

Community Hosts Dinner for the Outgoing Eritrean Ambassador to the US

On Sunday 13 May 2011, the Eritrean Community In the Washington, DC metropolitan area hosted a farewell dinner for H. E. Ghirmai Ghebremariam, the outgoing Eritrean Ambassador to the US. The evening brought together Ambassador Ghirmai's friends and colleagues in Eritrea's long struggle for independence, members of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), Peoples Front for Justice and Democracy (PFDJ), Young PFDJ, Hidri, Eritrean Musicians and Artists, and many other groups and individuals who make up the tight knit Eritrean Community.



The evening began with a moment of silence in memory of Eritrea's fallen heroes. The well-attended emotional event at the Eritrean Civic and Community Center brought young and old, men, women and children as well as long time friends and colleagues from other US cities who wanted bid him farewell and thank him personally for his lifelong dedication and service to Eritrea. Officials and staff from the Embassy of Eritrea in Washington, DC also attended the farewell reception thrown in his honor.

There were many, the youth in particular, who were fortunate enough to have spent quality time with him and recalled fond moments from the past and there were even childhood stories from the soccer fields in Asmara and many in the room who in the past had crossed paths with him in Europe and the United States as he worked to introduce and raise awareness for the Eritrean peoples just cause. The accolades and praises continued throughout the night. His relationship with the Eritrean communities across the globe spans decades and is well known to many.

After dinner was served, members of the Young-PFDJ, who served as emcees for the evening, took the floor and spoke in praise of the outgoing Ambassador and invited other speakers, mostly from out of those who either knew the Ambassador closely or had a chance to work with him in the past. Mekonnen Ghebremariam and Simone Marriotti members of Y-PFDJ, expressed their respect and gratitude for Ambassador Ghirmai's leadership and said that he was "like a father" to them. Filmon Hintsu, a member of HIDRI, the under 18 youth group told of his admiration for Ambassador Ghirmai, his humility, and the time that he spent encouraging the youth. Meskerem Mehari, also a Y-PFDJ member, talked about her internship opportunity and her experience at the Embassy of Eritrea and thanked Ambassador Ghirmai for his advice, attention and guidance.

Embassy staff and colleagues expressed appreciation for his leadership, his humble personality, his open door policy, his readiness to always listen to his subordinates and praised his work ethics, a teacher they said who "taught by example". Community members said Ambassador Ghirmai addressed everyone equally, and that he made time for everyone. They said that he was not only a skilled diplomat, but was also someone that went to great lengths to serve and strengthen the Eritrean Community. They said that he was always available at almost every Community event, always there to offer his help in resolving issues. After the cake cutting

ceremony, the youth presented Ambassador Ghirmai with a plaque of appreciation on behalf of the Eritrean Community. Traditional coffee, snacks and drinks were served throughout the event.

From the moment Eritrean Community's in the United States and Canada were notified of the Ambassador's departure, email, fax and phone messages of well wishes poured in from various cities in the United States and Canada. An email sent from the Midwest summed up the sentiments and farewell messages of all Eritrean Communities in the United States, it said, "Job well done Mr. Ambassador. Our foreign policy was executed with honor under your service and thank you for that. We wish you the best on you future endeavors". There was also a banner onto which many more personal messages of goodwill were written by those who attended the dinner.

Ambassador Ghirmai thanked and reminded everyone to work hard to strengthen the Community, guide the youth so that they may excel in their education, support their communities, become hard working patriotic citizens, and follow in the footsteps of the generation before them. He stressed the importance of the Community's unity and encouraged all to work to maintain it by not allowing divisive sub-regional and religious issues to divide and weaken them. He called on the Embassy of Eritrea to work hard to meet the Consular needs of its citizens and had a special message for the mothers who remain the backbone of the Eritrean Community. He told them to continue the monthly dinners that they have been organizing in the Community since the days of the Eritrean struggle. These dinners have had a great impact on the unity of the people and in keeping everyone well informed about developments in Eritrea, in a warm atmosphere of friendship and camaraderie, where lifelong relationships are built.

The music and dancing continued as the well wishers took turns at the Ambassador's table for more pictures and personal messages. It was a great send-off for a beloved Ambassdor. It should be recalled that Ambassador Ghirmai previously served in Kenya, United Kingdom and at the United Nations in New York. He is returning to Eritrea after a four years and 8 months term in the United States. The Eritrean Community takes the opportunity to once again wish His Excellency the very best in all his future endeavors and wherever duty calls him to serve. No doubt our paths will once again cross in the future.

Eternal glory to Eritrea's fallen heroes

Victory to the people!