

## More on Some of the Highlights Of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Eritrea Festival in Frankfurt

By Nharnet Team

This year's Eritrea Festival in Frankfurt was impressively special in a number of ways: 1) it attracted the largest number of festival participants in half a dozen years; 2) it witnessed the attendance of the members of different opposition organizations, including erstwhile protagonists; 3) there were fairly large number of youth and Eritrean intellectuals, who, for one reason or the other, rarely appeared in such events in the past; and 4) it was attended by German dignitaries and prominent politicians



representing the major parties in the country - the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), whose representative spoke for the Mayor of Frankfurt, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which is the largest party in the country, and a representative of the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP). The festival was covered by the German press, including by Frankfurter Rundschau, a widely read national newspaper in the country.



The panelists on the theme of post-PFDJ Eritrea (Eritrea of Tomorrow) made very remarkable presentations well applauded by Festival participants. Dr. Solomon Ghebregioris handled the top of "Eritrean mindset" as it affects our politics in such a way that everybody wanted him to keep on talking although the panelist had to abide within the given time framework. Equally interesting was the paper by Dr. Aklilu Ghirmai whose treatment of federalism was both enlightening and thought provoking. Their papers would be available for readers soon.



Another highlight was the political message presented representatives of political leaders who said in unison: situation in Eritrea is bad and we need to do away with the dictatorship

soonest. The speakers included the chairman of the provisional leadership of one bloc of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA-1), the chairmen of ELF-RC and EDP, and representatives of the Eritrean al Nahda Party and the Eritrean People's Movement.

The call by a trio - Fessehaye Hagos of USA California with Medhanie Nerayo (middle) and Gherishis Negash of Scandinavia – for material support from the audience for social activities of the organization in the Sudan was also among the highlights because it



was a rare occurrence in similar ELF-RC events. They asked for support to the ELF-RC administered Home for Disabled Persons in Kassala and for student materials for a refugee students in the Sudan. The response was quite encouraging.

After the reading of solidarity messages and presentations followed the public discussion which touched upon most of the burning issues in today's Eritrea under a cruel dictatorship.

All-night dancing and singing that followed dinner hours was graced by the veteran singer Osman Abdulrehim and other popular singers from Canada and Europe.



This annual event of Eritrea Festival in Germany was first launched in 1986 in Frankfurt by branches of ELF-RC in Europe. The first four events were held in the Frankfurt suburbs of Dreieich and Mulheim. For 14 consecutive years since 1990, the festivals were held in Kassel, but as of the summer of 2003, when the ELF-RC was affected by a split, the mainstream organization went back to Frankfurt, a central zone where the largest number of Eritreans in Germany resides.