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PRESS STATEMENT

Date: 14th July 2023

Councilor Paul Osborn
Leader of the Council
Harrow Borough Council

The British Eritrean Community Festival is due to take place at Harrow Leisure Centre on 15 and 16 July 2023. This is an event that has been held annually at Harrow since 2017 and in London 20 times. This event is attended by members of British Eritrean from different cities in the UK.

At 16:18 on 10 July 2023, the chair of events in BECONUK Ltd, Mulu Berhe, received an email from **Tamim Duro**n, the events manager @Harrow Leisure Centre.

“I am writing to inform you that I have to cancel your event taking place this weekend on the Saturday 15th July and Sunday 16th July 2023

It is with great regret that I have to cancel this as I have been informed by the Harrow council and the metropolitan Police to cancel your event due to the public disorder act they have told us to cancel the event. Once again, my deepest regret and I will refund your fully venue hire cost.”

As we understood from the communication that there was something to do with Eritrean Embassy, we have contacted the Eritrean Embassy about this incidence in which thankfully supported us by contacting the Diplomatic Protection Group to seek more information and received the following from Estella Dooley at 09:26 on 11th of July 2023.



“After making some enquiries with Harrow Police, I have been advised to direct you to Harrow Council who have spoken to the organizers and ultimately it is their decision on whether or not to cancel such events. Decisions are never made lightly when it comes to events.

The organizers of the event may be able to provide details of Harrow Council.”

We are writing this letter to the Chair and Chief Executive of the Council and Borough Commander of the police to seek clarification of the following questions:

- Who in the Council made the decision to cancel the booking?
- What advice from whom was the decision made on?
- Who provided that advice?
- What advice was provided by the Metropolitan Police and by whom?
- Have the Metropolitan Police directed that the event be cancelled – and if so under what legislation?
- We find it inconceivable that such a decision would have been made, had the decision been made at your level.

The event is well-managed and has a safety plan and risk assessment in place. It appears that the decision must have been made at a lower level and possibly as a result of lobbying by activists opposing the government of Eritrea.

We invite you in the first instance to rescind the decision to cancel the booking. In slower time we would appreciate answers to the questions posed above.

If you are not able to rescind the decision immediately then we urgently seek answers to the questions posed above and seek a meeting at an appropriate level as a matter of urgency.

We have written this letter to you as the appropriate senior leader in Harrow. Regrettably it appears that council staff are seeking to place responsibility for the decision upon the police and vice versa. We seek clarity.

BECONUK members

Eritrean communities, women’s groups, youth forums, Eritreans for Justice and Democracy
Eritrean Professionals, Investment Forum, and Eritrean Cultural Centre in East London,
West London, South London, North London, Birmingham,
Coventry, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool
Newcastle, Leeds, Nottingham and Leicester
BECONUK LTD Company number 11450935



BECONUK Ltd



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British Eritrean Communities and Organisations Network

شبكة الجاليات والاتحادات لإريتريّة البريطانيّة

We have every confidence that this matter can be resolved swiftly once you are appraised of the issue. We are sure you will understand the difficulties and embarrassment that will be caused if this event does not take place as planned.

Copy to

Paul Hewitt
Interim Chief Executive
Harrow Borough Council

Detective Superintendent Loader
Borough Commander
Barnet, Brent and Harrow

Thank you for your continued support, and we eagerly anticipate your presence at the festival.

Yours Sincerely,
Beyene Hagos
Chair of BECONUK Ltd Directors

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