

New York Tri State Ethiopians answered a call of our monks
at Waldiba ancient Monastrey !!!!!

Tedla Asfaw

The NY tri State Ethiopians mostly of Christian Orthodox came out in huge number yesterday afternoon on what we call " Lunch Rally " and answered for a call of our monks to defend the Waldiba Monastery that includes 18 churches and sacred burial ground from the Sugar Lords destruction. Waldiba has been a place of education and worship since 1200s by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and many who were educated shared their personal experience at Waldiba on our rally in front of the "Ethiopian" Mission at Manhattan. Some called Waldiba the first University of Ethiopia. Many agree that there is hardly to find any of our religious holy fathers who has never been at Waldiba one time or the other.

When the monk from Waldiba on VOA and Finote Hibret Radio interviews cried for help to stop the war the Ethiopian regime declared on Waldibia Monastery and their readiness to be martyred/Meseyef many of us were ready to answer their call. Our rallying cry was the exact "replica" of our monks at Waldiba. " Waldiban Ateknkubene Kenekachehu Eneseyefalene" meaning Do not trespass Waldiba's ancient holdings and we are ready to be Martyred.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church followers in New York surrounding were mobilized in less than 12 hours and came out in front of the "Ethiopian" Mission to stop its bulldozers immediately. Stop trespassing our holy Waldiba ancient holdings now !!!! The message was directed to the Sugar Lord/Minster Abay Tsehaye who is busy of sending his cadres and soldiers to silence the monks. He is accusing shamefully the holy people as politicians.

The holy fathers have no guns or soldiers to defend Waldiba but they have God and millions of their followers to stop the bulldozing of the ancient Monastery watershed. The forests and the four rivers attracted EFFORT bulldozers to produce and export sugar for their personal pockets. We heard it on their propaganda media that their Sugar Plantation is designed to produce sugar for national as well as foreign markets. One thing they did not tell us, where the study of this disastrous project is ? What is the human and environmental impact ? Where is the consultation of the people ?

The Waldiba Watershed includes one of the few remaining forestation and vegetation about 4 percent from the 40 percent four decades ago of Ethiopia. Deforestation in the Western and Southern Ethiopia to clear the land for foreign land grabbers like Karuturi and Saudi Star and others has been going on disregarding the local and international protest . All this

is done to get foreign currency to fatten TPLF bosses.

The Waldiba Monastery is now threatened the same way as the people of Gambella, Beni Shanguel, Afar, Oromia etc. The difference here is this is directed against not only the inhabitants of the region but many of us who have a religious link to the place. That is why our monks warning to stop this encroachment of holy land from rent seeking regime attracted many Ethiopians in short notice here in New York area.

No surprise our priests and deacons came to Manhattan in windy and cold afternoon with their religious garments and stood two hours with their followers and other Ethiopians to say Enough is Enough. The unique dressing and the holy cross has attracted many passers and were handed the paper that was written on the history of Waldiba and the impact of Land Grabbing on this ancient monastery.

St Mary of Zion, Yonkers, Amanuel Church, New Jersey deacons and priests made an emotional plea to all who stood on that windy afternoon in Manhattan. "If we did not preach to our followers and warn the regime to stop its bulldozers on their track how do we call ourselves servant of God ? ". All of them agree from now onward on Sunday masses it will be their obligation to speak and defend the holy monasteries that are threatened by suspicious fire at Asebot in East, Ziqula in South and now by Arrogant Sugar Lords bulldozers at Waldiba in North.

Similar rally was held yesterday in DC area by Ethiopians. All these were possible by grassroots mobilization by Ethiopian Orthodox Followers in short notice. Some in our area like the Medhanalem Church deacons and priests did not show up maybe due to short notice but many of its followers including myself and others were there to support our monks call, "Waldeban Atinkubene Kenekachue Eneseyafalene". Yes we will be martyred in defense of our religion that is why we came few feet away to the Regime Mission in New York. Such protests will continue until the regime publicly apologizes and leave our holy monastery as it has been for more than one thousand years.

We were not there to petition the rulers representatives because this regime did not treat our monks with respect. Rather Abay Tsehaye the Sugar Minister was insulting and threatening the monks. A regime that disrespects our monks back home should not get any respect from us here therefore we were there to Warn them. Stop immediately your bulldozers otherwise you are responsible for what to come.

Taking away land was not received in Gambella and Afar silently. Fighters are everywhere , Karuturi and Saudi Star promise to export crops to India and Gulf Nation is now threatened by popular arm revolt. The monks of Waldiba did not have such fighters to stop Abay Tsehai but we will stop him

by exposing the regime crime to their foreign supporters like USA. We got high five from New Yorkers yesterday, the public has a voice unlike Ethiopia and will question their representatives. It is politics 101 !!!!

Diaspora Ethiopian Orthodox churches on this holy month will rally behind one clear slogan, "Waldibane Atenkubene". This is a unifier like it was in DC and here in New York area churches. We are all the "soldiers" of Waldiba. Similar protest is planned in West Coast, Europe, Australia and Africa. The Sugar Lords will no doubt play tribal affiliation to divide Ethiopians.

Ethiopian Muslims at Aweliya were also expected to fall on TPLF tribal politics which they shattered and stood together to say no to the regime involvement in their religious affairs using unknown people in their name since late January this year. That will be the lesson for Ethiopian Orthodox Church followers back home and here. We have twenty years of experience of cadres recruited by the regime to divide us so that they will remain in power to enrich themselves at our expense.

It is on this belief that many who are highly involved on Ethiopian politics for the last 40 years came out and stand with the Ethiopian religious community and their struggle to defend Waldiba from Sugar Lords of EFFORT. Their personal experience as young revolutionaries fighting both TPLF and Derg, the kindness they received from Waldiba monks forced them to come and speak on their behalf. A gentleman spoke on what he witnessed at Waldiba as a young man. Assimba Editorialized its support for New York rally, the paper was distributed for all, "Dir Beyaber Anbassa Yasser" !!!!!

Elderly mother inspired the crowd when she shared her parents story giving their lives defending our country and religion and sadly she said that she is living her last days possibly to be buried on foreign land. "Why should we allow that my children ?". It was emotional for all of us.

The rally ended by prayer and we all promised to take the spirit of this rally to our churches on this holy month. The organizers will do their part with fellow Ethiopians in DC and other areas to organize a huge petition to be submitted to responsible international organizations. Yes, Do not Touch Waldiba, we are ready to be martyred to keep it a place of education and worship from generation to generation.