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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 12, 2007**

**UPDATE AND FAQ'S**

**THE WHITE HOUSE LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN WILL  
CONTINUE UNTIL  
H.R. 5680 OR ITS SUBSTITUTE IS SIGNED INTO LAW**

The Coalition for H.R. 5680 is pleased to provide the following update on the international Ethiopian Diaspora response to the campaign to deliver 100,000 letters-in-ten-days to President Bush.

From the tens of thousands of emails we have received ([passhr5680@hr5680.org](mailto:passhr5680@hr5680.org)), and other information we have gathered from numerous other sources, we are pleased to report the following:

The response to the letter campaign has been overwhelming, enthusiastic and massive.

While we can not affirmatively state that 100,000 letters have been delivered to the White House, we can assert confidently that tens of thousands of letters have been delivered based on an extrapolation of the massive influx of email we have received at [passhr5680@hr5680.org](mailto:passhr5680@hr5680.org).

As evidenced in the postings on the various websites, discussions in the chat rooms and radio programs, and the enormous number of email communications we have received, the letter writing campaign was adopted and collaboratively undertaken by diverse and independent political, civic and social groups, organizations and associations, particularly in the United States.

Among the various methods used to deliver large numbers of mail to the White House include letter writing drives by civic groups and associations, and political groups and their support organizations.

The various Ethiopian websites played a decisive role in spreading word of the campaign, generating massive and immediate response in the Diaspora Ethiopian community. (Please send an email thanking them for the extraordinary role they played in publicizing the campaign.)

Ethiopians residing in Europe, Canada and Australia made significant efforts in generating letters to the White House.

### **Most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)**

#### **100,000 Letters Campaign**

##### **Did we deliver 100,000 letters to the White House in 10 days?**

It is impossible to know if the White House received 100,000 letters in ten days from Ethiopians in the Diaspora. However, there is little doubt that tens of thousands of dedicated and patriotic Ethiopians the world over have participated in the letter writing campaign based on the astronomical number of email notifications we have received at [passhr5680@hr5680.org](mailto:passhr5680@hr5680.org) ([www.hr5680.org](http://www.hr5680.org)), and other indications.

But whether we actually generated the exact number of letters is a question each reader must ask of himself or herself:

*Did you do your part and send President Bush a letter?*

If you did, you know for certain that there are only 99,999 letters left to go. If you got your friends and relatives, co-workers, and other friends in the churches, mosques and synagogues to write, then there would be far fewer letters needed to meet the target number.

If you did not, you can still participate in the campaign. See below.

##### **Are we done with the 100,000 letters-in-ten-days campaign after the ten day period is over? NO.**

No. The letter writing campaign will continue until H.R. 5680, or its substitute in the new Congress passes. The pain and suffering of our people is not limited to 10 days, nor can it be addressed by a delivery of 100,000 letters to the white House.

Our people have suffered for decades, and now as their finest, and greatest hour of need, -- the dawn of freedom, democracy and human rights -- we must continue to speak up and inform and educate every American policy maker, from the highest levels of the American national government to those at the local levels, about human rights abuses in Ethiopia and seek their assistance.

The letter writing campaign will go on until H.R. 5680 or its substitute is enacted into law.

***It is not too late to send President Bush a letter. Please take a few minutes and send him a letter. A sample letter is provided at the end of this Press Release, below, and also available at:***

**[http://www.ethiomeia.com/articles/bush letter template.html](http://www.ethiomeia.com/articles/bush_letter_template.html)**

Also visit the Coalition for H.R. 5680's website at: <http://www.hr5680.org>

**The letter we sent to the White House at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue was returned to sender. Is there a problem? NO.**

We have received a few inquiries indicating that letter sent to the White House address at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue were returned to sender. The Pennsylvania Avenue address is perhaps one of the most famous addresses in the world. Please double check the delivery address. Official contact information for the White House is available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

Our guess is that a few hundred letters may have been returned to sender given the tens of thousands of letters delivered to the White House. It may be that the White House postal service may have been overwhelmed by the sheer volume of letters delivered in just a few days.

**Is there anything more Ethiopians in the United States can do right now using the American political system beyond writing letters to the White House? YES.**

Yes. The major task at hand is getting each of the 50-state legislatures to pass a resolution asking the U.S. President and Congress to work earnestly in seeking the release of the prisoners of conscience and improving the human rights situation there. This state legislative effort will have a decisive effect in the passage of H.R. 5680 or its substitute in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. All freedom-loving Ethiopian Americans should collaborate and get this important task accomplished.

The Ethiopia human rights resolution introduced in the California Assembly can be used as a **template** (example) in all other states.

The resolution can be accessed at:

[http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab\\_0001-0050/ajr\\_12\\_bill\\_20070222\\_introduced.html](http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/ajr_12_bill_20070222_introduced.html)  
[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab\\_0001-0050/ajr\\_12\\_bill\\_20070222\\_introduced.pdf](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/ajr_12_bill_20070222_introduced.pdf)

Also at:

[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab\\_0001-0050/ajr\\_12\\_bill\\_20070222\\_introduced.pdf](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/ajr_12_bill_20070222_introduced.pdf)

California support letter at:

[http://ethiomeia.com/articles/california\\_resolution.pdf](http://ethiomeia.com/articles/california_resolution.pdf)

**Is there anything Ethiopians in Europe, Canada, Australia and elsewhere can do right now to help improve the human rights situation in Ethiopia? YES.**

Ethiopians in Europe, Canada, Australia and other places should consider undertaking a similar letter writing campaign to the executive heads of their respective states/countries. They should also strive to clone H.R. 5680 in the parliaments and legislatures of their respective countries. We refer to the following article as a starting point.

