

World Council of Churches Takes Note of Pastoral Letter of Four Eritrean Bishops

EPDP Information Office

On 1 July, 2014, the Geneva-headquartered World Council of Churches (WCC), which has over 350 member churches with over 600 million followers globally, took note of the pastoral letter issued by four Eritrean Catholic Bishops inside Eritrea and discussed its contents in great detail in the presence of persons knowledgeable of the Eritrean situation.

Father Mussie Zerai, an Eritrean priest, was at hand to explain the background and content of the pastoral letter released in Eritrea on 25 May 2014, only a day after Eritrea's 23rd independence anniversary.

Attending the meeting were WCC officials and church representatives, among them, Dr. Isabel A. Phiri, WCC Associate General Secretary; Mr. Ralston Deffenbaugh, Assistant General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation; Dr. Nigussu Legesse, WCC Programme Executive; a long-time senior WCC official on African issues, Mr. Melaku Kifle and others.



After a brief summary of the pastoral letter and introductory note by a Ghanaian Catholic priest, Father Lawrence Iwuamadi, Father Mussie Zerai took the floor to speak in great detail about the 35-page document by the four Eritrean bishops. Besides dwelling on the pastoral letter, Father Mussie explained the extremely disquieting political, economic social, political and human rights situation in Eritrea. He also took the opportunity to describe the unbearable condition facing Eritrean refugees dispersed in many regions of the globe.

Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar, head of foreign relations office of the Eritrean People's Democratic Party (EPDP) also joined in explaining the ever worsening situation in the

country and called upon WCC and other religious organizations to play their part in helping to end the suffering in Eritrea.

The meeting expressed deep admiration to the Eritrean bishops for taking such a step inside Eritrea. Meeting participants also hailed the Arch Diocese of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church in North America for supporting and endorsing the pastoral message which was described by one speaker as “a message not only to and for Eritreans but to and for all of us”.

Recommendations were made for action that could help all WCC member churches to be informed of the real situation in Eritrea. Meeting participants hoped that the Central Council of the WCC, which was due to start its global assembly on 2 July, could somehow take note of the pastoral letter by the Eritrean bishops.