4127 Redwood Rd.
Oakland CA 94610
(510) 530-3681

No 2098/2013
Date 2a 1 17 2013

Dear Sir/Madam:

Attached you will find a statement of declaration released by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhaedo Church-in-Exile based on deliberations at its latest Synodal Meeting held from January 15-18 in Los Angeles, California. The statement discusses in detail the failed peace and reconciliation effort to end the division within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), why it failed, and who was responsible for the failure. Moreover, the declaration contains several resolutions intended to reach out to all Diaspora EOTCs, including those that have remained neutral for almost two decades, while offering a set of goals that the Exiled Synod seeks to accomplish in the years ahead.

Furthermore, this declaration is intended to provide the facts that truly explain the circumstances leading to the illegal dethronement of His Holiness Abune Merkorios from his patriarchal see, as well as the canonical and practical justifications of establishing a Holy Synod in exile. Above all, the Exiled Holy Synod, via this statement of declaration, wishes to remind that both the clergy and the laity should not recognize the outcome of the pending election of the 6th Patriarch for the EOTC because it would be a serious breach of the longstanding canons and related practices of Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Sincerely,

Abba Melkesedek Workneh, Archbishop and
General Secretary of the Holy Synod-in-Exile

4127 Redwood Rd.
Oakland CA 94610
(510) 530-3681

No 2098/2013
Date 2.12.2013

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen"

Statement of Declaration from the Legal Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Exile on the Upholding of the Church's Cannon Law and the Return of His Holiness Patriarch Abune Merkorios to the Throne from which He was Illegally Ousted

"Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

At its 34th biannual conference held in November of 2012 in Columbus, Ohio, the Legal Holy Synod-in-Exile passed a resolution affirming that a special session---a follow-up to the latest peace and reconciliation efforts within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church--- would be held in Los Angeles. Accordingly, the Synod held the meeting on January 7-9, 2013. Following is the Synod's statement of declaration based on deliberations made at that meeting.

Introduction

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has remained true to its dogma and practices for centuries. The Church has passed on its legacy from generations to generations, starting first with the evangelism of Eunuch, the treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, who went to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel, and later through the missionary work of Abba (Bishop) Fremenatos. Venerated highly by religious scholars and experts throughout the world and regarded as the sources of pride and hope by the Ethiopian Orthodox faithful, the Church has sustained its historic existence for the past two thousand years under the blessings and care of God. However, we are not oblivious to the fact that this highly revered Church has also gone through the rough tumults of history over the years. During the last 20 years, in particular, the Church experienced the worst of this turbulence, when it was seriously challenged with a fundamental breach of canonical law that subsequently led to a division within the Church and a deep sense

of grief among adherents of the faith. The division came from none other than the illegal dethroning of the reigning Patriarch by the regime and replacing him with another. Subsequently, the division further subjected the Church to undue pressure from external forces, while giving way to the looting of its treasures and artifacts, and the improper practices of the faith and of Orthodox dogma.

Mindful of this regrettable blemish on the Church, as well as driven by a genuine concern to save it from continuing turbulence, a few true sons of the Church founded the *Council of Peace and Unity of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.* The Council resolved to bring the Church back to its normalcy by embarking on a mission that would beget peace and reconciliation between the Holy Synod in Ethiopia and the Legal Holy Synod led by His Holiness Abune Merkorios in North America. Nevertheless, a small group of Archbishops within the Addis Ababa Synod, squashing the voices of the majority membership of that Synod, thwarted the peace and unity mission by announcing a statement that in effect wrecked the chances of bringing about the desired unity of the Church. In its content, not only was the announcement one unexpected of Orthodox Fathers, but also lacked truth, clarity, and integrity of intent; given these facts, therefore, the Exiled Synod has no choice but to issue this statement of declaration to the adherents of the faith in the interest of disclosing the true circumstances that led to the division of our Church and the ramifications thereof.

