

Washington update

April 20, 2018

URGENT CALL TO ACTION.

Act today to let the U.S. Senate hear your support for SR 168, legislation that will put the U.S. government on record as supporting human rights and democracy in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian-American community should make sure its voice is heard. Call and write to co-sponsors of SR 168, to members of the Senate Intelligence and Foreign Affairs Committee urging them to support enactment of SR 168. The Senate must know how important this legislation is for Ethiopian-Americans.

To express your support for SR 168, visit

<https://phonecongress.com/topic/congress/bills/sres168-115/351691>

To find your Senator's contact information. Also, go to

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/sres168/details> and click on the names of co-sponsors.

Summary of SR 168

Reported to Senate with amendment(s) (09/19/2017)

Condemns: (1) killings 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) abuse of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation to stifle political and civil dissent and journalistic freedoms.

Urges protesters in Ethiopia to refrain from violence and to reject violence in demonstrations.

Calls on the government of Ethiopia to:

- address broad and persistent concerns expressed across large swatches of the citizenry;
- end the practice of excessive force by security forces, enforce professional discipline, and hold accountable security forces responsible for such abuses;

- grant the United Nations (U.N.) High Commissioner for Human Rights and U.N. Special Rapporteurs access to conduct a comprehensive examination of the state of human rights in Ethiopia and work with such entities to improve human rights conditions;
- conduct an investigation into the killings, detentions, and instances of excessive use of force that took place in response to protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions, hold security forces accused of such actions accountable through public proceedings, and publicly release written findings from such investigation;
- release from incarceration all dissidents, members of the political opposition, activists, and journalists who have been jailed for exercising constitutional rights;
- respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and guarantee freedom of the press and mass media;
- engage in open consultations relative to its development strategy, especially those strategies that could result in people's displacement from land; and
- cease proclamations that are used to harass individuals or organizations engaging in peaceful political dissent or that prohibit funding for civil society organizations working for respect for constitutional rights, the rule of law, and protection of human rights.

Calls on the Department of State to: (1) share with Congress the recently concluded interagency review of U.S. security assistance and a description of current objectives and criteria that advance critical regional security objectives while mitigating the threat of assistance being misused; (2) engage with the Ethiopian government in strengthening the bilateral Working Group on Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights and provide support for implementation of Ethiopia's National Human Rights Action Plan; and (3) improve oversight and accountability of U.S. assistance to Ethiopia and ensure that such assistance reinforces long-term goals for improved governance.

Calls on: (1) the U.S. Agency for International Development to lead efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy to support improved democracy and governance in Ethiopia; and (2) the President 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, Ethiopian American Community