

Washington update August 20, 2018

To Supporters of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia, it is time to build on the impressive achievements of the Ethiopian-American community in the 2007 and again in 2018 session of Congress, when the House of Representatives unanimously passed legislation promoting Ethiopian human rights, democracy and economic prosperity. This time we need to get the Senate to pass SR 168 legislation. A resolution supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia.

There are many, competing priorities in Congress. The ONLY way we will succeed is by making our voices heard. Members of Congress respond to their constituents. The bill will help Ethiopia to be independent of foreign aid. Ethiopia can feed itself by employing modern agricultural technologies, and help eradicate HIV/AIDS and tropical diseases.

A Congressional fact finding mission will soon be on its way to Ethiopia.

We are maintain regular communication with members of Congress as well as the Administration. Most recently I spoke with with the senior staff of Senator Benjamin Cardin about SR 168.

I have informed senior staff that we in the Ethiopian/American community appreciate the hard work of Senator Benjamin Cardin of Maryland and his staff for bringing the situation in Ethiopia to the Senate's attention, especially the introduction of SR 168. This resolution calls cor the respecting of human rights and inclusive governance in Ethiopia.

We will reach out to Senator Inhofe's staff about a possible path forward in which we can work together on updated language to the resolution. They assured me that they will keep me posted as to progress.

It is also important for interested parties to telephone Inhofe's office and respectfully ask that he lift the hold on SR 168. Be sure to explain why this bill is important, that the Ethiopian regime is violating the human rights of Ethiopians, killing and imprisoning innocent people and suppressing democracy. Request meetings with him and his staff. His telephone number in Washington is: (202) 224-4721.

It is imperative that this legislation be passed in the Senate in order to send a message to the Ethiopian people and all of Africa that the United states will not tolerate torture, human rights abuse, and the imprisonment of individuals without due process.

As you probably know, Eskinder Nega and Mesfin Mekonen initiated and sent a letter to the Prime Minster of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, for his persual on the Ethiopia Declaration of Principles proposal. We believe that the South African Truth and Reconciliation model is the way to go, in light of the ethnic cleansing ongoing at the Ethiopia/Somalia border, including the burning of churches by extremist Muslims. We encourage the government of Ethiopia to find these criminals gang

and bring them to justice so that this kind of cruel behavior will come to a halt and not occur in other regions of Ethiopia.

The objective of the TRC will be to investigate human rights violations and abuses by the present and past governments of Ethiopia, occurring over the past 35 years, through the independent court system, and thus bringing these culprits to face trial.

The Reparation and Rehabilitation committee to be charged with restoring victim dignity and formulating proposals to assist with rehabilitation.

Please see below the latest draft resolution in support of the Ethiopia Declaration of Principles, as submitted by Congressman Mike Coffman (R-CO).

Congressman Mike Coffman in THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Mr. COFFMAN submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the
Committee on
Draft Resolution

Encouraging the Ethiopian Government to use the **South African transition to democracy model for a lasting peace.**

Whereas the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has been prone to human rights abuses, contraction of democratic space, and violence by security forces;

Whereas Ethiopia's new Prime Minister, H.E. Abiy Ahmed, was sworn into office in April and has created a semblance of stability and hope for a peaceful and more democratic government;

Whereas Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has made sincere reforms to encourage a more democratic Ethiopia through the release of political prisoners, touring the country promising change, and holding peace negotiations with neighboring Eritrea;

Whereas, on June 5, 2018, Ethiopia lifted the State of Emergency that started on February 16, 2018, following the resignation of then-Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn;

In politics in Ethiopia discussions have been suggested by some people who want to

oppose the regime. That in itself is a good thing but we need to be careful in

suggesting any acceptance of separatism and secession by anyone in Ethiopia.

The integrity of Ethiopia as a national state cannot be violated. We must continue to stress national unity for all Ethiopians. We are all Ethiopians regardless of ethnicity or religion. A unified Ethiopia is a Continental power in Africa.

Mesfin Mekonen