A. Concerning the Exile of the Patriarch

The statement issued by a small group of archbishops, after silencing the voices of the majority membership of the Addis Ababa Synod under the pressure of the regime's mighty force, made a bogus claim describing His Holiness Patriarch Markorios's alleged voluntary abdication of his throne in these terms: **"The heavy load of my work has affected my health condition for quite some time and thus I submit that the Holy Synod take over the helm of authority and lead the church."** This false claim, in effect, was a ploy to create confusion among the faithful about the true nature of the Patriarch's removal from the throne. As such, the Orthodox community should be aware of these cardinal facts:

- Even if the Patriarch were to declare that "I am ill and wish to abdicate my authority," the decision to quickly force the election of a new Patriarch was done in violation of the canon law governing the Church, as denoted in Article 4, No. 77, which states that **"an election cannot be conducted until the full recovery of the Patriarch from his illness."**
- In fact, the above referenced Article was put into full effect in the case of our first Patriarch, His Holiness Abune Basliose, who was under ailment for about seven years and unable to discharge the duties of the Patriarchate fully. At the time, the great leaders of our Church, strictly adhering to the canon law, elected an Acting Patriarch to lead the Church while the reigning Patriarch was still ill. Eventually, following his death, the Synod elected His Holiness Abune Tewofilos as the second Patriarch of the EOTC in accord with the tradition and practices of the Church.

Furthermore, it should be clearly evident to everyone concerned that neither a letter nor a recorded voice exists that conforms to the purported statement of the exiled Patriarch with regard to his alleged illness, and the voluntary abdication of his throne thereof. Therefore, in the absence of any credible evidence, other than the unsubstantiated allegation, it should be obvious that the Patriarch was indeed forced out of his position under the orders of the regime's security forces.

It is also ironic that the esteemed Fathers in Addis Ababa also claim that "The Holy Synod is a righteous body guided by the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, Patriarch Abune Merkorios's voluntary abdication of his position should be seen as a way of divine intervention, or a secret means to an end of his reign." Although the true believers of the Church are already privy to the fact of this matter, we still want to expound further on this issue by listing these authenticated details:

1. Mr. Tamerat Layne, the then-Prime Minister of the new government that came to power in 1991 (1983 E.C.), declared at the time that the regime would not wish to work with the Patriarch. It was subsequently resolved that, until such time that the new rulers stabilized the political uncertainty engulfing the country, the "Holy Synod should operate as is but with the Patriarch's role being limited only to providing prayers and blessings," which in effect meant stripping him of his normal duties as the Head of the EOTC;
2. In a letter dated Meskerem 28, 1984 E.C. (Oct, 1992) and numbered 69/298/84, the regime illegally issued an order to the Patriarch to vacate his office at the Patriarchate;
3. Subsequent to that order, His Holiness was forced out of his official residence by security forces on Meskerem 30, 1984 E.C. (Oct, 1992) and practically remained under house arrest in an undisclosed area of Addis Ababa for one year;
4. Still, in a later dated Tir 15, 1984 E.C. (January 24, 1992), the Patriarch informed the then-President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, Melese Zenawi, PM Tamerat Layne, all members of the Holy Synod, and the Executive Director of the EOTC Patriarchate, affirming that there was no illness nor any other impediments that would prevent him from discharging fully and ably his Holy duties, adding that the esteemed Fathers of the Holy Synod knew perfectly about his ability to do so;
5. Despite His Holiness's plea against his forced removal, the regime-orchestrated appointment of Abune Paulos as the fifth Patriarch was executed in violation of the canon law of the Church. In the aftermath, the group that forcefully took over the Church's chain of command placed the legal Patriarch in a life-threatening predicament, forcing him to stay in the underground basement of a burial site at an Entoto church, not too far from the capital city. Gravely concerned about the personal safety and security of the Patriarch, some faithful put together a plan that would escort him clandestinely on Tekimit 1, 1985 E.C. (October 12, 1993) to neighboring Kenya through Moyale, a border town between Ethiopia and that country;
6. In Tikimt 1985 E.C. (October 1993), His Holiness announced to all followers of the Orthodox faith around the world via radio and through a press release from his exile in Kenya that he is still the legal Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; and

7. The events that we have outlined above were finally validated in recent times, thanks to both the current President of Ethiopia, His Excellency Girma Wolde Giorgis, and former Prime Minister Tamerat Leyane, who publicly corroborated the forced removal of the Patriarch in no uncertain terms. Even more importantly, we do have in our possession original documents that further offer evidence substantiating the facts enumerated above. In fact, we are ready any time to show these authentic, historic documents to anyone seeking them. Despite these undeniable facts, however, the Holy Synod in Addis Ababa continues to deny the truth and still insists on alleging that His Holiness "voluntarily abdicated his throne," a claim that was made in the most recent statement issued from Addis Ababa. Meanwhile, we wish to reiterate that the faithful should not by any means be fooled by an assertion that is devoid of truth, as well as an outright falsification of facts and events.

