



Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches

July 23, 2019

To All of the Bishops, Priests, and Faithful of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church –

On June 17, 2016 His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, my predecessor in the Presidency of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches (SCOCH), wrote to you expressing our condolences on the repose of His Eminence Abba Dioskoros and our fervent hope that you would refrain from any action that would perpetuate schism in the Oriental Orthodox Church and return His Holiness Abune Antonios I to his Apostolic Throne. Roughly a year later – on June 12, 2017 – Archbishop Khajag again wrote to you reiterating our unwavering support for His Holiness Abune Antonios and our prayers that you would act to end the painful schism that continues to bedevil the Church by restoring him to his rightful place as Patriarch.

In that same spirit, we were greatly concerned and saddened to learn that what remains of the Holy Synod of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church has decided to excommunicate His Holiness Abune Antonios I as a heretic at the behest of the Eritrean government and the secular authorities that it has appointed to oversee the Church. We are aware that this decision has not been accepted by the majority of the Eritrean Orthodox clergy or faithful and that, to our knowledge, the excommunication was carried out by government fiat without a formal ecclesiastical trial at which His Holiness might offer a defense against the charges offered. We urge you to reconsider this decision and to conduct all matters related to the Church in accordance with the ancient canons common to us all which dictate that a Patriarch cannot be removed without a formal ecclesiastical trial and not merely at the behest of a secular ruler. Kindly consider the repercussions that your actions have for the entire Church.

With Love in Our Savior Jesus Christ and on behalf of
the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches,

Bishop David

President of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches of America

Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of New York & New England

Acting Patriarchal Exarch, Coptic Orthodox Archdiocese of North America