



HARARI ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE & EQUALITY

(H.A.J.E)

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From Harari Alliance for Justice and Equality (H.A.J.E)

H.A.J.E's Press Release on the crisis in Harar
January 29th, 2020

This open letter is in strong condemnation of the events leading to and outcomes of the recent religious-based acts of hooliganism by Christian youths in the ancient Muslim city of Harar.

Harari Alliance for Justice and Equality (HAJE) condemns the belligerent act of organized hooligans on the day of Timket; Ethiopian Orthodox Epiphany celebration on January 20, 2020, in Harar City, Harari Regional State. As HAJE has been informed by people that were witness to the event and has gathered from several reputable sources, the trigger to the events was the wanton and irresponsible hanging of the imperial Ethiopian flag on the day of Timket in provocative ways by the organizers of the Timket celebration. While the right of any recognized religious group to organize and celebrate holy days is and will always be a protected right in Harar, as it should be in any part of Ethiopia, it is also the responsibility of the organizers not to provoke the majority Muslims in the city by hanging the imperial flag, a symbol of repression and tyranny to most Muslims in Ethiopia, particularly to Muslims in Harar. Especially during these highly sensitive times following the organized destruction of Mosques and Muslim businesses in Mota town in Gojjam. It is the height of irresponsibility the way that the leadership of the Christian Orthodox church of Harar chose to celebrate their holy day. It was exactly such an act of provocation that led to the break-down of law and order on this day.

Organized Christian youth went on a rampage and destroyed properties and businesses owned by Muslims on that day. There is no question that Muslim businesses were targeted, buildings and property belonging to Muslims were disgracefully vandalized, destroyed and symbol of Christian crosses were spray-painted on buildings and vehicles, showing without a doubt the identity of the perpetrators. Multiple news sources and private videos and pictures provide the evidence. This unprovoked act of lawlessness was orchestrated by people who are determined to disrupt the co-existence between Muslims and Christians who live in the city. To add insult to injury, the federal armed forces, sworn to protect the peace were observed to watch on passively as these shameless acts of vandalism were going on. Their excuse, unbelievably was that they had no direction to stop the rampage!!! Since when do those sworn to protect the peace as their first and highest duty need to be instructed to do their JOB!

Until this tragic event, the co-existence of the two major religion followers in the city of Harar has been exemplary. Even though Harar is an ancient Islamic city, Christians are living side by side with Muslims in peace. However, recent developments in Ethiopia has given rise to Christian extremist who are organized and create havoc by burning Mosques and Muslim businesses. Most recently in Gojjam, Mota city, organized groups set fire to several mosques and Muslim businesses causing damage in millions of dollars. No one is so far been brought to justice. Equally, in the Oromia Region, Churches and Mosques were set on fire. If neither the Federal Government nor the Regional Governments can stop such dangerous acts from continuing, this will have severe ramifications for the social stability in Ethiopia and the region. A lack of action from authorities will only lead to loss of trust and further acts of hooliganism and vandalism!!

What is unbelievable still is the response of the Christian leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Instead of condemning the vandalism perpetrated by the Christian youths on the citizens of Harar, some activists such as Aba Mekarios, a priest of the Orthodox religion followers publicly defend and encourage violent acts against Muslims in Harar!!



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Hararis working together towards a common goal!



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These developments are extremely worrisome to all free and peace-loving Ethiopians, and especially to the citizens of Harar. A tit-for-tat response will leave all as losers, we urge the Religious Leaders to remember their religious duties and obligations which is always to stand for truth and to bring peace. We urge the prime-minister, and the head of the federal police to take swift and decisive action to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice. We urge this so that the trust of the people is preserved.



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