B. Concerning the Continuance of the Legal Holy Synod in Exile

In the same statement of declaration, the minority within the Addis Ababa Synod has accused us of "establishing a Synod in exile contrary to any historical precedence known to Orthodox religion." Yet we found this to be disingenuous in the sense that it was not intended to address the issues associated with the forced removal of the Patriarch. The esteemed Fathers even went as far as declaring that "Without the permission of the Holy Synod, even the celebration of Fasika (Ethiopian Easter) outside of the Archdiocese of the Church is prohibited based on the canonical law of the Church." To confuse the faithful, they further cited the most venerated religious figures of Orthodox Christianity, such as Pope Saint Athanasius, St. Yohanes Afework and Pope Saint Dioscorus, to validate their point, contending that these past saintly Fathers did not establish a Synod in exile, even though they were banished from their church in which they held the highest position of a Pope or a Patriarch. However, the reference to such great Orthodox saints disguises the truth, since it can only be relevant to a church in which its stability and sanctity, as well as its basic principles of faith, have not been compromised; as such, the cases of the saintly Fathers thus cannot be reasonably used to describe the crisis in our Church, which has fallen under the control of a seemingly "foreign" force that is not only hostile to the Orthodox faith but also has consciously breached the canon law of the Church. Let us now look at the cases of the three great Orthodox Fathers as they relate to the establishment of a synod in exile:

1. Saint Athanasisus, Saint Yohanes Afework, and Saint Dioscorus were all exiled as individuals, not as part of a group of high clergymen. As everyone who is familiar with Orthodox hierarchy knows, no one individual or a Patriarch alone is authorized to establish a Synod, run a Patriarchate, and consecrate new bishops. In this connection, both Saint Yohanes Afework and Saint Dioscorus were placed under house arrest in exile, and this meant that they did not even have the freedom to act on simple religious matters, let alone establishing a Synod or appointing bishops. In fact, their saintly biographies reveal that they lived the rest of their lives in prison and passed away without ever gaining their freedom.

2. His Holiness Abune Merkorios, by contrast, was forced into exile along with his fellow Archbishops, including His Eminence Abune Yisehaq, Archbishop of the Western Hemisphere; Abune Elias, Archbishop of Europe, Africa and Australia; Abune Zena Markos, Deputy Patriarch; Abune Gorgorios, Archbishop and Special Secretary to the Patriarch; and Abune Mekesedek, who at the time was Dean of the Theological College of the Holy Trinity and current General Secretary of the Holy Synod in exile. The exiled Fathers together established the Synod in exile, and have since expanded their missionary work, and will continue to do so as the legal Ethiopian Orthodox ecclesiastical body in North America. Given these facts, the futile attempt by the Synod in Ethiopia to liken our situation to the cases of the cited saintly Orthodox Fathers is masked in distortion of facts. Moreover, their pronouncement lacks the integrity that the Almighty God has bestowed on them as disciples of his teachings, while at the same time exposing the faithful to utter confusion and falsehood.

Another historical fact begs further explanation to counter the argument that the Addis Ababa Synod has made. When Saintly Father Athanasisus, Patriarch of Alexandria, was exiled five times, at no time did his followers attempt to fill the leadership void created by replacing him with another person. In fact, when the rulers of Constantinople tried to force upon them someone as their "religious Father," they vehemently rebuffed that order, thereby remaining true to their belief rather than acquiescing to the regime's demands. During the fourth century, our religious forefathers in Axum took a similar action by rejecting the accusations made against Saint Athanasius by Constantinople.

