



March 10, 2021

Dear Catholic Brothers and Sisters

RE: Appeal for Urgent Humanitarian Emergency Response for Irob People in the War-Torn Tigray

The Irob People are indigenous ethnic minority of only about 40,000 population living in North Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia bordering Eritrea. Irobs are predominantly Easter (Ge'ez) Rite Catholics and hold a unique spot in the history of embracing, enculturating, and sustaining the Catholic Christianity in Ethiopia by the brave apostolic work of St. Justine De Jacobis. Despite their relatively small population, Irobs have been at the forefront of regional and national development being the home of the first modern school in Ethiopia established by St. Justine De Jacobis in Alitena (the traditional capital).

Irobs mostly live on mixed farming and inhabit predominantly highland and mountainous area (Irob Land). Irob Land is highly hit by natural and man-made calamities including Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000. This war was total disaster for the already vulnerable community with several casualties, abduction, rape, displacement, looting (mainly livestock) and most notably disruption of livelihoods and social integrity. Irob Development Association (IDA) was founded in Mekelle, Tigray, Ethiopia in July 2,003 to contribute to the rehabilitation of the community in the aftermath of the Ethio-Eritrean war and bring about sustainable development. Later in 2014, it was also registered in Aurora, Colorado, USA gaining 501(C) 3 status. Since its establishment, IDA has been working hard to serve the community focusing mainly on education until another catastrophe occurred recently.

Ethiopian Interim Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali waged an outright war on the Government and People of Tigray Regional State on November 4, 2020 amid national political crisis to subdue opposition by force. Ethiopian National Defense Forces allied with Eritrean forces and Amhara regional special forces are fully deployed in war on Tigray. The Amhara forces are accompanied by militias and unarmed ethnic hatred driven youth group called 'Fano' stimulated by territory expansion. When the war was started, the federal government fully choked Tigray by interrupting power supply, internet, telecom, banking and blocking all supply lines. Moreover, this was done in the middle of COVID-19 pandemic and locust invasion during harvesting time. Continuous Air strikes have been conducted in cities as well as villages including by United Arab Emirates (UAE) fighter drones. Densely populated areas and civil infrastructures have been indiscriminately shelled by heavy artillery.

Now, after four months brutal war in dark, Tigray is in rubbles. Reports show that systematic aggression on health facilities by the allied invader forces has left more than 90% of health facilities are out of function. Systematic and organized destruction and looting of public and private properties has left citizens empty handed. Millions of livestock, thousands of vehicles, machinery & equipment from factories, universities, public service buildings and private properties are taken to Eritrea and Amhara region. Crops are burnt on fields. Widespread rape and hunger used as a weapon to terrorize people. Ethnic cleansing going on all over the country. Mass massacre, summary execution and civilian atrocities are routine including in churches. Civil casualties are over 50,000, more than 2.3 million internally displaced, more than 60,000 crossed borders to seek refuge in Sudan, about 4.5 million left on the verge of starvation. In summary, this is a clear state genocidal campaign against the people of Tigray.



This genocidal war poses clear existential threat to the Irob indigenous ethnic minority as the Eritrean forces have specially and viciously targeted the already devastated community due to their resistance to the Ethio-Eritrean border commission decision which awards significant part of the Irob Land with thousands of people to Eritrea against their will. Now, Eritrea has taken full control of the land massacring families going door-to-door, looting properties, raping, abducting, etc. There is no medicine, no water, no food no communication, and no transportation.

IDA has been working to seek an emergency humanitarian support to reach for the people of Irob through His Eminence Abune Tesfaselassie Medhin, Bishop of the Catholic Eparchy of Adigrat to reach for this poor community in mayhem. Therefore, at this critical time, we call up on all of you for emergency humanitarian assistance and to amplify the cry of our people to the International Community to end this madness as soon as possible.

We remain highly indebted to your due understanding of the horrible situation we are in at this moment. Please, keep us in your prayers and may God bless your service for those in need.

With Best Regards,

IDA-North America Executive Committee

Enc: Letter from His Eminence, Abune Tesfaselassie Medhin

