



Statement Given by the Crown Council Regarding the Recent Conflict between Christian and Muslim Ethiopians

October 30, 2006. USA

It is with deep dismay that members of the Crown Council have followed recent reports of conflicts between Christian and Muslim Ethiopians in various parts of our country. Our heartfelt condolences are sent to all those who have lost loved ones. We Ethiopians have for centuries lived side by side in peace with mutual respect of all religions. Therefore it is disheartening to hear that certain misguided people have now been swayed by the current tide of intolerance and violence.

History had taught us for centuries, how the Christian Ethiopian King had welcomed the followers of the Prophet Mohammed when they fled from persecution in their home land, and allowed them to live amongst his people in peace, undisturbed because of their religious difference. It is written that, in appreciation of the King's hospitality, the Prophet Mohamed himself had instructed all his followers never to attack Ethiopia. Given this rich history of mutual respect, why has the Islamic Court in Somalia declared a Jihad on Ethiopia, contrary to the teaching of the Prophet Mohammed?

In more recent times, our forefathers had believed, advocated, and upheld the fact that "religion is a very individual personal expression of our relationship with our God, while a country is a shared entity for which each and every citizen has the responsibility to work and protect locally, regionally, and globally." This deeply held conviction and continued teaching had, in the past, united our people and made Ethiopia the beacon of religious freedom and tolerance. Thus, Ethiopians of Christian and Muslim faith had intermarried and many of us have relatives from the respective faiths.

Regrettably, the intentional disconnect from value building blocks, such as our ancient history, religion and tradition, which were the trademark of the communist Dergue government, have resulted in weakening the long established values and the mutual respect that existed between people of different faith. However, by the Grace of God, there are still Ethiopians who deeply believe and uphold our long established values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Recently, we were most encouraged to hear that some Ethiopians of Muslim faith had condemned the violent attacks on Christians in the Western Region, and that a Council of Elders of both faiths, is discussing in Addis Ababa how best to educate our people so as to help reconcile the current conflict. The discussion that was held between Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders on the Muslim Radio here in the USA, on the eve of October 29th 2006, has also shown that Ethiopians of different faith are committed to jointly seek solutions to promote peace within our country and with our Muslim neighbors. This kind of interfaith dialogue must continue to be promoted and supported.

Furthermore, we implore our country men of all faith to teach our youth about the value of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The news media also has great responsibility to be tactful while reporting the various incidents so as not to inflame the already strained relationship between some of our people. We must acknowledge that we are all stakeholders in creating a culture of peace in our country. After all, the core teaching of all religion is reconciliation, harmony and Peace.

May God in his infinite mercy grant us Peace.