



Ελληνική Εταιρεία Γεωγραφικών Μελετών
«Ο Στράβων»

SOMALILAND

Admittedly, recognition of Somaliland as a sovereign and independent state by Israel (December 26, 2025) took many by surprise and caused fury in several quarters, not least in Ankara.

STRAVON will not dwell on the motifs of PM Netanyahu, which nevertheless are not just a tit for tat action to counter Turkey's growing presence in the internationally recognized Federal Republic of Somalia-Mogadishu but have a sighting further beyond, north in the Red Sea and east to the approaches of the Indian Ocean. Israel's scramble for Africa has geopolitical, geo economic, even geo cultural roots; students of Bible and the Torah know very well; neighbouring Ethiopia is a country of legend for the Jews, perhaps even more than Ethiopia for other historical reasons is considered to be the southern limit of Greek cultural horizon.

Beyond sympathy for Ethiopia struggling to secure an outlet to the Ocean, is Israel's move legal? In STRAVON's view, given that Somaliland has all the trappings of a viable state (territory, population, effective control) and furthermore happens to enjoy a relatively orderly and democratic rule, it justifiably claims to join the community of independent nations. Somaliland (former British Somalia), to remind, joined in 1960 as an existing entity former Italian Somaliland to set up Somalia. It was never part of a monolithic state structure, but a constituent part of a federation.

For decades, Somaliland has been living autonomously. Their case in essence is not less clearcut than the case of Southern Sudan, even taking into account that the latter gained independence from Sudan-Hartoum in 2011/12, as a result of a referendum fathered by the African Union and sanctioned by UN. It is the negative spillover effect for boundaries and nation states in post-colonial Africa that stands so far in the way of Somaliland towards international recognition of its independence. Yet, to give an analogy for our European minds, Somaliland resembles the case of Czech Republic vis a vis Slovakia, countries which were able to arrive at a velvet divorce.

As far as Greece and Cyprus are concerned, there is only a pale analogy with the illegal Turkey sponsored secessionist entity in the north of Cyprus, a result of latter's armed invasion and ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population in summer 1974. There are no such things having a bearing on Somaliland's aspirations. Yet, it is necessary for both countries to coordinate with partners in the EU, more so as long as they are respectively carrying out responsibilities as non-permanent member at the UN Security Council for 2025-26 and president of the European Council during first semester of 2026.

The above said, Greece would be well advised to sound on this issue the government in Cairo, Egypt being for the foreseeable future a strategic partner at loggerheads with Somaliland-friendly Ethiopia due to the unresolved question of distribution of the Blue Nile waters. In the meantime, as seas north and south of Bab al Mandab are critical maritime avenues, the government in Athens got to examine the case for opening a commercial office probably in the port of Berbera or in Somaliland's capital city of Hargeisa.

***STRAVON of Amaseia,
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