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THE CROWN COUNCIL OF ETHIOPIA

HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS PRINCE ERMIAS SAHLE-SELASSIE HAILE-SELASSIE  
PRESIDENT

## Crown Council Statement on the 126<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Victory of Adwa, 2022

*By His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie,  
President of the Crown Council of Ethiopia*

*March 1, 2022 / Yekatit 23, 2014*

Ethiopia defeated Italy's invading armies at the battle of Adwa 126 years ago. Ethiopians celebrate that victory on Yekatit 23 each year. Celebrations in Addis Ababa on that date traditionally take place at Menelik Square, the site of the famous statue commemorating the victorious emperor, Menelik II.

**This year, public anticipation and support for these celebrations was larger than ever. This was a heartwarming affirmation** of the central place that the Ethiopian Crown holds in the story of Ethiopia's unity and freedom.

But we still have lessons to learn from this moment. For forty years, our victory at Adwa spared us the horrors of war. When fascist armies occupied our country in 1936, our mothers and fathers fought five long years of resistance. When Menelik's successor, the Emperor Haile Selassie, returned to Ethiopia in 1941, he stood before Menelik's palace and called for forgiveness. "Do not return evil for evil," he told all who would listen. Nearly every Ethiopian has heard stories of their relatives who fought and died to defend our country in that war. How many of us would have the strength to make that same call for forgiveness?

For forty years, our victory at Adwa gave us peace. But this peace would never again last as long. Twice in the next generation we fought wars against Somalia. And at the end of the century, we fought a senseless war against our Eritrean cousins, only recently independent. In between these international crises, we spent some fifteen years locked in a civil war while our people starved. Thirty years after the fall of the Derg, memory of those years leaves us yearning for justice. But we remember one lesson, "Do not return evil for evil."

Today, our country has pulled back once more from the edge of disaster. We have fought another war against our own brothers and sisters, a war that posed again the question Adwa asked and answered: will our country survive as one? We must reject the temptations of tribalism, of ethnic federalism, of divisions that will break our country every bit as viciously as foreign colonialism. We must remember the blessings of peace, and do everything we can to secure them. We must be magnanimous to each other, and to all sides in our family struggle: “Do not return evil for evil.”

Forty years after Menelik’s victory at Adwa, the Italian occupiers tore down the statue of Menelik. Today, the statue stands strong, and the foreign invaders are gone. Our country is wounded, shaken, but still united. Our people have gathered at the statue to celebrate our victory, and remember its lesson of unity and strength. Some reject that lesson, preferring to think only of their own tribe. But this simply polarizes our people further than before. Polarization leads only to war, and war is not a solution. It is a vicious cycle.

We break that cycle when we work together without compromising our principles. We need to learn from our unique heritage of tolerance and wisdom. **Our victory at Adwa and our resistance to fascist occupation were the foundations of our support for African independence from colonialism. They guided our efforts to support freedom fighters in Zimbabwe and South Africa. They guided our negotiations as intermediaries in the conflicts in Biafra, in Congo, and between Morocco and Algeria. They guided our decision to send peacekeeping troops to Congo, Sudan, and Somalia. How far we have fallen that we should think now of receiving such help from others, instead of offering it to the world once more.**

**Adwa is the lesson we have forgotten, that it took all of us working as one people.** We will reach our full potential by once again standing together as one, as we did at Adwa 126 years ago. This will be our greatest victory, a victory which will embed peace, justice, and forgiveness into the very foundations of our society.