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July 10, 2015

OPEN LETTER OF APPEAL TO POPE FRANCIS I REGARDING JUSTICE FOR ETHIOPIA

Your Holiness,

The Global Alliance for Justice – The Ethiopian Cause presents its compliments, in our most humble and respectful manner, to Your Holiness and submits this petition for a formal Vatican apology to the Ethiopian people for its complicity with Fascist Italy in the war crimes perpetrated in Ethiopia by the Italian regime then led by Benito Mussolini during 1935-41.

We take this opportunity to express our joy and sincere appreciation of Your Holiness' formal apology to the people of Latin America yesterday (Thursday, July 9, 2015) at Santa Cruz during your official visit to Bolivia. According to the New York Times issue of the same date, Your Holiness had apologized "for the complicity of the Roman Catholic Church in the oppression of Latin America". It was also reported that Your Holiness had stated:

"I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offences of the church herself but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America."

We fervently submit that a similar apology is owed to the Ethiopian people for the Roman Catholic Church's (The Vatican's) complicity in the war crimes committed by Fascist Italy.

Fascist War Crimes Committed in Ethiopia

It is well known that the war crimes committed by Fascist Italy with the Vatican's blessing had the following devastating consequences:

- (a) One million Ethiopians were massacred including 30,000 people who were killed within only three days in Addis Ababa. Over 2,000 monks and parishioners were murdered at the Debre

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- Libanos monastery. Bishops Abune Petros and Abune Mikael as well as numerous patriots, women and children were also massacred.
- (b) 2,000 churches and 525,000 homes were destroyed as well as the devastation of 14 million animals and the perpetration of an expansive environmental pollution;
- (c) The extensive use of the internationally forbidden poison gas through numerous airplanes;
- (d) The looting of vast quantities of Ethiopian properties including over 500 manuscripts still in the possession of the Vatican.

EVIDENCE OF VATICAN'S COMPLICITY WITH FASCIST ITALY

There is an abundant and overwhelming evidence proving beyond any reasonable doubt as to the Vatican's complicity with Fascist Italy in the war crimes committed in Ethiopia. The following are mere examples:

1. The Lateran Treaty between the Vatican and the Italian Government led by Benito Mussolini was signed in 1929 resulting in the Italian Government's recognition of the Vatican's sovereignty as well as its provision of Lire 1,500,000,000 to the Vatican;
2. On February 13, 1929, Pope Pius XI proclaimed to the world that Mussolini was a man sent by Providence (Avro Manhattan);
3. "After the conquest of Abyssinia, the Pope expressed his joy in his speech of May 12, 1936 by stating: ".....the triumphant joy of an entire, great and good people over a

- peace which, it is hoped and intended, will be an effective contribution and prelude to the true peace in Europe and the world.”(Avro Manhattan)
4. The Archbishop of Tarano declared: “The war against Ethiopia should be considered as a holy war, a crusade” because the Italian victory would “open Ethiopia, a country of infidels and schismatics, to the expansion of the Catholic faith.”(Avro Manhattan);
 5. Pope Pius XI blessed the Italian king, Victor Emmanuel, as the “King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia” (New York Times item of February 13, 1937);
 6. “Practically without exception the whole world condemned Mussolini, all except the Pope (Pius XI).”(Teeling);
 7. Italian Cardinals, 29 Archbishops, and 61 bishops gave immediate support to the aggression (against Ethiopia).(Slavembini);
 8. In his address to archbishops, bishops and priests, Mussolini admired: “the efficient cooperation given by the clergy during the war against the Abyssinians...remembering with particular sympathy the example of patriotism shown by Italian bishops, who brought their gold to the local office of the Fascist Party...”(Corriere della Sera, January 10, 1938);
 9. “Pope Pius XI is credited with much admiration for Mussolini. That the Italian clergy as a whole are pro-Fascist is easy to understand, seeing that Fascism is antinationalist,

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- authoritarian, anti-liberal, and anti-Socialist force.”(Manchester Guardian, February 12, 1929);
10. Martindale, the Jesuit scholar representing the Pope, confirmed that the secretary of state at the Vatican, Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII), offered Haile Selassie 1 million (Sterling Pounds) on behalf of Italy in return for his abdication.”(Alberto Sbacchi);
 11. Sbacchi stated: “Bishop Andre Marie Elie Jarosseau, Haile Selassie’s former tutor and a man who had influence over him, also invited the exiled ruler to recognize Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia. By submitting to Italy he could rule with Italian consent.” P. 124 (Sbacchi’s sources: “Times (London), 29 April 1938; Le Petit Parisien, 22 August 1939; La Garonne, 22 August 1939; Bernoville, Monseigneur Jarosseau et la Mission des Gallas, p. 360” p. 127);
 12. Statement by an eye-witness, Dr. Syoum Gebregziabher, author of “Symphony of my Life”, 2012: “From my book you can note, how one of the Catholic priests took the personal responsibility to entice me to be a priest! How we the seminarians marched outside Harar in a heavily Moslem region protected by Fascist military to attend church every week! This was a clear policy of the Catholic Church in support of Fascism. The establishment of "Collegio Ethiopico" within the Vatican compound

was to train and indoctrinate Ethiopian seminarians. We were then told that if we become good potential priests, we will be eligible to go to Rome for further education (indoctrination)! There was a definite crusade to propagate Catholicism in Ethiopia with the help of fascism based on apartheid policy I had faced on my way to priesthood!"

