


Inter-Religious Council of Uganda



Religions for Peace

PRESS RELEASE

A CALL FOR DIALOGUE TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICTS THAT LED TO THE RWANDA - UGANDA BORDER CLOSURE

"The believers are but a single brotherhood. So make peace and Reconciliation between your two contending brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy."

Quran [Surat ul Hujrat] 49:10

Introduction

On behalf of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU), the East African Community - Inter-Religious Council (EAC-IRC) and the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL), we wish to express our deep concern over the current stand-off between Rwanda and Uganda that recently culminated in a unilateral decision to close the border between the two sister states.

As ardent advocates of dialogue, we strongly urge the heads of states of the two sister countries to sit at a round table and find a lasting solution to the underlying misunderstandings between the two countries. We are certain that a number of channels still exist to resolve this conflict. These include, among others, preventive diplomacy spearheaded by the two ministries of Foreign Affairs; the East African Conflict Management Act, 2012, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU).

There is no doubt that a conflict between two EAC countries has far-reaching consequences as it inevitably affects the whole region and continent in one way or another. Therefore, the closure of the border between Rwanda and Uganda has wider ramifications on cross-border

trade, and the movement of people, capital and services to and from other neighbouring countries namely, Kenya, Burundi, DRC Congo, Burundi and South Sudan. This, in itself, contradicts the spirit behind the formation of the East African Community i.e.; *“Widening and deepening co-operation among the partner states and other regional economic communities in, among others, political, economic and social fields for their mutual benefit”*.

It is important to note that whereas the border closure is hardly one-and-half weeks old, the impact is by far overwhelming. Already, traders are losing large volumes of their perishable goods as the cargo trucks remain stranded at the borders. Besides, it is the same traders who must foot the excess bills occasioned by the immobile vehicles. The education fortunes of the innocent Rwandan school children commuting daily from Rwanda to Uganda are in jeopardy as they are barred from crossing the border. On a social and cultural scale, the border closure negatively affects the citizens wishing to visit their friends and relatives across the border.

Equally important, as long as the crisis persists, it heightens tensions and security concerns not only for border communities, but also the two nation-states and the entire region. The current wrangling between the two East African states is a threat to the realization of the goal of regional integration and the ultimate objective of political federation.

We are happy to note, though, that the Rwanda authorities have now allowed the cargo trucks to make a detour and enter Rwanda through Mirama Hills. This partially relieves the cumulative effect of the border closure. We sincerely believe and pray that it is the full opening of the borders which will revert the situation back to normalcy.


On this note, we wish to reiterate our call for dialogue between the two nations. We appreciate the ongoing diplomatic overtures by the two ministers of Foreign Affairs; Hon. Sam Kutesa and Hon. Richard Sezibera.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we wish to appeal to the political leadership in the two countries to ensure that their actions and decisions are in concurrence with the interests of their people.

For God and My Country!

Signed this 7th day of March, 2019.



His Eminence Sheikh Shaban Ramadhan Mubaje

Grand Mufti of the Uganda

Chair Council of Presidents, Inter-Religious Council of Uganda

Co-Chair Council of President, African Council of Religious Leaders

**FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF UGANDA AND THE
AFRICAN COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS**