

## Washington Update

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### Ethiopian regime hires scandal-tainted lobbyists

The Ethiopian regime has hired a scandal-tainted lobbying firm to improve its public image and influence members of Congress.

According to a Foreign Agents Registration Act document, the Ethiopian ambassador to Washington has hired S.G.R. LLC for \$150,000 per month to conduct lobbying and public relations work.

S.G.R. worked for disgraced former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. After President Trump fired Flynn, Flynn revealed that he had failed to report his lobbying for Turkish President Erdogan. As part of his secret work to help Erdogan crush democratic opposition and gain dictatorial power, Flynn paid S.G.R. hundreds of thousands of dollars. This money paid for SGR to produce propaganda materials targeting Erdogan's opponents, and arrange for an op-ed Flynn wrote to be published in The Hill newspaper without any indication that Flynn was being paid by an organization affiliated with the Turkish government.

We can expect SGR to employ these kinds of tactics in support of the Ethiopian regime.

Last month in his opening statement Smith criticized “a tradition of authoritarian rule” by a single party, which he said, “continues to strangle the advancement of democracy in Ethiopia.” His comments were critical and also noted the U.S. dilemma in engaging with the country. “Ethiopia has long been an important ally, providing effective peacekeepers and collaborating in the War on Terror,” said Smith. “However, increasingly repressive policies have diminished political space and threaten to radicalize not only the political opposition but also civil society by frustrating their ability to exercise their rights under law.”

Right now, SGR's target is House Resolution 128: Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia. Text of the resolution, which is being sponsored and championed by Rep. Chris Smith, is available at <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hres128/text>. It has 25 co-sponsors and, contrary to the statements of the Ethiopian regime, has an excellent chance of being passed. It is important for all Ethiopian-Americans to call their members of Congress, and try to meet with them when they visit their districts, to educate them about the suppression of human rights and subversion of democracy in Ethiopia, and urge them to vote for House Resolution 128.

Anyone who cares about human rights, democracy and freedom in Ethiopia should contact their congressional representative and demand that they support House resolution 128.

The resolution identifies a long list of crimes committed by the Ethiopian government against the Ethiopian people, notes that it has held sham elections, and has stifled dissent and free speech by outlawing non-governmental organizations and blocking Internet access. Importantly, the resolution states that the Ethiopian government's cooperation with the U.S. in battling terrorism does not justify its abuses.