

# ITALY'S EXCELLENT NEWS FOR ETHIOPIA

By Kidane Alemayehu

It has been reported in various news media that Italy has signed an agreement with Libya to pay a compensation of \$5 billion for the use of Libyans who fought as part of the Fascist army during the Second World War. This should be an excellent news as the Fascist army which included some Libyans had committed genocide for which Ethiopia should be compensated a minimum of \$50 billion.

The Libyan government should be given due credit for its valiant effort in getting a redress through the substantial compensation by the European government i.e. Italy that colonized it for several years and utilized its citizens in its quest for suppression as well as committing atrocities in other nations such as Ethiopia.

The current Italian government also deserves appreciation for its principled stand on the issue by owning up to its past historic injustices. The important remaining issue now is whether the Italian government would be consistent with this fundamental principle and apply it to Ethiopia which had suffered the most from the Fascist atrocities. This will depend not only on the Italian government's new-found sense of justice but also on whether the people and government of Ethiopia will make a justified demand for an equitable compensation.

Various well known scholars and authors including Avro Manhattan, Richard Pankhurst, Anthony Mockler, Emperor Haile Selassie I, Paulos Gnogno, etc. have provided an indisputable evidence for the fact that during the 1935-41 Italian occupation of Ethiopia, the following devastating losses were perpetrated by the Fascists:

1. Numerous Ethiopians (later estimated at 1 million) were killed of whom 30,000 were murdered in a few hours in Addis Ababa alone; 350 monks and nuns were massacred in the famous Debre Libanos monastery; and two bishops, namely, Abune Petros and Abune Michael were martyred. (1)
2. 525,000 homes and 2000 churches were destroyed.
3. 14 million animals were killed.
4. As the Fascists sprayed mustard poison gas in various parts of Ethiopia using numerous airplanes, the Ethiopian environment was devastated in addition to the above genocide and substantial destruction.

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*(1) There are numerous personal tragedies involving the Fascists. Mine concerns my grandfather, Grazmach Gessesse Fanta and his son, Merid Gessesse, who died fighting against the Fascists in the Ogaden, the eastern region of Ethiopia. The Fascist army that invaded Ethiopia from the Somali front included Libyan and Somali soldiers. My father, Alemayehu Gebremichael, (God bless his soul) had related to me that he also fought against the Fascists in the same area but was able to escape only to be caught later by the Libyan soldiers who beat him so much that his blood was flowing from his nose.*

As a so-called compensation, Italy agreed to pay the tiny amount of only 6 million sterling pounds in 1947 and, as a result, the issue has remained a festering open wound for generations. The main reason for the inappropriate and ridiculously low amount of compensation for such a huge crime against humanity was due to the fact that Ethiopia was the only independent African country at the time and the western countries sided with one of their own.

Now that the Italian government has finally seen fit to pay a more appropriate compensation for its past crimes in the African country of Libya, there is good reason to hope and believe that it will also meet its obligation for the Fascists genocide and destruction in Ethiopia.

The above issue has been taken up by the Global Alliance for Justice – the Ethiopia Cause ([www.globalallianceforethiopia.org](http://www.globalallianceforethiopia.org)) which has launched an international campaign for a Vatican apology to the Ethiopian people for its complicity with the Fascists. An international petition is being signed in the above website and, so far, nearly 800 people from over 30 countries have already complied. It is intended that once enough signatures have been obtained, a formal appeal will be submitted to the international community including the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, Amnesty International, and other such institutions as well as certain appropriate governments to put pressure on the Vatican to do its Christian duty by apologizing to the Ethiopian people.

A number of letters have also been submitted to Pope Benedict XVI, the head of the Vatican, directly calling for his apology similar to the ones that he and previous Popes have offered to the Jewish people for the mere fact that the Vatican remained silent when the Nazis committed the infamous holocaust. The apology to Ethiopia should be even stronger because of the fact that the Fascist army occupied Ethiopia with the prior blessing and, therefore, direct complicity of the Vatican (please see the picture below).



A Vatican clergy blessing the Fascist army at the start of its journey to commit its genocide in Ethiopia.

It should be noted that the Alliance's strategy comprises three inter-related strands: firstly, to obtain an apology by the Vatican to the Ethiopian people; secondly, to ensure that the United Nations includes the Fascist genocide against Ethiopia in the annals of its historic records; and finally, thirdly, to obtain an adequate compensation by the Italian government to the Ethiopian people.

The above huge effort needs the support of all people and governments who believe in justice and human rights. All who are interested in contributing to the success of this endeavor are requested:

1. To sign the petition in [www.globalallianceforethiopia.org](http://www.globalallianceforethiopia.org) calling upon the Vatican to apologize to the Ethiopian people for its complicity with the Fascists;
2. To demand from the Italian government an adequate compensation for the genocide and the immense destruction perpetrated by the Fascists in Ethiopia;
3. To call upon the United Nations to include the Fascist genocide against Ethiopia in its historic records for the accurate information of future generations of humanity.

“Ethiopia shall raise its hands unto God.” (Psalm: 68:31)