

FYI:

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Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on Ethiopian Elections

We acknowledge the conclusion of Ethiopia's parliamentary elections on May 23, 2010. We commend the people of Ethiopia for their civic participation and note that the voting proceeded peacefully.

We are concerned that international observers found that the elections fell short of international commitments. We are disappointed that U.S. Embassy officials were denied accreditation and the opportunity to travel outside of the capital on Election Day to observe the voting. The limitation of independent observation and the harassment of independent media representatives are deeply troubling.

An environment conducive to free and fair elections was not in place even before Election Day. In recent years, the Ethiopian government has taken steps to restrict political space for the opposition through intimidation and harassment, tighten its control over civil society, and curtail the activities of independent media. We are concerned that these actions have restricted freedom of expression and association and are inconsistent with the Ethiopian government's human rights obligations.

As voting concludes and the results are announced, we call on all parties to reject violence. We await the final assessments of the electoral process from independent observers, and encourage the government to address in good faith and impartially any concerns and disputes that are raised.

Ethiopia and the United States have a multifaceted relationship and share a number of important interests. We urge the Ethiopian government to ensure that its citizens are able to enjoy their fundamental rights. We will work diligently with Ethiopia to ensure that strengthened democratic institutions and open political dialogue become a reality for the Ethiopian people.