Seattle and surrounding Puget Sound Eritreans Celebrate 25th Jubilee Independence Day

On Saturday May 28th 2016 Eritreans, Eritrean Americans, friends and well- wishers came together to usher in the Celebration of Eritrea’s 25th Jubilee Independence festivities in one of Seattle’s many beautiful parks: Volunteer Park in the heart of the city. Seattle Eritreans have made this park a shrine for our annual Independence Day Picnic for the past several years. This year the atmosphere was full of anticipation of how we not only evaluate a quarter of a Century of Resilience and Development but also the deep understanding of how much more is expected of everyone for the coming decades given Eritrea’s past history and future challenges.

The event was officially opened at 2:00 PM with a moment of silence in remembrance of those who sacrificed life and limb for the birth of the new nation on May 24th 2091 after the longest and one of the most brutal wars for independence on the African Continent. This was followed by a ceremonial raising of the flag and the singing of the national anthems of Eritrea and the United States of America.

Mr. Isaac Araya, Chair Eritrean National Holyday Organizing Committee welcomed the over 2500 gathered crowed with a moving tribute to the history of the struggle for independence and a forward looking message of urgency to safeguard this precious gift from our martyrs. He did not mince any words in reminding audience Eritrea is engaged in diplomatic, economic, and political fronts to push back on the ongoing assault on its very survival and national sovereignty.

As always the legendary Seattle Eritrean youth dance group performers were ready to showcase their best dance skills on the occasion of Eritrea’s 25th Birthday bash and they did in a spectacular fashion. The audience was treated to all 9 tribal dances of Eritrea and they were impressed by their talent and energy. Ms. Senait Oghbe deserves huge kudos for her years of dedication in training the young people of Seattle in traditional Eritrean dance styles.

Messages of congratulations poured in from well-wishers from the Governor of Washington, the Honorable Jay Inslee, and proclamation from the Seattle City Council were read by their respective representatives. The Mayor of the City of Seattle, The Honorable Ed Murry was at hand in person to read his proclamation of declaring May 28, 2016 Eritrean Independence Day in Seattle. Eritrean Diaspora in Seattle felt honored and appreciated his presence.

More music performance by the Kunama and Bilen community members was joined by traditional Tehambele music and dance to cap of the program for Saturday. Guayla music and dance continued into the evening until the park closure.

Happy 25th Birthday Eritrea from all your children in Seattle.

Awet Nehafash

Eritrean National Holyday Organizing Committee