

ICEJ Sponsors Third Flight in Resumed Airlift of Ethiopian Jews

On Tuesday this week, a specially chartered flight arranged by the Jewish Agency For Israel and sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem brought a group of 160 Ethiopian Jewish immigrants to Israel as part of the resumed airlift operation *Tzur Yisrael* ("Rock of Israel"). This will mark the third flight of the renewed airlift, which aims to bring as many as 3,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel this year.

The second phase of the urgent airlift kicked off earlier this month when two flights arrived at Ben-Gurion Airport bringing 341 new immigrants from Ethiopia. Phase one was launched last December and quickly brought 2,000 Ethiopian Jews amid civil war, worsening drought conditions and coronavirus concerns.

Including today's flight, the Christian Embassy has now supported the Aliyah of over half of the Ethiopian Jews (2,750 out of 5,197) who have immigrated to Israel since 2015, when the Israeli cabinet decided to resume Ethiopian immigration on the basis of family reunification.

"The Christian Embassy is privileged to help with the historic Ingathering of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel in our day, and we are especially committed to standing in support of the Ethiopian Aliyah," said ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler. "They are the remnant of an ancient community who have waited long and suffered much for the hope of one day reuniting with the Jewish mainstream here in the land of their forefathers. May they be blessed as they embrace family and loved ones awaiting their arrival in Israel."

The ICEJ's support of today's Ethiopian immigrant group

includes the flight costs as well as various pre-flight expenses, including transportation and security from Gondar to the airport in Addis Ababa, Hebrew lessons, medical attention, interview and documentation costs, plus some urgent integration assistance once they arrive in Israel.

Many of these newest Ethiopian arrivals have been living for 20 years or more in difficult conditions in transit camps in Gondar and Addis Ababa, waiting for their chance to rejoin their families and the Jewish people in Israel. Israel's Minister of Aliyah & Absorption, Pnina Tamano-Shata, herself an Ethiopian Jewish immigrant to Israel at age three, has been spearheading the effort to revive the Ethiopian airlift, which was temporarily suspended over recent months due to several factors.

Over 95,000 Ethiopian Jews have immigrated to Israel since the 1980s, many in emergency airlifts to escape war and famine. Along with their offspring, the Ethiopian community in Israel today numbers over 140,000 members.

The remnant of Jews still left in Ethiopia were previously prevented from coming because they are considered *Falash Mura*, a term for Jews forced to convert to Christianity several generations ago for economic or other reasons. They continue to practice Judaism and have close relatives in Israel, so the Israeli government approved the resumption of their Aliyah back in 2015 on humanitarian grounds. {eoa}

David Parsons is vice president & senior spokesman for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. For more information on ICEJ's Ethiopian Aliyah, visit .

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