

Washington update

May 5, 2015

I recently met with a senior policy advisory to Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-Maryland) and discussed the situation in Ethiopia and SR 168, A resolution supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia. The bill, which was introduced by Senator Cardin, has 29 cosponsors.

Senator Cardin is concerned about the human rights situation in Ethiopia as he is a champion for human rights around the globe. Sen. Cardin is working very hard along with his staff for the passage of SR 168 and is very optimistic that it will be enacted. The legislation has been already passed in the Foreign Relation Committee.

To increase the chances of SR 168 passing, the Ethiopian-American community in the United States must contact the senators in their states and ask them to cosponsor SR 168. To find your Senator's contact information go to

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

At this critical time, the U.S. must send a clear message to the Ethiopian regime and to the Ethiopian people in support of democracy and human rights.

The regime in Ethiopia is rarely if ever truthful. It has always given the Ethiopian people empty words about democracy, and about investing infrastructure projects that will create prosperity. The regime's basic rule is to monopolize power in Ethiopia and to concentrate the nation's wealth in its own hands. All decisions on all issues are resolved following this basic rule.

The regime's well documented violations of human rights and denial of the rule of law are a result of its adherence to this rule. The corruption that has held back progress in Ethiopia is the consequence of having a regime in power that seeks only to enrich its members.

In addition to promoting human rights and democracy, I discussed with Senator Cardin's staff the famine in Ethiopia, and respectfully recommend that Senator Cardin to add the following to SR 168: Directs the President of the United States to provide Ethiopia with assistance to develop Ethiopia's Nile and Awash River resources, including assistance for the construction of irrigation systems that might prevent future famine.

Ethiopia is at critical crossroads with a large and increasing population, a depressed national economy, insufficient agriculture production, and a low number of developed energy sources. The upper Blue Nile basin harbors considerable untapped potential for irrigation and hydropower development expansion.

In a May 3 statement about World Press Day, Sen. Cardin expressed support for imprisoned Ethiopian journalists. In the statement, he said: "I applaud the bravery of... Ethiopian journalists like Eskinder Nega, Temesghen Desalegn, Zone 9 bloggers Befekadu Hailu and Mahlet Fantahun, and Zelalem Workagegnehu who are routinely arrested for criticizing the Ethiopian government and exposing human rights abuses in the country. I stand in solidarity with them and their many colleagues around the world who risk their freedom and lives in pursuit of truth, often at substandard pay and over long hours."

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