**A week-end of jubilation and reflection for Eritreans in the New England region**

**Several hundred Eritreans descended to the city of Boston this week-end to celebrate the 20th year of independence of their beloved nation. The program started in the evening of Friday May the 20th at the Eritrean Cultural and Development Center at which a moment of silence was observed in memory of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice followed by the heartfelt singing of the National Anthem. Thereafter, with ERI-TV and a slide presentation as contexts, the some participants began to share their individual and collective thoughts and feelings about the struggle for independence and the social, diplomatic and economic challenges and achievements that the nation experienced during the last twenty years.**

**On Saturday the 21st of May, several hundred Eritreans and their friends attended the standing room only event in a spacious and ball room at the Park Plaza Hotel in downtown Boston. The room was elegantly decorated with Eritrean flags and balloons. The celebration commenced with the Master of Ceremony, Mr Solomon Mehari, making a brief welcoming statement and asking the audience to observe a minute of silence in memory of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and sing the National Anthem. He subsequently introduced the Chair of the Eritrean National Holidays Organizing Committee in Boston, Mr Paulos Abraha, whose remarks provided the historical context for the unwavering patriotism that was demonstrated by all Eritreans during this week-end of celebration The musical repertoire included a commendable dance presentation by the Boston based Hidri group, a splendid performance by a talented pianist and singer of Italian and Eritrean ancestry, Monica Cialone and her fine guitarist Marco Montenegro. The highlight of the event was Michael Zere, who along with his keyboard player Minasie Haile kept the audience dancing to songs reminiscent of the long and difficult struggle for independence.**

**The plan was to conclude the festive week-end with a relaxing outdoor picnic on Sunday. However, due to the predicted inclement weather was postponed until further notice.**

**Throughout the week-end, the sense of unity and pride instilled by the long and arduous struggle for independence and the challenges and achievements during the post-independence era was clearly palpable among all of the participants.**