Likewise, when Saint Yohanes Afework was falsely accused and forced into exile, his followers cried out for his return and never accepted his replacement with an open arm. Upon his death, even his accusers felt so remorseful about what they did to him that they cried and pleaded in these words, "Forgive us our Father," but never mocked at him as their ex-Patriarch.

Similarly, Saint Dioscorus, who accepted his exile with grace and saw his suffering as a source of religious atonement, sent his followers a message of exaltation reminding them that "the fruits of the true religion are vested in you," a message that resonated with them for as long as he was alive; it was a reminder that they believed in him until eternity, as they never wavered from what he taught them, and still recognized him as their leader even when the rulers of Constantinople named a replacement for him without their consent. As their loyalty to Saint Dioscorus was unflinching, it was passed on from generations to generations in the annals of Orthodox history. Yet those who followed the orders of Constantinople accepted the replacement of Pope Dioscorus and took a different route that made the religious division bona fide.

In keeping with the traditions established by our great Orthodox Fathers--- Saint Athanasius, Saint Yohanes Afework, and Saint Dioscorus-- His Holiness Abune Merkorios has continued in exile his godly work more resolutely than ever. The Almighty God has blessed him to be of great service to the followers of the faith, as he leads a group of devout Archbishops, 12 of whom he appointed personally, who perform faithfully God's work throughout the Diaspora Orthodox

community. The Legal Synod he leads has helped establish a growing number of churches that are now under the umbrella of the Patriarchate, while at the same time making it possible for the faithful to have their spiritual needs served well. The affiliated churches are growing in number; the missionary work of the Synod is more expanding than ever; the faithful are attending church services in greater numbers more than any other time; and a strong base for communities of Ethiopian Orthodox faith throughout the Diaspora is being established with great fervor. Above all, our community is more prepared than before to build a strong Orthodox foundation; to leave a legacy that gives vibrancy to Ethiopia's Orthodox faith; to revitalize its unique history; and to pass these vital societal hallmarks to the generations to follow.

C. Concerning the Peace and Unity Mission

The *Council of Peace and Unity of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church* embarked on a mission of peace and unity, mediating between the Holy Synod in Ethiopia and our Synod so as to unite the divided church though reconciliation. With the blessings of His Holiness Abune Merkorios and the Synod's full endorsement of this effort, a team of representatives was named to present our case. Three conferences took place over the last three years involving our team and representatives from the Addis Ababa Synod. Throughout the course of time, the peace and unity mission was greeted overwhelmingly by almost all Orthodox Tewahedo believers both at home and abroad and was awaited with a great sense of hope and optimism. In Ethiopia, the majority of the Synod's membership, the clergy, Sunday School pupils and many others concerned individuals and organizations all saw the reconciliation efforts with great fanfare and exaltation. However, the statement issued by the Holy Synod in Addis Ababa, following the talks in Dallas, was such that it not only undermined the process of the reconciliation mission but also presented facts that were deceiving and distorted. In essence, that statement characterized our position in terms that were outright false. In it, the Addis Ababa Synod misrepresented the Legal Synod's position describing it in these terms: "There is no such thing as peace and unity within the Church unless we control the Patriarchate," an outright lie that had no credible support. Given this backdrop then, what actually took place during the peace talks? What was the agenda considered for the negotiation? To answer these and other related questions, the following points must be clearly understood.

1. At the outset, we found out that the team representing the Holy Synod in Addis Ababa had neither the will nor the authority to propose or accept ideas during the course of the negotiation. They presented the same old and debunked argument that "Abune Merkorios abdicated his throne voluntarily and that the Church must now move to selecting the sixth Patriarch," a position that gave no room for further discussion because they had no authorization from Addis Ababa to do anything otherwise;
2. Since the Addis Ababa Synod has come under the direct control of the regime in power, the peace and unity mediation was doomed from the start, as was evident in the provocative statement released by the Synod that was detrimental to the negotiation even before the team had a chance to report to the entire Synod on the progress of the talks. On one hand, a team was sent to Dallas purportedly to negotiate with us, but at

the same time the Acting Patriarch in Addis Ababa was making a statement in an interview over the media that was counterproductive to the negotiation, which in effect gave a clue about the malicious hand of the regime in the affairs of the Church, and therefore was really an effort in futility even to begin with; and

