**Date: 26/10/2013**

XXXXXXXXXXXXMP

Address xxxxxxxx

**Re Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church of St. Mary of Debre Tsion in London (Charity number 1060394**

The United Kingdom has been home to thousands of Ethiopians who fled political persecution from successive authoritarian regimes in Ethiopia over the past 40 years. Most of these political refugees are now British Citizens and have established families and have become active members of the community. Many of these Ethiopians or British citizens of Ethiopian origin are followers of The Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity faith and have established a church called “**Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church St. Mary of Debre Tsion” in London**.

These 40 years, particularly the last 22 years, have been marked by the tyrannical Ethiopian Government’s continuous attempt to impose its influence on the church through the use of the Synod in Addis Ababa and the Patriarch’s office thereby to widen its sphere of influence and build its constituency and support base. St Mary of Debre Tsion, particularly after 2005, had officially declared that it would not be subject to any administrative instruction from the Synod controlled by the ethno-apartheid regime. As for the church’s financial and property management, the church is registered with the UK Charities Commission; therefore, follows the rules and regulations of the UK Charity Commission. The church has been managed by members for members.

Those who supported the ethno-apartheid Ethiopian regime in power and did not agree with the way **St. Mary of Debre Tsion** Church was managed protested and when they found themselves in a minority left the church in 2005 and established their own churches with the support of the regime that made us refugees in the first place. These churches are called Holly Trinity (ቅድስት ሥላሴ) and St Gabriel (ቅዱስ ገብርኤል). They have left from St Mary and they practice their faith in accordance to their wishes of promoting the regime they support.

Those who have settled and established their lives and livings in UK maintained their determination to stay independent of the Synod dominated by the regime’s infiltrators and continued to grow and prosper, achieving a very high level of growth in terms of the services provided to members. This is a pride to all Ethiopians all over the world.

As a result of this success, the regime in Ethiopia and the Synod in Addis Ababa were determined, more than ever, to take over the property and management of the church, by any means necessary, ignoring the laws of this country. In 2011, the ethnic based churches in London quickly created “**Ethiopian Orthodox** **Tewehedo Diocese of North** **West Europe**” and started their campaign to take over **Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church of St. Mary of Debre Tsion.** The current regime has all its hands in the affairs of the church and the synod in Ethiopia. The regime follows ethnic politics, where tribalism is the order of the day. Many members and followers of St Mary of Debre Tsion are victims of that regime. Among them are people who have lost family members in the hands of the regime. Therefore, Ethiopians have living in Britain have ground and reason to fight tooth-nail to protect their church from falling in the hands of their persecutors.

On top of all these above, many members of the congregation of **Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church of St. Mary of Debre Tsion,** are actively engaged in opposing and exposing the regime’s gross violation of human rights, domination of the economy, summary killings, imprisonment without due legal process and the likes. They have been serving the community at home as a voice of the voiceless. Therefore, the main motive of the regime’s representatives and their supporters is to possess the church, have access to the members, and thereby use all the means in its disposal to silence the voice of the opposition, even here in a democratic country.

Based on the above, it is evident that as British citizens, UK nationals of Ethiopian origin being subjugated by the Ethiopian regime would have tantamount to Ethiopian regimes interference in the internal affairs of the UK government.

1. We ask the Charity Commission to protect the rights of UK citizens and right to faith, from The Ethiopian regime. After all no UK charity should be run or managed directly or indirectly by foreign organisations or governments.
2. We ask the Commission to ensure that members’ rights are respected. The church should be run in accordance with members’ wishes and decisions not that of a foreign government or its agents. The properties of the church should be legally protected and should not be legally owned by few individuals, as is the case now.

The Charity Commission has now invited the two parties involved in this dispute for a meeting on 6th November 2013 at which the Member of Parliament for Battersea Ms Jane Ellison will be present. We ask you and your office to do everything you can by contacting Ms Ellison and Charity Commission directly so that members’, who are British residents and citizens, rights are respected and that we remain free from persecution and fear from a regime thousands of miles away.

Yours sincerely

Full name of constituent

Address and signature