grade 6 . Later, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education allowed Ethiopian students to enroll as well. The English School section is considered one of the best in the Ethiopian capital.

In the English section, the English curricula of the University of Cambridge, which has recognised the Greek Community School as an official examination centre for the IGCSE, A/S and A-levels international diplomas, are applied.

In 1997, the English section moved into the new building, a gift of the then President of the Greek Community of Addis Ababa, Mr. Konstantinos Kalogeropoulos.

## THE PRESENT SITUATION

Within the land of the Greek Community Schools (GCS) two schools are operating. The Greek section, which is under the Greek Ministry of Education and the English section which operates under a permission of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. Both under the responsibility of the HGCA.

The Ethiopian Ministry of Education issued new guidelines for the operation of International and Community schools in March 2021, with the aim of increasing control over them.

At the same time (July 2022) a new Administration (Board of Directors) was elected in the Greek Community of AA, with a mandate to clean the mess of previous administrations.

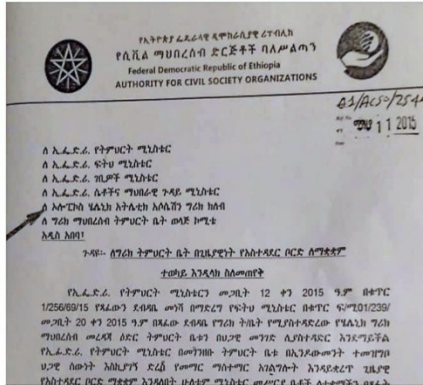
In order to renew the schools' license, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education asked the Community to create a new legal entity which will manage the English section School and to which the Community **will endow the school buildings.**



During the year the Greek Community of AA, reported that it did not accept the form of Charitable Endowment and proposed the INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL format which is one of the 4 forms of schools that the Ethiopian Ministry of Education allows to operate. It also informed, as of February 2023, the Ministry in this regard that it has fulfilled all the conditions required and requested that the INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL be opened from the 2023-24 school year. **Finally, the Greek Community of AA prominently stressed that if the permit for the INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL was not granted, it preferred to close the English section School, which is its sovereign right as the owner of the GCS.**

The current situation is the result of the actions and demands of the Minister of Education, Professor Berhanu Nega PhD., calling for a change of the Board of Directors, of the English School, now composed of members of the Greek AA Community, so that the school is run by a state-affiliated body, in order to install its own board.

In one of his documents, the Minister announced that he would take over the Greek Schools, install an administration of his personal choice, which administration would transfer the Greek Property to a Charitable Endowment which would be controlled (as the law requires for these legal forms) by the Ethiopian State, i.e. a usurpation of the Community's property.



The Minister's response was that they had to accept his terms by 31/03/2023, or else he would proceed unilaterally. So by a verbal instruction issued by ACSO (the department of social organisations) and the Department of Education announced that it would proceed with the appointment of an Interim Administration that will lead to a Charitable Endowment.

The reaction of the Hellenic AA Community was immediate. It filed a legal appeal to the Kirkos First Instance Court and requested a suspension of the decision. The injunction was finally heard on 14/06/2023 and prohibited the implementation of the decision: (the date on the letter is from the old calendar used by Ethiopia and elements from the text in English have been pasted).



When the Minister realised that he was losing the case, he obliquely issued another court order, from another court of his choice (Federal Higher Court – Lideta. In Ethiopia there are different type of courts: in each Federal area with local peculiarities – ethnic, religious, etc). On 14/06/2023 the hearing started which continued on 19/06/2023 and issued finally a decision in favour of the Minister on 07/07/2023. The Greek community of AA declared that it will appeal this decision..

On May 24, the IRS paid a surprise visit to the Community's accounting records for the years 2015 to 2022. At the same time, the Minister began to speak widely about corrupt Greeks. To justify his action, the Minister spoke that there are financial irregularities that need to be checked. THERE IS NO COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GREEKS and the new administration of the Greek Community of AA that took over almost a year ago!!!!. And of course the Greeks as a whole should not be punished, especially before any misdoings are found!!!!. Of course there is no discussion of the Community property that was seized since 1975 during the Derg Military regime (Old School and Mosvold buildings), which should be returned or offset against any findings.

The lawyer of the Greek Community AA said that all the rumors spread by the Minister of Education about the non-payment of taxes for 25 years are unsubstantiated. The Ministry of Education has no authority to deal with such matters, but the Ministry of Revenues, which has not announced whether it has any findings.

No evidence of these financial irregularities has been provided, and if and when it is, it will have to be documented and appropriate responsibility attributed to those who may have committed any mismanagement.

Apart from that, he stressed that the school is a community school and such schools are exempt by the Legislation to pay taxes based on the Legislation of the country !! (There is also an earlier court decision).