3. The team representing the Legal Synod in North America, by contrast, was charged with a full authority to negotiate with its counterpart and thus made every effort toward the settlement of the outstanding issues that created the divide within our Church. During the negotiation, we adopted a good measure of flexibility in our bargaining posture, proposing what we thought was a workable solution that would both address the breach of the canon law and yet offer due recognition to the reigns of both the legal Patriarch and the one that was placed on the throne in violation of Orthodox practices. To this end, our team proposed the reinstatement of the legal Patriarch to his former position, so that he will finish up his reign without any lasting damage to the canon law, and then to be followed with the selection of the six Patriarch when the vacancy becomes legally available. However, the latest announcement issued by the Synod in Addis Ababa made it clear that they never had the true intentions of finding solutions to the problem. In fact, they appeared to play "the number game," arguing that reinstating the legal Patriarch now, the fourth in the order of appointment, after the fifth Patriarch (the late Abuse Paulo's) is going "backwards in the numbering order" and thus unworkable, which we found it to be a disingenuous way of looking at the issue at hand as well as a clear indication of not wanting to find a real solution to a real problem.

After probing the retrogressing behavior of the Synod in Addis Ababa subsequent to the Dallas meeting, it became apparent to us that five of that Synod's Archbishops have taken full charge of making the decision, thereby overshadowing the voices of the entire Synod; they are active members of the ruling party and thus charged with stymieing the peace and unity mission. We also discovered that each had an ambition to become a Patriarch, and therefore it would not have been in their personal interest to support the peace and unity effort even from the start. Any possible return of the Patriarch to his throne would have apparently gone contrary to their plot, as well as to the wishes of the regime to which they report.

From the facts stated in the foregoing, it becomes crystal clear that a small but powerful clique of the Wayane regime, which orchestrated illegally the removal of His Holiness Abune Merkorios from his throne 21 years ago, is still in charge and continues to disgrace our Church. In fact, this ruling clique is more determined than ever to subject our Church to relentless infamy; destroy the sanctity of the Church itself as we know it; and weaken the spiritual resiliency of the devout believers of the Orthodox Tewahedo faith.

Taking into account the events described above, the Legal Holy Synod in North America examined thoroughly the state of the EOTC in both Ethiopia and the Diaspora and has passed the following resolutions:

1. Since His Holiness Abune Merkorios is still the legal Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Holy Synod in exile condemns any illegal enthronement of a

Patriarch for the EOTC in Ethiopia, because it would be a serious contravention of the Church's canon law;

2. For more than 21 years, our Church has undergone a crisis of historic proportions, as a government-led coup d'état against the legal Patriarch was put into effect, leading to the illegitimate ascension of the late Abune Paulos to the throne and the division of the church thereafter. That regrettable action was being repeated again, as five members of the Holy Synod in Addis Ababa, using the power of the regime, were mobilizing forces to install a "Patriarch" of the regime's choice. Thus, based on the orders enshrined in the decrees of the Holy Book, the Synod directs that the true believers of the Orthodox faith, forever and in unison, oppose to, not recognize, or refuse to comply with the appointment of a "false Patriarch" in Ethiopia. The Synod further implores that the true Fathers of the Church in Ethiopia, especially those who stood their grounds for the peace and unity of the Church, refrain from participating in these questionable and ungodly exercises, which are indefensible in the court of both history and the Almighty God;
3. The Legal Holy Synod is deeply saddened by the fact that all those who stand for the peace and unity of our Church, including our religious Fathers, the clergy, organized Orthodox groups, and the faithful at large in Ethiopia, are being subjected to threats, intimidation or warnings, often coming from government operatives that oppose the return of the legal Patriarch to Ethiopia. These criminal practices against the Orthodox community are part and parcel of the sufferings that all other citizens in Ethiopia are being subjected to under the current regime in Addis Ababa. We are cognizant that our country is at a crossroads of political and social crises and that we pray to the Lord, so the suffering of our people will come to an end. Meanwhile, we are hopeful that Ethiopia will resurrect itself, and our Church will soon regain its freedom from the shackles of bondage. Meanwhile, the Synod wishes to counsel that the faithful engage at all times in activities that not only advance unity and peace for our Church but also foster a sense of fellowship and harmony between and among both the clergy and the laity. We hope you do so with greater care, wisdom, and stronger religious convictions;
4. The Synod was dismayed to learn that the political gang that had been waging a war of attrition on our Church for more than two decades has made recently the most ungodly claim of having "uprooted the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhaedo Church from its foundation while annihilating the Amhara benefactors." Besides allowing alien religious forces to undermine our faith, distorting EOTC's positive contributions to Ethiopia's history, encouraging Orthodox believers to turn against their own faith, this seemingly godless clique is running a government bent on destroying our heritage as proud Ethiopians. The statement quoted above offers clear evidence that Ethiopia and particularly our historic Church is under grave danger and that the regime has neither good intensions nor goodwill for people of the Orthodox faith, as would have been expected under a government of national unity. With this being the case, the Synod urges all the faithful to join forces to engage in prayers and vigils so as to publicize this danger while pleading to our Creator to give us solace and strength to save our Church from further destruction;

