

CONSTITUTION OF ETHIOPIA  
ESTABLISHED IN THE REIGN OF  
HIS MAJESTY HAILE SELASSIE I.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE AND THE  
SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE.

Article 1.

The territory of Ethiopia, in its entirety, is from one extreme to the other subject to the Government of His Majesty the Emperor.

All natives of Ethiopia, subjects of the Empire, form together the Ethiopian nation.

Article 2.

The Imperial Government guarantees the unity of the territory, of the nation, and of the law of Ethiopia.

Article 3.

It is provided by law that the Imperial Rank shall remain perpetually in the line of His Majesty Haile Selassie I, descendant of King Sahle Selassie, whose lineage continues unbroken from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of King Solomon of Jerusalem and the Queen of Ethiopia, sometimes called the Queen of Sheba.

Article 4.

The Throne and the Crown of the Empire will pass to the descendants of the Emperor by virtue of the Law of the Imperial Household.

Article 5.

By virtue of His Imperial Lineage as well as by the anointment he received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity inviolate and His power incontestable. He therefore enjoys by right all honors due him by tradition and in conformity with the present Constitution. The Law provides that whoever shall dare to harm the Majesty of the Emperor shall be punished.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE EMPEROR'S POWER AND ATTRIBUTES.

#### Article 6.

Within the Ethiopian Empire the Emperor holds in its entirety the supreme power. He guarantees to exercise it in accordance with the established Law.

#### Article 7.

The Emperor of Ethiopia will establish the Senate (Yeheggue meouessegha meker biet) and the Chamber of Deputies (Yeheggue memriya meker biet). The laws drafted by these chambers will become effective by His promulgation.

#### Article 8.

It is within the power of the Emperor to call sessions of the deliberative Chambers and to announce the opening and closing of their sessions. He may also call sessions before or after the regular periods. He may dissolve the Chamber of Deputies.

#### Article 9.

When the Chambers are not in session the Emperor has the right, if needs be, to promulgate decrees having the full force of laws in order to maintain peace and to ward off public dangers. The Law provides that these decrees will be presented later to the Chambers at their first subsequent session, and that they shall be abrogated as regards further validity if the Chambers do not approve them.

#### Article 10.

Within the letter and the spirit of the laws now in force the Emperor will give the necessary orders to guarantee their execution, to preserve public order, and to develop the nation's prosperity.

#### Article 11.

The Emperor will determine the organization and regulations of all the administrative departments.

It appertains to him to designate and to discharge officers of the army as well as civil office-holders, and to define their respective powers and salaries.



Article 12.

The right to declare war and to conclude peace is reserved by law to the Emperor.

Article 13.

It is the Emperor's right to prescribe the number of armed forces necessary to the Empire in time of peace as well as in war.

Article 14.

The Emperor has by law the right to negotiate and to sign Treaties of every kind.

Article 15.

The Emperor has the right to confer the title of Prince, and other honorary titles, to make personal land grants, and to institute new Orders.

Article 16.

The Emperor exercises the rights of pardon, of commuting sentences, and rehabilitation.

Article 17.

If the Emperor, for reasons of either illness or of age, becomes incapable of managing the affairs of Government, a Regent of the Empire may be appointed by virtue of the Law of the Imperial Household to exercise the supreme power in the Emperor's name.

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CHAPTER III.

THE RIGHTS ACKNOWLEDGED TO THE NATION  
BY THE EMPEROR, AND THE DUTIES INCUMBENT  
UPON THE NATION.

Article 18.

The law prescribes the conditions required for Ethiopian nationality.



Article 19.

All Ethiopian subjects, provided they fulfil the conditions prescribed by the Law and by the decrees promulgated by His Majesty the Emperor, may be designated officers of the army or civil office-holders, or may be appointed to any other offices or posts in the service of the State.

Article 20.

All those who belong to the Ethiopian army owe absolute allegiance and obedience to the Emperor according to provisions of law.

Article 21.

The nation is held to the payment of any legally imposed taxes.

Article 22.

Ethiopian subjects have the right within the limits prescribed by law to move freely from one place to another.

Article 23.

No Ethiopian subject may be arrested, condemned or imprisoned except by due process of law.

Article 24.

No Ethiopian subject may be deprived against his will of having his case tried by the legally established court.

Article 25.

Except in the instances for which legal provision has been made, there shall be no search of domicile.

Article 26.

Except in the instances for which legal provision has been made, no one shall have the right to violate the secrecy of the correspondence of Ethiopian subjects.



Article 27.

Except in the cases of public interest fixed by law, no one shall have the right to confiscate from an Ethiopian subject neither his movable property nor the real estate which he possesses.

Article 28.

The right to present petitions to the Government, within legal forms, is recognized to all Ethiopian subjects.

Article 29.

The provisions of this chapter shall not prevent the measures which the Emperor by virtue of his supreme power may take in case of war or public disasters which threaten the interests of the nation.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE DELIBERATIVE CHAMBERS OF THE  
EMPIRE.

Article 30.

