

Ethiopian Jewry
3/22/86

NEWS

COMMITTEE

FROM THE



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, March 22 . . . Approximately 10,000 Ethiopian Jews -- many of them young mothers, small children, the old and the weak -- are still trapped in Ethiopia, the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry reported today.

Some 14,000 other Jews have been given refuge in Israel, but those left behind are increasingly starved, oppressed, and endangered by war, according to Barbara Ribakove, executive director of the Conference.

Founded four years ago, the Conference recently moved its offices to the headquarters of the American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. There, Ms. Ribakove stated, the Conference plans to expand the program, which enables Jewish families in Ethiopia to buy food and keep their children in school.

"We know what a valuable resource these helpless people are," Ms. Ribakove said. "~~Ethiopian Jewish youngsters in Israel are unusually bright and highly motivated, often working so hard they do two academic years in one.~~"

But the plight of the Jews still in Ethiopia continues to worsen, she stated, stressing that "even where there is food to be bought, our people cannot afford the exorbitant prices demanded. Even when the rains falls, our people cannot buy seed to plant."

Among its recent activities, Ms. Ribakove added, the Conference has organized and led repeated missions to Ethiopia, bringing doctors and medicine, religious and educational material, food and hope to the Jews there.

It has also, she said, assisted Jews still in Ethiopia in maintaining links with their families in Israel and in rejoining them.

In Israel, Ms. Ribakove added, the Conference:

- * provides textbooks and tutors for students;
- * reaches newly arrived families with books, toys, sports equipment, baby clothes, diapers, kitchen utensils, and educational materials;
- * helps preserve the rich historic culture of Ethiopian Jewry by supporting a traditional dance troupe and the work of an anthropologist recording their unique religious traditions;
- * serves as an ombudsman for Ethiopian Jews in their relationships with government and Jewish Agency officials.

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Howard I. Friedman, President; Theodore Ellenoff, Chair, Board of Governors; Alfred H. Moses, Chair, National Executive Council; Robert S. Jacobs, Chair, Board of Trustees; David M. Gordis, Executive Vice-President

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"As Americans and Jews," Ms. Ribakove stated, "we take pride in the diplomatic and operational skill that brought about the rescue of Ethiopian Jews from refugee camps in the Sudan a year ago. We are thankful that these men, women and children have been rescued from the horror of their lives and given the opportunity to begin new lives with their people in Israel."

The American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. Founded in 1906, it combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people everywhere.

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