5. We believe that the Holy Synod is the messenger of hope and goodwill, and stands for what is right and what is always acceptable unto God. As an ecclesiastical body advancing the work of God, the Holy Synod abominates any practice that begets racism, ethnicism, or any other discriminatory treatment of human beings. In Ethiopia today, the pitfalls of ethnic-based rule are causing havoc on our society. Even the most celebrated monastery, Waldiba, has not been immune from the misfortune befalling Ethiopia today. Dozens of monks and celibates are being persecuted for resisting the government's desecration of the holiest of the holy site in that country. "The shrine and sanctity of our grand monastery must not be trampled with," cry out the monks of Waldiba, but the response from the regime was a swift and merciless action of intimidation, physical abuse and imprisonment of those God-fearing Orthodox celibates. This meant that the monks in Waldeba have joined the ranks of journalists, human rights advocates, and political prisoners who are all languishing in prison for voicing their ideas, and, in the case of the monks, for objecting peacefully to the demolition of their sacred and holy sanctuary; consequently, they all have become victims of government abuse and official oppression. Given that the regime has caused untold atrocities on every segment of our population, the Synod has resolved to take a stand and become an advocate for those whose freedom and liberties are being crushed in Ethiopia. Ironically, this has come at a time when the federal holiday commerating the birthday of the most celebrated African American civil rights leader, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, was before us. The issue of civil rights and liberties in Ethiopia is one that we intend to publicize to the rest of the world using every available means at our disposal, as Dr. King had done decades ago. In keeping with the tradition of our own great Orthodox Fathers of the past, who sacrificed their lives for their religious beliefs, including the martyred Abune Pateros, Abune Michael, and the great Patriarch Abune Tewoflos, we in the Exiled Synod, guided by His holiness Patriarch Abune Merkorios, have resolved that we will stand for the freedom of our people in Ethiopia and work toward peace and unity of our Church, relying on the power of God and His blessings. There should not be any doubt that the survival our country is directly tied to the survival of our Church, and thus any weakening in our faith will undoubtedly have a direct bearing on the survival our beloved country, as well. Therefore, we call on all Ethiopians, especially those with strong ties to their country of birth, to rise up in unison and join us in solidarity and unity to voice our cries for freedom and liberty in the country that we all cherish so dearly and collectively;
6. To effectively carry out the objectives outlined above, the Holy Synod-in-Exile has restructured the Patriarchate and made some readjustment to its priorities. Accordingly, our plan to expand the number of Archdioceses and consecrate additional Bishops, which was on hold due to the now defunct peace and unity bid, will now go forward with new force and vigor. To this end, the Synod has strengthened the Office of the Patriarchate by appointing a three-member executive body charged with coordinating and monitoring the day-to-day operations of member churches throughout the globe; it consists of a General Manger, an Executive Secretary, as well as a Public Relations Officer. Yet this new direction will require the full participation of the faithful particularly in the Diaspora. Your ideas, prayers, and generous financial support are all

critical to make a difference in executing the plan that has been put forward, and so the Synod is hoping that your will respond positively to our call for action;

