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Ethiopian Catholic Church Eparchy of Bahir Dar - Dessie Bishop's House

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Ref.

The Church with the suffering people:

The Way of the cross.

"Thus says the Lord: keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears....
There is hope of your future..." (Jer.31:16-17)

Dear Friends,

Greeting from the Eparchy of Bahir Dar –Dessie.

With this Letter I would like to share some important information regarding the ongoing conflict - the wounds, the sufferings and the burdens of this current situation in the Eparchy of Bahir Dar Dessie, Ethiopia, which is mostly happening in the Mandate areas of the said Eparchy (*Metekel Zone of Benishangul Gumuz region, All Gojam and Gondar, South and North Wollo Zones of Amhara Region and Zones 1, 4, 5 of Afar Region*). I express my sympathy to what happened outside the mentioned places but I

limit myself only to my ecclesiastical jurisdiction. We are all praying for peace to prevail, it is only Christ who is the king of peace who brings lasting peace.

We all are in great tribulation, tension and sorrow with the numerous people who are in exodus, forced to leave their land and property to save their lives and



that of their families. Numerous lives are lost, public and private properties are looted. Public Institutions such as schools, hospitals and clinics and other economic and social institutions are also looted. The infrastructure deteriorating, such as electric power centers, telecommunication telephone and internet communication services are destroyed. The most painful is to see sexually abused young girls and women brought from *Nefasmewcha* and the surrounding to FELEGEHEYWOT hospital

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in Bahir Dar. I myself have visited 30 of them who were under treatment in Bahirdar hospital and are trying to support them in all possible ways.

1. The town of KOBO :- 30 km from the border of Tigray Region

The way of the Cross begun in the town of Kobo where Capuchin fathers and Ursuline sisters are present and serving the community, the many pastoral and social activities including orphanage with resident boys and girls children, when TPLF soldiers came to control the town. Then the town and the surrounding villages was being taken over (captured) by TPLF soldiers on July 9, 2021. The town many residents left everything behind and run to save their lives and walked on foot in *mass exodus* towards the town of *Woldya* which is 55 kms south of kobo Town.

Since then our communication with **Ursuline Sisters** who are working in the Higher Clinic and Kindergarten is completely cut off. Amidst of the conflict the Ursuline sisters remained with the people who preferred to stay behind sharing all the sufferings of the people. They are still in their mission serving those remained in the town.

The **Capuchin Fathers** who used to work as parish priest of St. Joseph Catholic Church and administering the Elementary and Secondary schools of the Parish, escaped with the children in order to save the lives of the Children from any unpredictable danger. They left for **Weldya** on foot together with the above mentioned 20 children, **ELSA** who is a young university graduate of school year 2020-2021, who was there as “**one year for Jesus**” volunteer, who was helping in the parish as local Lay Missionary and a multitude of the town people until they reach.

As mentioned above we are totally detached from any communications with these towns, which have prevent us from any direct information access until now. A little information we are receiving is from some individuals who know our sisters and who have escaped from the town. In this way we are informed that our sisters are safe, selflessly helping the people with a little number of workers who have volunteered themselves with the resources they have. This is really giving prophetic witness to all the people around. However, since the battery of the Generator of the health center was taken away and this has made their service to the people so difficult. Getting petrol is not easy and they do not have enough money. I believe they will continue until they finish the little money they have likewise the petroleum supply finished too. We are worried about them as they do not have supplies: especially food and other supplies.

I wonder how the people are living. There is no humanitarian support entering into the town for the more than four months.

The staff who were working in the Catholic Institutions (like Schools and Health institutions) are scattered to the safest place they could find and are in difficult situation to maintain their lives and the lives of their families. They are all scattered and we need to find ways of supporting them by paying their salaries wherever they are.

Last week of August, during the fighting in Kobo, a building owned by the Capuchin friars has been damaged and two four-wheel drive vehicles were also taken. This was the day that the death of many civilians were reported by the individual eye witnesses.

The Government hospital was totally looted and most of the important hospital equipment are taken away. I was informed by two of our faithful who have come out of Kobo recently.

2. NEFAS MEWCHA –180 from Woldya and 180 from Bahir Dar 246 from Alamata

Nefas Mewcha is a town in northern Ethiopia. Located in the South Gondar Zone of the Amhara Region, this town has a latitude and longitude of 11°44'N 38°28'E and an elevation of 3150 meters above sea level. It is the administrative center of Lay Gayint woreda.