In addition, Dr. Syoum Gebregziabher stated in his letter to me dated July 19, 2012:

"...In 1948 my uncle Gebremeskel Habtemariam (Dejasmach) mentioned in the book; not only protested the Vatican collaboration with Mussolini; but officially dropped his Catholicism and joined and embraced the Ethiopian Orthodox Church!"

13. Contrary to the abundance of evidence proving Pope Pius XI's complicity with Mussolini and the Fascists, there are some who claim that the Pope, in his speech to graduating nurses, expressed, as an aside to his formal speech a statement to the effect that he objected to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. However, in addition to the evidence provided above, Rev Dr. Mikre-Sellassie G/Ammanuel quotes Gaetano Salvemini, in his book: "Church and Missions in Ethiopia During the Italian Occupation":

"To anyone reading without close attention, Pius XI's address to the nurses gives an impression of condemning not only war but also this particular war as an abominable crime. In actual fact it does not condemn the imminent war. It

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condones it as a war of self-defense. In addition it puts in a plea for indulgence and leniency should Mussolini, in the exercise of his rights of self-defense, exceed the limits of moderation."

14. Rev. Dr. Mikre-Sellassie G/Amanuel stated further in the above book:

"...the Pope very clearly expressed his love and wholehearted support to Italy and the Fascist Government."

15. Another eyewitness account by the 97-year old, General Lema Gabremariam, a participant in the war at Maichew in 1936 states, in his open letter to Pope Francis I:

"... the battle of Maichew, 1936... was my first experience of war. I witnessed the deadly poison gas, yperite raining from aircrafts, which was a routine of the Fascist warfare. As a result of the acidic-rain, my eyes were affected and I was nearly blinded and made unconscious.

...When I regained my consciousness, I found myself in the middle of heaps of dead bodies of humans and pack animals.....

There are proofs that some (Vatican) Cardinals and clergy rallied behind fascism, among them the Cardinal of Milan, Alfredo Ildefonso Schuster. In addition to his

anti Ethiopia campaign, the Cardinal was photographed with war generals next to tanks, machineguns, and the army, which were on their way to invade Ethiopia.

As Your Holiness is aware, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI had apologized to the Jewish people in the year 2000 for failing to take action in challenging the Nazi, though the Vatican had not collaborated with Hitler. What would God say when the Vatican confessed to the Jews, but not to Ethiopians?

I have learned about your reputation through the mass media that you are a man of many firsts. I hope and pray that you will add more to your great achievement by apologizing to the Ethiopian people and peace loving people at large.”

16. Karlheinz Deschner, “God and the Fascists”, 2013, :

“Even Catholic papers flatly admitted that Pius XI had permitted colonial war. The conscience of the world condemned Italy’s vigorous approach.” Gert Buchheit also wrote in 1938: “What did the Papacy do?The Church demanded that the bishops hand in their gold crosses and chains.....Yes, the Pope even gave the Duce (Mussolini) the frozen assets in Germany so that Italy could purchase the necessary raw materials...”

17. David I Kertzer, “The Pope and Mussolini”, 2014:

“The Vatican (Pope Pius XI) played a central role both in making the Fascist regime possible and in keeping it in power.....The central player in the effort to keep Pope Pius XI (in check) was Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli – later Pope Pius XII.”

18. Jeff Pearce, “Prevail”, 2014:

“...By mid-September (1935), Eugenio Pacelli, Cardinal Secretary of State (and later Pius XII) sent word to Musolini that the Pope (Pius XI) would not stand in the way of an invasion (of Ethiopia). As Professor Christopher Duggan noted in *Fascist Voices*, “The Church provided overwhelming backing for the war, with seven cardinals, twenty-nine archbishops, and seventy-five bishops offering public endorsements to the press.”

JUSTICE FOR ETHIOPIA

Despite the clear prevalence of the abundant evidence for the Fascist war crimes in Ethiopia and the Vatican’s complicity, justice has not prevailed for the country. None of the Fascist criminals were brought to justice. The Vatican has not yet expressed its apology. No adequate reparations have been undertaken by the Italian Government although the Italian President, H.E. Mr. Luigi Scalfaro, did express his apology during a visit to Ethiopia in 1997.

It is important to note that the Vatican has apologized to the Jewish people for having been silent during the Nazi holocaust.

Therefore, our Alliance is undertaking a global struggle for justice including the payment of adequate reparations by the Italian Government, a Vatican apology to the Ethiopian people, restitution of Ethiopian properties currently in the possession of the Vatican and the Italian Government, UN recognition of the Fascist war crimes in Ethiopia; and the removal of the Graziani mausoleum at Affile.

It should be noted here that over 4,500 people from some 30 countries have signed the petition presented on our website (www.globalallianceforethiopia.org) appealing to the Vatican to apologize to the Ethiopian people.

In conclusion, we appeal to Your Holiness to continue with your exemplary Christian service to humanity by offering the Vatican's formal and public apology to the Ethiopian people thereby finally bringing justice that has been owed for over three quarters of a century.

With the assurances of our highest respect,

Yours faithfully,

Kidane Alemayehu

Executive Director