7. During the last several years, the Exiled Synod has made a sincere effort to bring together the divided Church and the faithful in the Diaspora with some success, but still much remained to be accomplished. During the same period, many of the faithful and several churches had hoped that the divide within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhaedo Church would come to an end through reconciliation and thus chose to remain neutral until that happened. However, that hope was dashed when the Synod in Addis Ababa aborted the peace and unity mediation efforts. Given this backdrop, the Holy Synod has now resolved that it has the moral obligation to bring all the Orthodox faithful and neutral churches under a reinvigorated Holy Synod that caters to the spiritual needs of the Orthodox community at large. By so doing, the Synod's guiding principles will be **"one country, one people and one church."** With this in mind, we pray that the faithful and those churches that are not affiliated with the Synod will join us to make this a reality. To those who are true believers of the Orthodox faith, are genuinely concerned with crisis facing our Church, and have great ideas to rescue the Church from its current predicament, we call upon you once again to stand up for freedom and liberty of the Orthodox faithful as well as the sanctity of our Church. Since the Synod has established a special taskforce to find ways that will bring all the divided churches in the Diaspora into unity, the group assigned for this purpose is ready to meet and discuss with representatives of neutral churches and others to build the groundwork that will be necessary to nurture unity, solidarity, and fellowship amongst our people;
8. The Synod believes that it has the responsibility of educating and informing international organizations, religious communities, human rights organizations, and governments around the work about the brutalities to which our clergy and our people at home are subjected. With this in mind, we have established a taskforce, consisting of members from among the Archbishops, the clergy, and the laity, the charge of which will be to give testimonials at international forums, as well disseminate information as necessary to publicize the danger that our Church is facing;
9. The recently-announced statement by the Holy Synod in Addis Ababa came from a small group of Archbishops who are in cahoots with the regime, and was made by suppressing the voices of reason expressed by others within the Synod. The statement sent shockwaves throughout the Diaspora Orthodox community that was awaiting for good news, with unprecedented fervor, to see the divide within the EOTC coming to an end. However, the crisis facing the Church will only come to pass once we receive some redemption from our Lord. Our Church, throughout its history, has gone through many tribulations and historical adversities, one of which was the destruction inflicted on it and its treasures by Gran Mohamed. Many Orthodox scholars and believers have lost their lives in defense of our Church during this period of sheer destruction that lasted 15 years. After the passage of that tumultuous period, the Church is still a symbol of "light in the midst of darkness." Even with the current crisis, the Synod asks you--- the faithful--- not to lose hope but to pray and plead to our Almighty God for salvation. Having accepted the commandment of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Synod has taken up the moral obligation to propagate the words of the Gospel through a rejuvenated missionary

program and reach out to the Orthodox faithful throughout the diaspora. As commended in the verses of the Holy Bible "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God" (Isaiah 40:1," the Holy Synod is ready with new energy and zeal to comfort those that need to be comforted; those designated to do the missionary work of the Synod will be at your service from hereon;

10. Despite a three-year effort to bring peace and unity to our Church, which was finally thwarted by a small cadre of Archbishops who act as regime operatives within the Addis Ababa Synod, the Synod-in-Exile extends a heartfelt appreciation to the *Council of Peace and Unity of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church* for being so benevolent in their mediation and sacrificing their precious time, energy and resources for a noble cause that has both national and international implications;
11. At the same time, the Synod has resolved that the selection of the 6th Patriarch that was underway should be halted immediately because the silent majority within the Addis Ababa Synod was not in favor of it, nor the mediators and the faithful at large. We think that the peace and unity effort should take precedence over the selection of a Patriarch, who would be just as illegitimate as the one before him. Therefore, we are still acquiescent to the peace and unity mission, so that the divide within our Church can be overcome once and for all, and we are ready to do our part to bring a historic end to that divide; and
12. The Los Angeles meeting concluded with the final blessings of His Holiness Abune Merkoris, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Hosted by the clergy, the board, and members of the *Dingil Mariam Orthodox Tewahedo Church* in Los Angeles, the meeting was received with great enthusiasm and patronage. For this, the Synod gives special thanks to all the members of that Church; we are deeply indebted to the hospitality and graciousness that they exhibited during the course of the meeting.