

ICEJ Outlays Massive Funding for Ethiopian Jewish Aliyah

Following the Israeli government's recent decision to renew the aliyah of Ethiopian Jewry, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem recently handed over to the Jewish Agency the funds needed to sponsor the first wave of over 500 new immigrants arriving from this ancient African community.

Last month, the ICEJ handed over \$500,000 to Keren Hayesod to cover the aliyah flights of the first wave of 523 Ethiopian Jews, as well as to sponsor flights for another 104 Jewish immigrants coming soon from France and the Ukraine. The first families of Ethiopian Jews are expected to start arriving in Israel by Sukkot, in time for the ICEJ's annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in mid-October. Over the coming months, the Christian Embassy also is aiming to raise enough funds to sponsor the entire first year of renewed Ethiopian aliyah, set at some 1,400 persons, as well as additional monies to assist with their absorption into the country.

"Our Christian supporters have always been generous and enthusiastic in giving towards our aliyah projects, especially when they take on such a humanitarian mission as this renewed Ethiopian return," said Dr. Jürgen Bühler, the ICEJ executive director. "These are people who are endangered by tribal conflicts and unrest while also suffering through times of severe drought and flooding. But now they will be lifted out of difficult and impoverished conditions, and finally be reunited with their families already in Israel."

Dr. Bühler also noted the ICEJ's commitment to the absorption phase for Ethiopian Jews, since it has proven to be as important as the actual move to Israel due to the large adjustments in language, culture and education these communities must make. Bühler said the cabinet decision to

bring home the last of the Ethiopian Jews also is a further sign that Israel is not a racist or apartheid state. He added that even African Christians have been responding generously over recent weeks to contribute towards this aliyah effort from their continent.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the ICEJ has assisted nearly 120,000 Jews in making their way home to Israel from all over the world. This represents an investment of over \$50 million in aliyah efforts, with most of the assisted Jewish *olim* coming from the former Soviet republics but also thousands from Western Europe, North and South America, the Bnei Menashe from India, and the Kaifeng Jews from China.

David Parsons *is a spokesperson for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.*