

Washington Update - January 31, 2018

House leadership was briefed on Tuesday about the situation in Ethiopia by Ethiopian /Americans activists.

The meeting was organized in coordination with Congressman Chris Smith's office and the Majority Leader office for the House leadership including the Majority leader Kevin McCarthy, CA, Congressman Chris Smith NJ and Congressman Mike Coffman, CO to hear from the Ethiopian Diaspora including from Ethiopians Amhara organization, Ethiopians Oromo organization and civic group including Ethiopian/Americans and Dekon Yoseph from Colorado who attended the hearing of Africa sub committee on Ethiopia present situation last year. According to the Congressional staff the leadership seems convinced that the groups had informed the leadership about the situation and the reality on the ground in Ethiopia.

The US Congress has been waiting for the Ethiopian regime to make reform and to release all political and journalists prisoners.

One of the conditions in discussion was to have the regime in Ethiopia let the United Nations who is present in Ethiopia to do the human rights assessment in Ethiopia affected regions and report back to Congress soon.

According to the Congressional Sr. staff, the legislation will move forward in early march.

H. Res. 128, entitled “Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia,” condemns the human rights abuses of Ethiopia and calls on the Ethiopian government 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.

“It is important to note that this resolution does not call for sanctions on the Government of Ethiopia, but it does call for the use of existing mechanisms to sanction individuals who torture or otherwise deny their countrymen their human and civil rights,” said Smith.

On May , 2017 Senator Ben Cardin (D-Maryland) introduced Senate Resolution SR 168

Introduced in Senate (05/17/2017)

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 from encouraging or accepting violence in demonstrations.

Calls on the government of Ethiopia to take specified steps, including to fully lift the state of emergency, end the practice of excessive force by security forces, grant the United Nations (U.N.) High Commissioner for Human Rights and U.N. Special Rapporteurs full access to conduct a comprehensive independent examination of the state of human rights in Ethiopia, and repeal proclamations that can be 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: (1) the Department of State to share with Congress the results of a review of 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 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. It is essential to contact Senator Cardin of Maryland as soon as the HR 128 passed. We have not gotten there yet.

Although the road to democracy is a long one, we will prevail someday.

It is also important to call Inhofe's office and respectfully ask to support on SR 168. Explain why the 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](tel:2022244721).

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

Mesfin Mekonen

Below is a link to an article from Financial Times:

<https://www.ft.com/content/51b0b940-0678-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>