

From: ICEJ USA <us@mailings.icej.org>
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THE LAST WAVE OF ETHIOPIAN JEWRY

ICEJ to help speed return of Falash Mura

By David Parsons
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Falash Mura mother and child arriving in Israel
(JAFI/Brian Hendler)

The Jewish Agency for Israel has requested special assistance from the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem to help accelerate the return of the last 8,700 Ethiopian Jews to Israel by sponsoring direct aliyah flights over coming months.

According to Howard Flower, ICEJ Director of Aliyah Operations, JAFI officials say the need is urgent given the current drought and political turmoil in the region, as well as the growing medical problems of the Jewish community still in camps in the mountainous Gondar area.

Years of intense debate ended last November when the Israeli government and rabbinic authorities finally approved the aliyah requests of over 8,000 Jews left in Ethiopia who are known as Falash Mura. These are Jews whose ancestors were pressured to convert to Christianity about 150 years ago for economic reasons but still sought to retain in part their Jewish identities and traditions.

The Jewish Agency has been flying them to Israel at the rate of 200 per month in special flight groups of 100 passengers each. At the current rate, however, it will take up to four years to complete this unique aliyah initiative

"With concerns growing over their deteriorating conditions, the Jewish Agency is eager to speed

up the process, and due to budget cuts they are very thankful for the help from the Christian Embassy", said Flower. "We are a long-time partner with JAFI in the great modern-day aliyah and this provides us with another amazing opportunity to assist in the final Ingathering of the Jews to the land of their forefathers."

Some of the Falash Mura require urgent medical treatment which they cannot receive in Ethiopia, as a number of clinics have been closed due to funding shortages. Many also have been separated for years from close family members already in Israel.

"Children are growing up away from their grandparents, who are now well advanced in age", Flower explained.

Additionally, the severe drought that has been plaguing northern Africa has caused food shortages around Gondar, where most of the Falash Mura live.

Finally, there is concern that the chaotic revolutions in the Arab world might spread to Ethiopia, forcing Israel to consider yet another emergency airlift of Ethiopian Jews.



Jewish children in a Gondar school awaiting their turn to come home to Israel (JAFI)



Ethiopian Jewish immigrants arriving at Ben-Gurion (ICEJ)

The request for ICEJ assistance came on the 20th anniversary of "Operation Solomon", when nearly 15,000 Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel in a dramatic airlift involving 34 round-trip flights in 36 hours. Rebels opposed to the Marxist regime in Addis Ababa were closing in on the capital, forcing the country's military ruler to flee. With diplomatic intervention from the United States, Israeli leaders convinced the rebels to allow them to bring the throngs of Jews home in a swift, massive operation over one weekend in late May 1991.

A half decade earlier, "Operation Moses" had rescued an initial wave of thousands of Ethiopian Jews who had fled the nation's bitter civil war and were trying to journey to Israel by foot via Sudan.

This current group of more than 8,000 Falash Mura represents the last contingent of Ethiopian Jews who will be able to come home to Israel under the Law of Return, thereby realising this isolated community's ancient dream of returning to Zion one day.

The Christian Embassy has committed to helping with this urgent humanitarian mission as we work to hasten their rate of return to Israel. The first ICEJ-sponsored flight in this accelerated aliyah initiative will make the journey to Ben-Gurion Airport in August with 100 Ethiopian Jews on board.

"We plan to be waiting with a festive reception", said Flower.

Please act now to help us meet this urgent need.

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"Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and

gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth - everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and made."
Isaiah 43:5-7

[The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem](#) was founded in 1980 as an act of comfort and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to Jerusalem. Today, the ICEJ stands at the forefront of a growing mainstream movement of Christians worldwide who share a love and concern for Israel and an understanding of the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of the Jews to the land of their forefathers. [Join us »](#)

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