



ZENTRALRAT DER ERITREER IN DEUTSCHLAND e.V.

## Review of the Eritrea Festival 2023

Giessen. The Central Council of Eritreans in Germany e.V. looks back on the Eritrea Festival on 08. and 09.07.2023. The festival has been held in Giessen since 2011. It has always been a place of multicultural encounters and offers a platform of exchange and integration. It is a festival where people of different origins, religions, nationalities and cultures come together to learn from each other and celebrate together.

After the city of Giessen had already been critical of the 2023 festival during the preparatory phase, it finally banned it. The ban was lifted by the Administrative Court of Giessen (Ref.: 4 L 1614/23.GI; 8 L 1603/23.GI) following an urgent application by the Central Council. The appeal by the City of Giessen against this was also rejected as unfounded by the Administrative Court of Hesse (Ref.: 8 B 921/23; 6 B 919/23). The courts certified a sufficient event concept. Ensuring security outside the peaceful festival, which was threatened by insurgent third parties, was the responsibility of the state, not the Central Council. The decisions also reinforced the self-image of the German-Eritrean members of the Central Council of being a recognized part of society.

The Eritrea Festival 2023 was peaceful and exuberant. This year the festival was once again a place for young and old, for families and single people. Through many conversations and songs, our participants celebrated our culture, music and dances. It was a pleasure for the participants to celebrate the traditional festival. Harmonious and determined, our participants showed cohesion even in this dynamic situation.

However, the festival was unfortunately accompanied by despicable violent attacks from external third parties. The Central Council strongly condemns the threats and violence that took place around the festival. Such aggression has no place in our society and must not be the means of choice in a constitutional state to enforce a cause. Such actions are unacceptable and are contrary to diversity and cultural exchange.

The Central Council of Eritreans in Germany would like to point out that in the course of the media coverage, some misleading articles were published by individual media. The Central Council would like to clarify:

"We reject the generalized coverage of the events in Giessen. We denounce the fueling of stereotypes and of striking political slogans. We refuse to accept the assertion that these are imported problems from third countries that are being fought out on German soil. Our participants are mainly German citizens



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of Eritrean origin who have been living peacefully in Germany for decades and who make their contribution as part of German society. The riots were not "imported problems" from Eritrea, but violence by disruptors against a peaceful festival and its guests."

Downplaying and understanding the riots in order to make political capital out of them does not allow a debate to develop, but only fuels dangerous resentment.

Thanks to the work of the security forces and the police, both on and off the premises, the festival could be held peacefully and exuberantly, despite the dynamic situation around the fairgrounds. The Board of the Central Council would like to thank them personally:

"We are very happy that despite the obstacles we were able to put on a peaceful and inclusive event. We would like to thank the organizers and helpers for their tireless efforts and determination to make the event possible so that we could create a safe space for culture, music and dance.

Our thanks go first and foremost to our participants. We would also like to expressly thank the police for their tireless efforts to ensure safety during the festival. We would like to take this opportunity to wish the injured police officers a speedy recovery."

In addition, special thanks should also be expressed to the Hessenhallen, who supported us despite the pressure from outside. We would also like to express our gratitude to the security, the security guards and the stewards, who actively supported us so that the Eritrea Festival could proceed without any special incidents.

Finally, the Central Council of Eritreans reiterates that it remains open to a dialogue with the relevant authorities in order to discuss the situation and find solutions.

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