The Executive Committee Members of the HGCA have informed that the English School Section and the entire HGCA accounts have been checked by CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS and that since 24th May 2023, all financial documents of years 2015-2022 have been taken by the Ministry of Revenues for audit. Shouldn't all wait for their findings and claims? And to negotiate with them?

However, at the end of May (in implementation of the ACSO - Ministry of Education decisions) armed federal police officers stormed in and started sealing off the community buildings. They even tried to seal off the restaurant where 23 destitute children of the Boarding School, teachers and students are fed.



diplomatic statutes.

The Greek Ambassador arrived on the spot, trying to find out who ordered this occupation. The entire Board of Directors of the Greek Community AA, Residents, Parents of children, employees of the Community protested. The armed police ordered those present to leave. The threat of force is a serious violation of the human rights and

On a daily basis in the following days, community members attended the premises on a daily basis, preserving Community property. The Greek Foreign Ministry and other authorities were contacted, TV channels and Radio Stations were alerted, and together with residents, parents and students demanded the removal of the federal police.



And while awaiting the injunction decision of 14/06/2023, the Minister called the parents and threatened them not to endanger their children as on 14/06/2023 he would enter with a strong federal police force to implement the installation of a new interim administration. Which he did without resistance as the community and parents fearing bloodshed did not line up at the entrance. Following the unacceptable actions of the Minister of Education to appropriate the Addis Ababa Greek Community school complex by attempting to arbitrarily change the board of directors which was made up of members by the Greek Community of AA, actions for which the Greek Community of AA has taken to the courts and the case is pending.

The interim administration intervenes in actions concerning the Community and not the English section, such as: opening and using the Community's bank accounts, racist remarks to Greek-Ethiopians to choose whether to be Greek or Ethiopian, attempt to dismiss lawyers and other Community staff (chief of staff, accountants, etc.) an attempt to prohibit the social benefits of the Community to 83 expatriates and people over 65 in need of such assistance, taking care of Greek religious properties: Church, Cemetery, the Greek Archbishop's residence some of which have unpaid utility bills (power & water supplies) etc. Finally, through the divisive actions of a small group (Trojan Horses of the community), it tries to change the composition and control the Board of Directors of the Community.

The interim administration also started interfering in the Greek section of the GCS, which is out of its jurisdiction. Several teachers of the Greek section (Greek civil servants), are facing a situation whereas their salaries and other benefits are not paid. They are also facing expulsion from teachers' chambers in GCS, while there are rumors that their travel to Greece for family reunion is not allowed.

The interim administration issued several orders: banning members of the Greek Community of AA Board from entering, prohibiting faculty and administrative staff from discussing anything related to the situation (under penalty of expulsion), and announced that it would soon install the Charitable Endowment administration with individuals appointed by the Department of Education, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Women's Social Affairs, the Greek Community School Parents' Association, and the Greek Athletic Association "Olympiacos", placing in this position its vice-president. Thus the real owner, i.e. the Greek Community AA, which was elected by the 147 members that make up the Community, is excluded, and the Minister "rewards" the unrecognized and separatist Greek Community Organization Aid Idir, which was created by the 8-member administration of the Greek Athletic Association Olympiacos 11 months ago to be an alternative solution as a "Trojan Horse" in the hands of the Minister, by people who oppose the Greek Community of AA. They even tried to appropriate the Diplomatic car of the Embassy that was on the site.

The interim administration also said the employees over-65s will be expelled. Threats are still being hurled at anyone (teachers, parents, students, or members of the Hellenic Community of AA administration) through the mass media or social media networks who refer to the current situation. Orders were given to break into the offices of the Community. This constitutes a regime of intimidation and is not consistent with human rights and academic freedom principles that accommodate school institutions. Community lawyers were "fired" i.e. deprived of the Constitutionally guaranteed right to legal defense.



The interim administration for the English Department of the school, appointed by the Minister of Education, has issued a document denying access to the members of the Community Board because they are "obstructing" their work. (document opposite).

More broadly, the whole affair is said to be related to intra-governmental power struggle between the tribal parties that make up the current federal government of Ethiopia, with the current Minister of Education wanting to

raise his "stock", saying that he "brought" a significant fortune to the Ethiopian state.

He is said to have the same plans for the French, German and Italian schools.

