



February 8, 2023

Press Statement

“The American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee (AEPAC) joins the World Council of Churches, Eastern Orthodox Churches/Oriental Orthodox churches, the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, The Ethiopian Human Rights Council, and several prominent diaspora organizations and individuals in calling for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the Federal Government of Ethiopia (FGOE) to immediately protect Ethiopian citizens from the deteriorating situation in Ethiopia.

“The recent violence was created by the actions of a few ex-communicated and outlawed groups within the ranks of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). We are dismayed by the failure of Ethiopia’s Federal Government to properly handle this situation, which has started to cost lives and has led to the destruction and desecration of churches.

“Trust and confidence in the FGOE’s ability to resolve this developing crisis is fast eroding. Indeed, many members of the Ethiopian diaspora and many Ethiopian citizens feel the nation’s first democratically elected government is seemingly supporting an agenda that has exacerbated the current crisis.

“Around the world, we are seeing people of Ethiopian descent express their concern about the loss of life in the country and the inactions of the FGOE through prayer meetings and demonstrations.

“We are encouraged by Ethiopian elders and respected members of the community who are seeking to bring EOTC and FGOE leaders together to address the current issues through discussion and mutual understanding.

“We positively note efforts such as the press briefing by the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia urging the Government, different political parties, and the media to act legally and responsibly in dealing with the current problems in EOTC and support the Council’s solidarity with EOTC and full confidence in the Church to solve its internal issues.

“In contrast, we condemn the reported events in some areas in the Oromia Region of religious leaders being detained, barred from their congregations and of Church properties and religious sites violated by the ex-communicated groups, with alleged support from the Oromia Regional State law enforcement.

“AEPAC is deeply saddened by the news that on February 4th, government security forces allegedly shot and killed orthodox Christian followers in Shashemene. This serious crime should be investigated, and the culprits should be held responsible in a court of law.

“AEPAC strongly believes that there is still time for Prime Minister Ahmed and his government to change course, live up to constitutional responsibilities, defuse the crisis and address the legitimate concerns of the EOTC.

“However, the window for this to happen is fast closing.

“Protecting the rights and safety of religious leaders and church members is part of the responsibility of GOE and should clearly form part of the government’s stated priority to build strong institutions.

“We sincerely hope this call is heard and acted on before it is too late.”

Ends

About AEPAC

The American-Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee is dedicated to promoting a positive, synergetic relationship between the United States and Ethiopia. AEPAC’s core mission is to strengthen and enhance the century-old relationship between the United States and Ethiopia. AEPAC strives to build a strong partnership based on the common interests and mutual benefits of the two countries.

More information on our work can be found here: <https://aepact.org/>