

14 December 2016

The Honorable Tom Malinowski  
Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

CC:

Office of Ed Royce, Chairman of House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Office of Rep. Chris Smith, Chairman of the Subcommittee of Africa, Global Human Rights, & International Organizations.

Office of Bob Corker, Chairman U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Office of Jeff Flake, Chairman, Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy.

Peter H. Vrooman, Chargé d'affaires Ethiopia

**Subject: Regarding Your Travel to Ethiopia from December 14-17.**

Dear Assistant Secretary Malinowski,

The Amhara Association of America, an organization established to bring awareness to the oppression of the Amhara people as well as advocate and be a voice for the Amhara people of Ethiopia have learned of your upcoming trip to Ethiopia from December 14-17. We are pleased that you have chosen to go to Ethiopia at this critical time where millions of Ethiopians, especially Amharas are suffering at the hands of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) led government.

As citizens of this great country, we are grateful and cherish the security, opportunity, freedom, value of human rights and dignity, and representative democracy we have in America. We are blessed to have been afforded the opportunity to call America home and raise our children in this great country.

Unfortunately, the Amhara people living in Ethiopia do not enjoy these same basic universal human rights we enjoy here in America. The Amhara people are the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, making up close to 35% of the 100million Ethiopian population. From its inception, TPLF stated in its manifesto that the Amhara people were an enemy of the Tigray people and must be suppressed. And since coming to power in 1991, the TPLF led government has instituted a policy of silent genocide, ethnic cleansing, and forceful land confiscation of the Amhara people. In the 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, the Amhara population was short by an estimated 3million and some estimates have it as high as 6million. The TPLF government has yet to provide a credible explanation or allow an independent investigation as to the "missing" 3-6 million Amharas.

The TPLF led government has also forcefully annexed the Welkait and Raya area of Amhara land to the Tigray Region. The people in Welkait and Raya are Amhara people who have historically spoken Amharic, are culturally Amharas, and thus identify themselves as Amharas. The ruling TPLF party has

been and continues to commit ethnic cleansing of the Amharas in Welkait and Raya. Their native tongue (Amharic) is suppressed. Widespread discrimination, killing, rape, and confiscation of land have led to many of the ethnic Amhara people in Welkait leaving to Gonder and other regions of Ethiopia. Those that dared speak up against the government policies were either killed, imprisoned, or forced to recant through intimidation and torture.

Recently, the people in the Welkait region of Amhara ethnic group began organizing at the various villages and towns, elected leaders, and utilizing the constitution and laws of the land have petitioned the Government of Ethiopia to rejoin Welkait to the Amhara Region. This is allowed within the constitution of Ethiopia. The name of this organization is called The Welkait-Teged Amhara Nationalism Identity Request Committee. However, this simple act of petitioning led to the Ethiopian government kidnapping and imprisoning the leaders under pretense charges of terrorism. The leaders of this committee who have been advocating for the rights of Amharas are named as prisoners of conscious in the recent joint statement by several human rights organizations (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/08/joint-letter-un-human-rights-council-ethiopia>).

The face of the Amhara resistance is Colonel Demeke Zewdu who is imprisoned in Gondar and the Chairperson Getachew Ademe is imprisoned in Addis Ababa. In addition, two prominent Amhara leaders are currently serving long prison sentences for speaking out against atrocities of Amharas. Eskinder Nega, a prominent Amhara journalist who has been in jail now since 2012. Andualem Arage is a prominent Amhara politician who is currently serving a life sentence in prison for terrorism charges since 2011.

We are requesting that you meet with the leaders of the Amhara people during your visit to Ethiopia and hear their concerns, views, and their perspective on a path to a peaceful resolution to the current turmoil.

Since the Government of Ethiopia's declaration of a State of Emergency, an armed struggle has ensued in the Amhara areas of Gondar and Gojam. This has led to the government forces arresting close to 30,000 young Amhara youths, burning the homes and farmlands of suspected fighters and their family members, extra judicial killings, and intimidation of the Amhara people.

As Amhara-Americans we genuinely love America and take seriously the security interest of our great country. However, we feel our government has turned a blind eye to the many atrocities committed by the Ethiopian government against the Amhara people. As a country that values freedom, democracy, a fair judicial system, independent press and a generous country that has given this regime over \$30 billion in aid since 1991, we have an obligation to ensure Ethiopia is held accountable for our financial generosity and its human rights violations. We believe all non-humanitarian financial support should cease until the Government of Ethiopia lifts the State of Emergency, makes serious changes and improvements to human rights, democracy, press freedom, and release all political prisoners. In addition, the Government of Ethiopia should allow an independent investigation to recent cause of the protests and the death of thousands of Ethiopians. We are also requesting an independent investigation to the "missing" Amharas identified in the 2007 Ethiopian Census.

Again, we thank you for your focus on Ethiopia, are hopeful that you will discuss the above matters with the Ethiopian Government, and look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Amhara Association of America (AAA) – An organization committed to organizing the Amhara People in the Americas as a strong and vibrant community capable of contributing to the Amhara People in Ethiopia and the Amhara-American community.

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