

9th April 2022

To All Christian Brothers and Sisters

“Brothers and sisters, pray for us.”

1 Thessaloniens 5:25

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”

Psalm 133:1

Christians the world over are looking forward to the Holy Week to observe, with special solemnity and devotion, the Passion of Jesus Christ, his great deeds and crucifixion and, to Easter Sunday, to celebrate his resurrection.

For the second year and counting, Christians in Tigray can look to no such Holy Week or Easter for they are under total siege, now running for over 500 days. Waged in November 2020 by the joint forces of Ethiopia’s Abiy Ahmed, Eritrea’s dictator Isaias Afeworki, and the Amhara militia, the ongoing war in the Tigray region of Ethiopia continues to cause gruesome atrocities on the people of Tigray.

Tigrayans, who pride themselves for adopting Christianity in the 4th century and the first translation of the Bible into an African language, are for the last 17 months subjected to Nazi style atrocities aimed at subjugating them to an autocratic rule. The heinous war crimes they are forced to endure include but are not limited to: extrajudicial mass killing including by burning to death; weaponised rape including multiple sexual violations of 120, 000 women and girls in front of their family members as well as nuns; ethnic profiling and mass expulsion from their work; closing of Tigrayan businesses, and incarceration in Nazi-style concentration camps across the country. These atrocities didn’t even spare priests and monks and to date some 326 Tigrayan clergies have been killed. Furthermore, on the eve of the annual celebration of Aksum Tsion Mariam, over 700 people were summarily killed in the compounds of the church which hosts The Arch of the Covenant. In addition to unprecedented looting and physical destruction on cities, transport and communication infrastructure, and power and manufacturing plants, the genocidal war of Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afeworki is also causing untold destruction to ancient churches, mosques and monasteries. The world is witnessing an inhuman destruction of historical heritage in Tigray on the scale committed in Iraq and Syria by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The plundering of ancient manuscripts from churches, mosques and monasteries is widespread - listings have already started featuring on eBay.

To advance their ethnic cleansing objectives against the people of Tigray, Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afeworki are leveraging every tool in their disposal, including the complete deprivation of access to water, food, banking, electricity, transportation, telecommunications, medical supplies and independent media. As Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of WHO recently stated, ‘The siege of six million people in Tigray by Eritrean and Ethiopian forces for over 500 days is one of the longest in modern history’. The weaponisation of aid has meant nine out of every ten Tigrayans are exposed to man-made famine and people, particularly vulnerable children, breastfeeding mothers, the elderly and the infirm, are currently dying in their hundreds.

Early in March 2022, researchers from Belgium’s Ghent University estimated 50,000-100,000 have died in the Tigray war, 150,000-200,000 from starvation and another 100,000 from lack of medication. Despite the scale and length of these atrocities, once again, the world is quietly witnessing a massive genocide in the making. Apart from some initial cuts of aid to the Ethiopian





regime by the USA and EU, the International Community and individual governments continue to take a lacklustre response, preferring empty pronouncements of concern and condemnation. As for the wider public, not much is known about the scale of continuing tragedy in Tigray since it is not adequately reported in public media. Deservedly, the war in Ukraine is prominent in everyday news, its flag is flying in prominent places, government officials and parliamentarians wear UK-Ukraine badges at every photo opportunity, stadiums fly the flag, musicians hold concerts in support, etc. As atrocities go, the systematic genocide and siege-starvation against Tigrayans is at least equally heinous, and deserves commensurate response.

We feel your support is critical in these trying times for Christians in Tigray. We urge you to think of their plight and include them in your prayers in the coming Holy Week and Easter Sunday Mass. This Easter, Tigrayans are threatened with extermination; let's join our hands in prayer for unfettered access to humanitarian aid, the lifting of the siege and a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Where possible, it will also help if we can urge our parliamentarians to ask their respective governments to take decisive action to stop the ongoing war crime against Tigrayans in Ethiopia.

With God's Grace,

*Abba Tsgegenet Kidanewold*

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Chair

