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Prime Minister Meles Zenawi passed away late on August 20, 2012. Prime Minister Meles died after being treated abroad for the last few weeks, the Council of Ministers announced. The Council said the Prime Minister was a visionary leader for Ethiopia and steadfastly worked for the renaissance of Africa. He has been representing his country and Africa at international forums to consolidate peace and stability. The Council decided that Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hailemariam Desalegn become Acting Prime Minister of the country (State media (August 21). - Ethiopia's Prime Minister H.E. Meles Zenawi died at midnight on August 20. Ethiopians lost their dedicated leader who has contributed to the transformation of the country from absolute dictatorial military rule and poverty to a democratic and developmental one. The Premier was one of the most remarkable transformational leaders in Africa and the rest of the world (WIC, August 21).

Thousands of Ethiopians descended on the centre of the capital Addis Ababa on Tuesday to mourn Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, their firm-handed ruler of more than two decades, whose body was flown home after his death in a Brussels hospital at 57. Supporters mourned him as the savior of a long-suffering nation and Washington praised its ally, but opponents hailed the death of an autocrat one group described as a "genocidal tyrant". Traffic was congested from the airport to his residence, where his body was to be put on display. - Secretive to the end, Meles left it to officials of the European Union to disclose that he was being treated in the Belgian capital when he succumbed to an unspecified illness. An EU source said he had been a patient at the Saint-Luc University Hospital in Brussels. His deputy Hailemariam said they had spoken only recently: "He was recovering well, even taking part in light sporting activities. We were often in touch while he was recovering and we were optimistic that he would go on towards a full recovery," he said. "Meles was one of a kind. It is very difficult to replace a man of his stature." - In Brussels, a cortege accompanied by police outriders left a hotel next to the hospital, and took his casket to a private Belgian airstrip. Belgian military officials and police were there as it was loaded onto an Ethiopian Airlines jet. Hours later in Addis Ababa, the coffin was carried out of the aircraft, draped in the green, gold and red national flag. On the tarmac, a sister of Meles wept. "My brother loved this country. He deserved better," she said, a black scarf covering her tearful eyes. Outside the airport's terminal, thousands of well-wishers huddled in the rain to pay their respects. Some carried placards reading: "Meles, your legacy will never die." (Reuters, August 21).

Thousands of Ethiopians gathered Thursday for the funeral of Abuna Paulos, head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Abuna died last Thursday at the age of 76, four days before the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Abuna Paulos' funeral was held at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa. Among the mourners was Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, who is set to take over as Ethiopia's new leader. Most people had to listen to the service on the radio outside the church compound, as the crowd was too large to accommodate everybody. Many people were crying outside, mourning the death of their religious leader. Many people at the funeral said they will remember Abuna Paulos mostly for his development work in Ethiopia. - But the patriarch was also frequently criticized. His critics felt that his ties with the government were too strong. They also said he tried to make his own position more powerful by attempting to put the patriarch position above the synod, the council of the church. Also, Abuna Paulos was appointed leader while his predecessor, Abuna Merkorios, was in exile. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church officially states that no new patriarch can be appointed if the former one is still alive. Abuna Merkorios and his followers started a rival synod in the United States. The General Secretary of the Orthodox Catholic Church, Abuna Heskin, says that people who are criticizing Abuna Paulos are judging without knowing the truth (VOA, August 23).