



Webinar

Voices from Tigray

Brutalities against Religious Leaders,
Holy Places and Heritage in Tigray

Testimony 7

Testimony from a Priest from Tigray based in East Africa

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Dear friends of Humanity and Global solidarity,

As a religious person living outside Tigray, I share with tears the sufferings of my people that cannot be described with words and recommend the following possible solutions to be implemented swiftly to save Tigray from total annihilation.

- The Interfaith Council of Tigray wrote a report on the general situation of religious leaders and worship centres on the 4th of May 2021. They stated that the atrocities are getting worse instead of getting better. They wrote a summary of the current devastating situation in Tigray, explaining how they are compelled to speak up, refusing to be silenced in front of such an overwhelming killing and sufferings of the religious leaders and civilians in the sanctuaries during celebrations of the Masses and other prayers.
- These are clear indications of the present situation in Tigray. In other words, the killings and harassments of the religious leaders, the civilians and the destruction and the desecration of Holy Places of different religions continue as we speak.
- Since the war started in November 2020, the sufferings that cannot be described with words are inflicted on the people of Tigray by different forces, particularly foreign forces.
- One of the sufferings incurred on Tigray is religious and spiritual devastation. Although the Tigray people are deeply religious, those forces are prohibiting people from praying and get spiritual strength during all their suffering by shelling, including the 1600 years old Churches and Mosques with powerful weapons. Some of those worship centres are the registered UNESCO Heritage Sites.
- The artilleries intentionally hit more than 12 Churches and Mosques until they are decimated and became out of use.
- They are desecrating the worship centres and the sections of Churches where only ordained priests are allowed to enter.
- The instruments of worship, especially the sacred vessels, are being looted from the Churches and Mosques and being transported out of Tigray with other goods for selling.
- It appears that is why the bishops of the neighbouring country officially discouraging the people from buying anything coming from Tigray.
- They are killing the religious leaders in different ranks so that the people are not consoled by the word of God and by counselling from their spiritual leaders. The names and the number of the religious leaders executed in cold blood are reported hereafter from sure sources.

- Although we could not specifically establish the fact where it took place that some months ago, we heard that two girls, who were in the formation to become sisters were raped by 18 soldiers.
- The sisters who have clinics are suffering immensely. There was an incident where more than ten unarmed civilians were killed in a small village, and one remained alive among those considered executed. Then the neighbours took the man to the hospital carrying on a stretcher for hours; then the soldiers heard that the man remained alive and is in the hospital. Then they came to finish him off on the hospital bed. Then the sisters and the priests covering the half-dead man with their body saying, "either kill us with him or leave us all!" Fortunately, they left them, but it is horrendous to imagine coming to kill people in the hospital under religious leaders' care.
- When artilleries hit the monasteries and religious houses, the Church residents escape without any food and proper closings. These are causing immense suffering until people say Monks seen searching for food on the streets.
- For instance, according to a sure source: in the Eastern region of Tigray, more than 76 priests, pastors, altar servers and mosque servers have been executed.
- In the Southeast Region of Tigray, more than 44 priests, Sheikhs and servers of the Mosques have been killed.
- More than 163 priests, sheikhs, and the Mosque servers have been killed in the Middle part of Tigray.
- In the Northwest Tigray, 43 priests, sheikhs and the servers of the Mosques were killed.
- Up to the 4th of May 2021, the total number of religious leaders killed during their religious service are more than 326.
- It appears the destruction of religious leaders and worship centres are being used as another weapon of war to deprive the people of Tigray of getting spiritual and human refuge.
- For these reasons, in several places, the Churches and Mosques are closed altogether so that people may not pray and get any spiritual or psychological support.
- From all these nightmares, one can imagine the magnitude of the need for short- and long-term counselling in Tigray.
- Therefore, we are appealing to you who are in the international political or religious leadership, to support us in the following actions as soon as possible:
 - 1. To withdraw the Eritrean Government from Tigray altogether, respecting the sovereignty and legal borders according to the International Laws. It is so clear that without the withdrawal of the Eritrean soldiers, there is nothing concrete that can be done to save the lives and livelihoods in Tigray.

- 2. We demand the Ethiopian Government to ensure the evacuation of the Eritrean soldiers, the Somali soldiers, and Amara's special forces from Tigray and allow the deploying of the UN soldiers to guarantee the evacuation and verify the civilian atrocities committed.
- 3. To allow humanitarian food and medical support without any restriction in the whole Tigray before the rain intensifies in the region.
- 4. To re-establish the school and Health systems in the Entire Tigray as soon as possible. Without those systems put back in place, the annihilation of the current and the future Tigray people will continue.

References:

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