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Press Statement from Concerned Ethiopians on Violence Against Ethiopian Religious Institutions

Concerned Ethiopians (CE) are deeply saddened by the recent violence and killings in Gondar and Werebe city in Silti Zone and extend their heartfelt condolences to the victims' families. CE is extremely dismayed that the premise for this violence is religion and that the Gondar incident occurred in a historically significant city that had served as the capital of ancient Ethiopia. Gondar has a deeply religious population and is a place where Christians, Muslims, and Jews have lived in harmony for hundreds of years. An incident that happened during a funeral procession for an elderly Muslim Sheikh ended up costing the lives of Ethiopians. Provocateurs, saboteurs, anarchists, and agents of armed rebels are suspected of detonating bombs in the crowd.

Ethiopians are questioning the ever-increasingly shocking and violent incidents that are happening regularly. The burning of at least three Ethiopian Orthodox churches in Werebe city in the Siltie Zone is also gut-wrenching. This area did not previously have religious conflicts, just as Gondar had not. Recent Christians protest in Wolkite City near Werebe have questioned the inaction of authorities. The Muslim youth meeting at the Arab Genda Masjid in Dessie has raised essential and some inflammatory rhetoric. CE commends the leaders of the Masjid for their conciliatory tones.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its patriarch have condemned the violence and called for tolerance, forgiveness, and peace. The Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Council head eloquently described the problem and asked for solutions. Similarly, The Ethiopian Religious Institutions Conference has also denounced the killings and asked for

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immediate action by authorities. Renowned Ethiopians and some political parties have given similar statements.

There is ample consensus that the government must take immediate and decisive actions to stop religious and ethnic violence.

Concerned Ethiopians also call on Federal, Regional, and Local authorities to urgently investigate these incidents and announce their findings as soon as possible. Ethiopia is witnessing unprecedented violence, and these incidents are getting normalized. Ethiopia should never “get used to” or be “indifferent to” religious and ethnic violence. If regional and local authorities cannot find timely solutions, the federal government needs to make it an immediate priority and stop religious conflicts before they become widespread and tear the country apart. Concerned Ethiopians, in its paper on April 15, 2022, had called for each Ethiopian, renowned Ethiopians, community leaders, activists, civil society members, religious leaders, and politicians for effective action to address significant issues in an inclusive manner. This action needs to be taken now to address these acts of violence against religious institutions.

Concerned Ethiopians wish our Muslim brothers and sisters a happy Eid celebration. May God/Allah give Ethiopians and their leaders the wisdom to ensure religious freedom and all religious events get celebrated respectfully, peacefully, and harmoniously.