

Washington update September 30, 2017

The U.S. Congress is considering a resolution that will put pressure on the Ethiopian regime to respect basic human rights and democracy. Some people say that House Resolution 128 is meaningless, but there is proof that it will have some impact: the Ethiopian government is furiously lobbying Congress to kill it or water it down. Now is the time for every Ethiopian-American to call the House leadership and express support for the resolution.

Call the Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan and the Majority leader Kevin McCarthy Paul Ryan. Tell them human rights and democracy can't wait, they should schedule a vote on House Resolution 128 as soon as possible.

Contact information below:

Paul Ryan: phone 202-225-3031; paulryan.house.gov/

Kevin McCarthy, Phone 202-225-2915; kevinmccarthy.house.gov

Here's a summary of HR 128:

Condemns: (1) the killing of peaceful protesters and excessive use of force by Ethiopian security forces; (2) the detention of journalists, students, activists and political leaders who exercise their constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and expression through peaceful protests; and (3) the abuse of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation to stifle political and civil dissent and journalistic freedoms.

Urges: (1) protesters in Ethiopia to refrain from violence and from encouragement or acceptance of violence in demonstrations, and (2) all armed factions to cease their conflict with the Ethiopian government and engage in peaceful negotiations.

Calls on the government of Ethiopia to:

- end the use of excessive force by security forces;
- investigate the killings and excessive use of force that took place as a result of protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions;
- release dissidents, activists, and journalists who have been imprisoned for exercising constitutional rights;
- respect the right to peaceful assembly and guarantee freedom of the press;

- engage in open consultations with citizens regarding its development strategy;
- allow a United Nations rapporteur to conduct an independent examination of the state of human rights in Ethiopia;
- address the grievances brought forward by representatives of registered opposition parties;
- hold accountable those responsible for killing, torturing, and detaining innocent civilians who exercised their constitutional rights; and
- investigate and report on the circumstances surrounding the September 3, 2016, shootings and fire at Qilinto Prison, the deaths of persons in attendance at the annual Irreecha festivities at Lake Hora near Bishoftu on October 2, 2016, and the ongoing killings of civilians over several years in the Somali Regional State by police.

Calls on such government to repeal proclamations that:

- can be used to harass or prohibit funding for organizations that investigate human rights violations, engage in peaceful political dissent, or advocate for greater political freedoms;
- prohibit those displaced from their land from seeking judicial redress;
- permit the detention of peaceful protesters and political opponents who legally exercise their rights to freedom of expression and association; and
- limit peaceful nonprofit operations in Ethiopia.

Calls on: (1) the Department of State to review security assistance and improve oversight of U.S. assistance to Ethiopia; (2) the U.S. Agency for International Development to lead efforts to develop a strategy to support improved democracy and governance in Ethiopia; and (3) the State Department, in cooperation with the Department of the Treasury, to apply appropriate sanctions on foreign persons or entities responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against any nationals in Ethiopia;. Supports the peaceful efforts of the Ethiopian people to exercise their constitutional rights.

Mesfin Mekonen