The deliberative chambers of the Empire are the two following; (a) the first: the Senate (Yheggue meouesseigna meker biet); (b) the second: the Chamber of Deputies (Yheggue memriya meker biet).

Article 31.

The members of the Senate will be designated by His Majesty the Emperor, from among the dignitaries (mekuanent) who have served the Empire for a long time in the ranks of Princes or Ministers, Judges or Chiefs of the army.

Article 32.

Provisionally, and until that time when the people are in a position to elect them themselves, the members of the Chamber of Deputies shall be chosen from among the dignitaries (mekuanent) and the local chiefs (choumotch).

Article 33.

Anyone who has been designated member of the Senate may not in the same parliamentary session become



a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and anyone who has been chosen member of the Chamber of Deputies may not in the same parliamentary session become a member of the Senate.

Article 34.

No law may be put into force without having been deliberated in the Chambers, and without having received the approval of the Emperor.

Article 35.

The members of the Chamber of Deputies will be legally bound to accept and to deliberate bills proposed by the Ministers of the respective departments. However, when the deputies have a project of possible use to the Empire or the nation, the right to communicate it to the Emperor through their president is reserved to them by law, and the Chamber will consider this project should the Emperor consent.

Article 36.

Each of the two Chambers shall have the right to express separately to His Majesty the Emperor its opinion on a legislative question or on any other matter. If the Emperor does not accept its opinion, the Chamber is not allowed to bring up the same question again in that parliamentary session.

Article 37.

The two Chambers will be summoned annually and will sit for \_\_\_\_\_ months. If necessary, the Emperor may have them remain in session for a longer time.

Article 38.

The Chambers will be summoned for special sessions if such is necessary. In these instances it is the Emperor's right to fix the length of the session.

Article 39.

The opening and closing, and the length of



sessions and vacations, will be made identical for the two Chambers. If the Chamber of Deputies is dissolved, the Senate will adjourn its session until a later time.

Article 40.

If the Emperor has exercised his right to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies completely, he will arrange that a new Chamber assemble within four months.

Article 41.

Neither of the Chambers will open debates, discuss, or vote unless two-thirds of its members are present.

Article 42.

In the event that in the deliberations of the Chambers, the vote is equally divided, the opinion of the group which the president of the Chamber supports will be the deciding one.

Article 43.

The President of the Chamber will announce in advance whether the questions under discussion are of a public or secret nature.

If a matter once has been declared secret any member who brings it to the knowledge of the public by means of speeches, the press, writings, or any other means, shall be punished according to penal law.

Article 44.

The Emperor will establish in the form of a law the regulations controlling the work of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies. ✓

Article 45.

Otherwise than in criminal cases, the trials of which cannot be delayed, no member of the Chamber of Deputies shall be subject to legal prosecution during the period of a parliamentary session.



Article 46.

If the two Chambers reach different conclusions in the deliberation of an important matter, the Emperor upon receiving a written summary of their respective opinions will investigate the reasons for their disagreement, and when he forms his own opinion on the matter, he will try to reach a compromise likely to reconcile them to a final agreement, selecting what he considers the best in the two conclusions.

In case it is impossible to reconcile the opinions of the two Chambers, the Emperor has by law the right either to choose and promulgate the conclusion of one or the other, or to postpone the question. ✓

Article 47.

Without obtaining the consent of the Emperor the Chambers may not invite the Ministers to their sessions even if they feel the need to do so. As for the Ministers, they may not attend the sessions of the Chambers and take part in the deliberations without the consent of His Majesty. ✓

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CHAPTER V.

THE MINISTERS OF THE EMPIRE.

Article 48.

The Ministers will present their opinions in writing to His Majesty the Emperor on matters pertaining to their respective departments; they will be responsible for these opinions. Laws, decrees, and all other acts issued by the Emperor on matters of the Empire will bear the Imperial signature; and then the keeper of the Seal (Tsafi-teezaz) will communicate them under his signature to the competent Minister.

Article 49.

When the Emperor requests the opinion of the Ministers on an important government matter, they will deliberate together according to regulations



before submitting it to Him.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE JUDICIARY.

#### Article 50.

The officially constituted judges will administer justice, according to the laws, in the name of His Majesty the Emperor. The organization of the courts will be governed by law.

#### Article 51.

Judges shall be chosen from among men who have had experience in judicial matters.

#### Article 52.

The judges shall hold court in public. In those cases which might affect public tranquility, or which might violate good morals, the session may legally be held behind closed doors.

#### Article 53.

The jurisdiction of each court will be determined by law.

#### Article 54.

Special Courts will hear all cases concerning administrative matters which are outside the competence of other courts.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE BUDGET OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT.

#### Article 55.

The law provides that receipts of the Government Treasury of whatever kind shall be expended only in conformity with the annual budget which shall decide the amounts allotted to each department. The annual



budget shall be prepared on the basis of the proposals made by the Minister of Finance in the deliberations of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate, whose conclusions will be submitted to the approval of His Majesty, the Emperor.

Done at Addis Ababa, Hamlic 9th, Year of Grace 1923 (July 16, 1931).

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