The situation that has been created does not reflect the almost two centuries close cooperation and friendship between Greeks and Ethiopians in the latest period. The two **proud Nations** met each other for thousands of years and build up co-operation of **mutual respect and trust** specially because Greeks were never a colonial force. Needless to recall that the very name of the Country derives from the ancient Greek Homeric word **Aethiops**. These relations have deep roots in the official (i.e. adopted by the then kings) Christianization of Ethiopia by St. Frumentius or Abu Salama, the help of Greeks in important moments in Ethiopia (1896 Battle of Adwa, 1936 Mussolini invasion), the significant help of Negus Tafari for the Asia Minor disaster (1923 Abyssinia Square) and the care of orphans of the Asia Minor disaster and World War II, etc. The Greeks participated in important developmental public works: the construction of monuments and important buildings, Banks, Hotels, the building of the railway, etc. In addition, they had made significant investments in the economy (coffee, mills, viticulture, textile industry, building materials, etc.). Greeks were also active at assisting the 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, studies of the Ethiopian



# Greek Community School in uphill discord with Gov't



By Metasebia Teshome

The Greek Community School accuses the government of trying to illegally seize its property.

As the situation heats up, the school's board of directors has now resorted to taking matters to its own hand by filing a lawsuit against the government, claiming that it had no legal right to take possession of the property.

In a press conference given by the school on Wednesday, June 7, 2023, regarding the current situation, the school's lawyer, Zenebe Fikre stated that, "Our right to be heard has been denied, and our property has been confiscated by the government without our knowledge."

As the lawyer indicated, the issue, which started three years ago in relation to taxation, has now reached a stage where the government has decided to take over the school illegally.

On March 20, 2015, the Ministry of Justice, based on the letter sent by the Ministry of Education (MoE), in a letter written to the Civil Society Organization Authority (ACSO) stated that the Hellenic Greek Community, which manages the Greek school, is not properly managing the school, and further requested the authority to establish a temporary board. Following the statement, the authority established a board which had 6 members from 4 ministerial offices, and one from the school's parent committee and one from

Olopikos Hellenic Athletic Association Greek Club to administer the school until it registered its endowment property.

The school lawyer now claims that despite the community's great management of the school, the government has seen it otherwise. "On April 24, 2023, the court issued an injunction to stop the Ministry of Education and ACSO from setting up a new board to take over the school, for further investigation. The court is now considering the ownership and legitimacy of the school thoroughly."

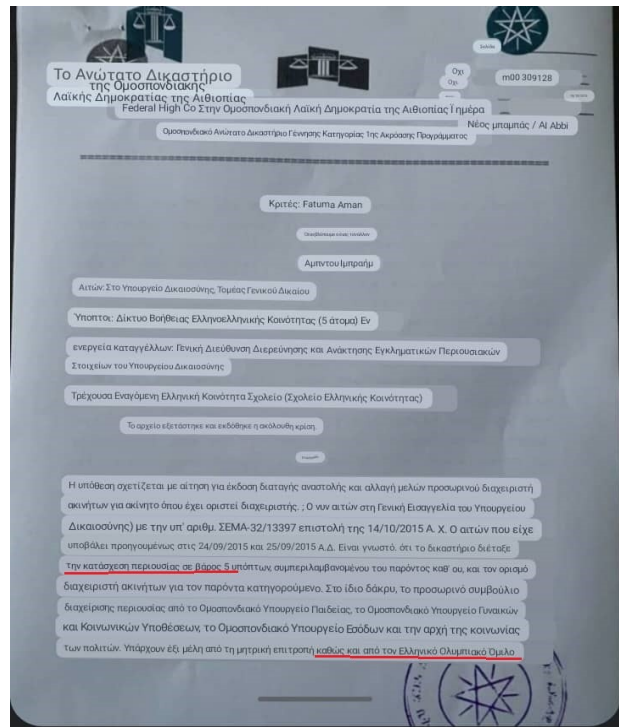
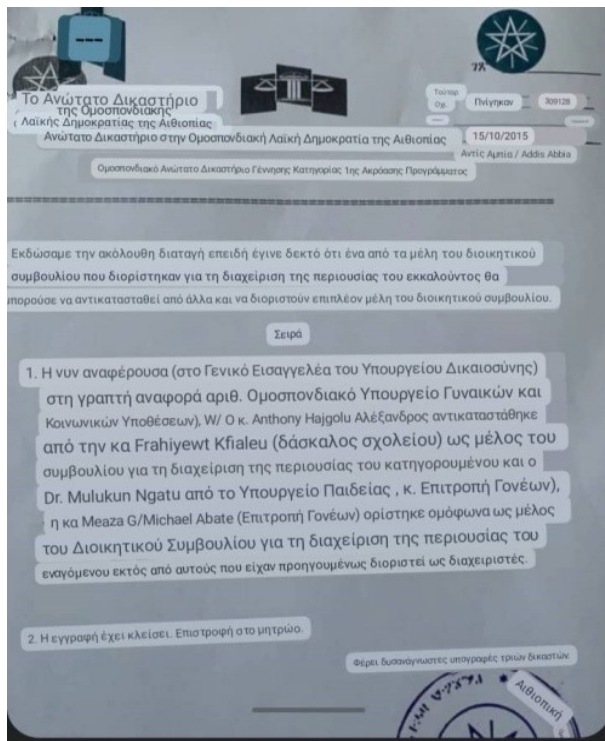
"Whilst this was pending, on last Friday June 2, 2023, the prosecutor filed a lawsuit and when we were appearing at the high court for a scheduled hearing; the court passed a decision without hearing our answer. The court ultimately ruled in favor of the government. As a result, those who claim to be the administration, we do not know where they are from have since been in the compound since Saturday," the lawyer expressed, puzzled by the decision made.

