



Webinar

Voices from Tigray

Brutalities against Religious Leaders,
Holy Places and Heritage in Tigray

Testimony 4

Testimony by a priest

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EEPA

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Testimony by a Priest

Evidence: testimony of the priest and what has happened to the church is video recorded.

The name of this church is E. It is found in District/W (name known to publishers, withheld for security reasons)

Testimony

Our church was shelled. The walls and the roofs were all shot. Now there are holes and cracks in the windows, walls and roof of the church. The shooting and shelling was done by Ethiopian National Defense soldiers from distance before they reach and enter the church. This was done on January 10, 2021 at around 3PM in the afternoon.

The most horrifying time was on the next day. On January 11, 2021, the Ethiopian soldiers dragged us out from our home at 8 AM in the morning and took us to the church. We were around six and they forced us to open the church. We couldn't identify the key that opens the door. They get angry. They beat us. They asked us where the Tigray policy forces, militias and leaders are? They think the Tigray forces kept weapons in the church. They asked us where the Juntas are? We told them we know nothing. We told them we are servants of the church. I am so sad I don't want to talk about it. They killed our brothers. I don't want to talk about it. What they have done to us is not something you could explain it in words. What they have done to us is nothing when I think of our brothers who got killed. They beat us. They start beating us from the church until we reach their bureau. They dug a pit and asked to stand in it. In the pit, they were about to shoot and kill us. One of the soldiers whose name was Captain Abdi, is the one he saved our life. He shield us by standing between us and the shooters. He asked the shooters to leave us. Later he told us he is from Hawassa, Southern Ethiopia. The cruellest and who destroyed our life are the ethnic Amhara soldiers. There was difference between the Amhara and Oromo soldiers. We identified them by their language. The ethnic Amhara's and Oromo's were speaking in their respective languages. We heard the Amhara's saying kill them all. Had it not been for the Captain Abdi who saved our life, they would have killed and buried us all in the pit. They released us in the afternoon at 5:30 PM and they took the church keys.

The soldiers came back again the next morning on January 12, 2021 and interviewed us. On this day, they succeed opening the church's door. They looted more than 10 Umbrellas, 5 carpets and took a heritage church book. The book was registered as heritage at the bureau of Tourism of Tigray. The umbrellas are heritages as well. They were not ordinary umbrellas. They were made nicely and don't get dirt. They glare and their color was unique like silver. The church is believed to be built on 424 BC. Our parents told us the book and umbrellas has been in the church for ages and generations. They are as old as the church. Our parents and grandparents said so. They were in the church from generation to generation. On the front page of the book, there is a statement about the person who built the church. His name is Gebre-Aregawi.

Our pain didn't end with the Ethiopian soldiers. The worst came when the Eritrean soldiers (Shabiya) arrived on January 26, 2021. They fought using the church as their main fortress and camp. We couldn't come to the church and pray for days.

We pray for God to save us and give peace. We pray for God to give his judgment to all who are doing all the crimes and bring them back to peace.