Patriarch Kirill expresses support for the Primate of the Ethiopian Church due to the latest developments in Ethiopia

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has sent a letter of support to His Holiness Patriarch Abune Mathias of of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in connection with the latest tragic events in Ethiopia as a group of schismatics attempted to carry out a schism in Ethiopia.

Bellow is the full text of the message from the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

HIS HOLINESS ABUNE MATHIAS
PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ETHIOPIA

Your Holiness, beloved brother in Christ,

On behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church I address you with these words of sincere compassion at the time of new ordeals that have befallen our friend – the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. My heart aches as I hear the news of the hardships the Ethiopian Christians are enduring, in these trying circumstances remaining faithful to their Church and despite the oppression maintaining *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3).

The strength in spirit that your suffering flock shows serves as a proof that Christian faith is living and strong in the Ethiopian land. I believe that the fortitude of the confessors who defy earthly fear for the sake of *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness* (Mt 6:33) will set an example for future generations.

The Russian Orthodox Church has always taken to heart the afflictions that befell your people. Now, at this difficult moment, I express my brotherly support to Your Holiness, the archpastors, pastors and all faithful children of the Ethiopian Church. We resolutely condemn any actions aimed at causing a schism in the Church and invariably support our Ethiopian brothers.

I wish to Your Holiness good health and plentiful help from God Almighty in your Primatial ministry, and I wish unity in faith and longevity to your flock. It is my hope that the Lord will show mercy on the Christians of Ethiopia and, in accord with the words of St David the Psalmist, *will bless his people with peace* (Ps 29:11).

With love in Christ,

+KIRILL
PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

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At the end of January of this year, the aforementioned group of schismatics openly opposed the Holy See of the Ethiopian Church and attempted to form their own "ecclesiastical jurisdiction." To achieve this goal, the schismatics have carried out armed attacks on churches, clergy and parishioners of the Ethiopian Church. There have been victims among the defenders of churches.

The schismatics' actions have been rejected by the majority of Ethiopian Christians. Today, with the blessing of Patriarch Abune Mathias, a solemn prayer for the early cessation of division and the restoration of unity in the faith is being offered at all parishes of the Ethiopian Church. On February 12th a special Churchwide Prayer will be said by Ethiopian believers all around the world. The Synod of the Ethiopian Church has also sent letters asking for support from leaders of the largest Christian communities in the world.

The Russian Orthodox Church has never been indifferent to the woes of the brotherly people of

Ethiopia and in difficult times has always raised its voice in their defense.

The Ethiopian Church is a member of the family of Ancient Oriental Churches. It is not only the largest body in the Pre-Chalcedonian family, but is also one of the largest Christian communities in the world: the number of its members exceeds 60 million people.

Ties between the peoples of Russia and Ethiopia date back to the fifteenth century. Regular inter-Church contacts were established in the late 19th century. In 1950s-1980s, they reached a particularly high level, largely thanks to the efforts of Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. These ties are especially strong today and are also carried out within the framework of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Church, established in 2018.

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