Over the years, there have been multiple allegations against the school over corruption for close to 30 years.

"We had two appointments in court; no one was able to present any evidence. As a community school, the school exercises its right to write about taxes. However, the school uses collected funds for operations and is prepared to accept responsibility for any unlawful actions," the lawyer underlined.

clergy in Greece), with cultural exchanges (performance of "Socrates barefoot" at the Herodes theater (under Acropolis), with the participation in the Ethiopian Film Festival, with bilateral trade forums, etc.

A question has already been submitted to the European Commission by the Member of the European Parliament of the New Democracy Party, Mr. Man. Kefalogiannis, asking the European Commission whether "it has been informed about the events in Addis Ababa" and "what actions it intends to take to avoid the obvious intention of the Ethiopian government to appropriate the school complex of the Greek Community, which was acquired by the Greek Community and is its property".

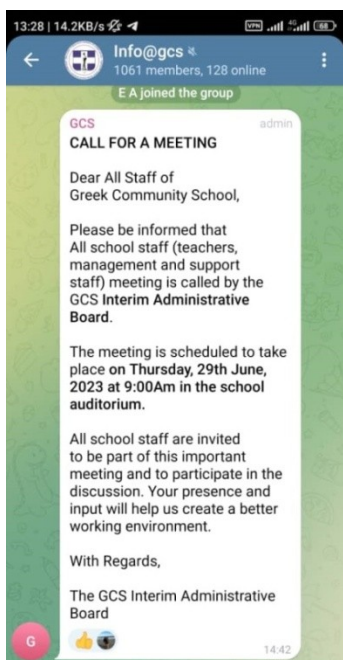


The long-awaited interim decision of the Lideta Supreme Court was finally delivered on 24 May 2023.

Notable features of this decision are the reference to "confiscation" only on suspicion of mismanagement and without evidence. A global legal prototype. And secondly the replacement

of the notorious splitter (it seems those who used him realized his negative role). The Greek Community of AA has stated that it is continuing the legal process and will challenge all these decisions.

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 of Ethiopia in Greece or 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 two 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 29<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.**

In addition, following **two Verbal Notes** were sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia (the last given on the 5th of July 2023), the appeal is made to achieve a just and swift resolution, permitting the survival of the Greek Community, the wellbeing and respect of the Greek Nationals in accordance to the International Human Rights Declaration and the EU – Ethiopian (African) Bilateral Agreement.

The Association of Greeks of Ethiopia (S.E.A.) will support with every legal means the struggle of the Greek Community of Addis Ababa for the prevention of the expropriation of the property of the Greek Community by the unacceptable actions of the Ethiopian Minister of Education and individuals who act as a "Trojan Horse" aiming at the property of the Greek Community of Addis Ababa and the Greek Athletic Union "Olympiacos". This property was created by the contributions of the Greek expatriates of Ethiopia and the 5 benefactors, and belongs to the tradition of all.



**S.E.A. calls on to the Greek expatriates of Ethiopia their friends and relatives everywhere to react, to sign the petition (<https://chnq.it/D5cWGVJGKh>), to address authorities of the place where they reside and to denounce the injustice and illegality against the Greek Community of AA. To cooperate with the Greek Diaspora and Ethiopian organizations abroad to express their protest.**



The Association of Greeks of Ethiopia is today the body that expresses the largest organized part of the community diaspora that leaves outside Ethiopia with the great exodus of 1975-76 with regular members: in Greece and corresponding members: in Ethiopia, other African countries, Australia, Arab countries, France, Holland and other European countries, USA, Canada.

We are pleading to all to interfere to stop this unfortunate situation. The process that has started should be stopped and all actions reversed. The Temporary Interim Board should be abolished. A friendly negotiation should start to find a solution for the creation of the INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL and if that is not acceptable, as the HGCA has declared it will close down the English School Section, as it is not willing to cede its property, which is its sovereign right on its legal ownership. And a negotiation should take place on any possible wrong financial doings and possible claims. Also to emphasize the clear cut commitment of the HGCA to be frequently monitored and checked by the proper financial authorities.

## PUBLICATIONS

PETITION: <https://www.ellinoethiopic.gr/petition-stop-the-ministry-of-education-of-ethiopia-to-take-over-illegally-the-greek-community-school/diafora/>

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[«APOGEVMATINI» newspaper of Constantinople, 20/06/2023](#)