<http://almariamforthedefense.blogspot.com/2006/10/clone-hr-5680-everywhere.html>

**What lessons have we learned from the presidential letter writing campaign?**

There at least two lessons that can be drawn from the letter writing campaign: 1) Each individual Ethiopian, and Ethiopian Americans collectively, could directly impact on the course of U.S. policy in Ethiopia, and 2) Diaspora Ethiopians can make a tremendous difference in policy outcomes when they act collectively. United action is not only effective but absolutely necessary if we are to succeed in improving the human rights situation in Ethiopia. Numbers mean a lot in the American political process. If thousands of us speak in one voice, we are guaranteed to get the attention of our policy makers, and our demands will be given serious consideration. It's just as simple as that!

**Have you heard any feedback from the White House?**

We believe this question is related to the question above. We will report on any feedback we may have received from the White House in due course. Without appearing evasive and in the interest of candor, we would like to sincerely defer a response to this question on the grounds that it would be premature to make a statement or comment either way.

## **H.R. 5680**

**What is the status of H.R. 5680 right now?**

H.R. 5680 is very much alive and well, much to the disappointments of the enemies of freedom and human rights. In our opinion, action has been reserved on the bill in the new Congress to give the ruling regime in Ethiopia an opportunity to do the right thing and release the prisoners of conscience for starters. We also believe that ruling regime is inherently incapable of doing the right thing given its

past history of mendacity, delaying tactics, bad faith negotiations, hypocrisy, dishonesty, treachery, duplicity, chicanery and evasiveness.

It is our belief that H.R. 5680, under a new number, will be re-introduced in the very foreseeable future. We should all prepare to do some heavy lifting soon.

**Will H.R. 5680 change to a different number in the new Congress? How much of the current bill change in the new Congress? Will there be new hearings?**

H.R. 5680 will very like change to a different number when it is re-introduced in the House of Representatives in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. Bills are numbered sequentially by the clerk of the House, although representatives may seek to reserve a particular number if they so choose. As of March 7/8, 2007, 1, 359 bills have been introduced in the House and 750 in the Senate. We expect H.R. 5680 will be given a new number.

The current bill is pretty substantial for its stated objectives. It may undergo certain refinements in light of new evidence of massive and gross violations of human rights. In our opinion, H.R. 5680 in its present draft will go a long way in helping Ethiopia and Ethiopians enjoy the blessings of freedom, democracy and human rights.

It is possible that there may be new hearings. However, the extensive work done last year by the Africa Subcommittee and the unanimous and bipartisan support shown for H.R. 5680 in the International Relations Committee, we believe, indicates that it may not be necessary to conduct extensive hearings. We should welcome, and the Coalition is prepared, for any new hearings in Congress on H.R. 5680 or its substitute. We believe any such hearings will serve to establish for ourselves and posterity the monstrous crimes against humanity committed by the regime of Zenawi.

**Now that the Democrats control Congress, how will that affect H.R. 5680?**

It is important to understand and help others to understand that H.R.5680 passed the International Relations Committee of the House with a unanimous vote and bipartisan support. In the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, Chris Smith, the Republican chairman of the Africa Subcommittee, was totally committed to the bill. In the current Congress, Donald Payne is equally committed to the bill. Both Smith and Payne remain equally committed to passage of the bill. We have two powerhouses championing our cause.

In any case, we should all take comfort in Winston Churchill's wise advice: "Don't worry. You can always count on the Americans to do the right thing after exhausting all other alternatives."

**What is the best place to get information on H.R. 5680 and stay abreast of developments?**

There may be many places where one can get information on H.R. 5680. Bill status may be obtained from the official site at:

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h109-5680>

Advocacy and other materials are available at:

<http://www.hr5680.org>

Many of the Ethiopian websites also carry a variety of information pertaining to H.R. 5680.

**What can the ruling regime do to sabotage H.R. 5680 this time around?**

We believe the ruling regime will spare no expense to defeat H.R. 5680 or its substitute once it is reintroduced in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. We should remain vigilant of the invisible forces of evil that lurk stealthily in the halls of Congress -- the likes of Richard Armev who will profit on the suffering of our people by charging exorbitant lobbying fees which could be used to build schools, clinics, roads and help our brothers and sisters devastated by AIDS.

We should never forget: People power will always trump money power, if the people know their democratic rights and use it.

Let's fight the power, of money. Let's expand and magnify our grassroots advocacy efforts once the bill is re-introduced.

**What else can Ethiopians in Europe, Canada and Australia do to help in the struggle for human rights in Ethiopia?**

All Ethiopians in the Diaspora equally share the responsibilities and duties of improving the human rights situation in Ethiopia. We should avoid the tendency of placing the entire responsibility on Ethiopian Americans, and wait for the results of their efforts. We recognize that there are differences in the types of things that can be done in the United States and Europe, Canada and Australia or other parts of the world.

One effort we should all try to undertake is to clone H.R. 5680 in the parliaments and legislatures of our respective countries. We refer to the following article as a starting point.

<http://almariamforthedefense.blogspot.com/2006/10/clone-hr-5680-everywhere.html>

We should also try and organize educational campaign to enlist the support of citizens in our respective countries.

**Is the Coalition for H.R. 5680 a political organization? How can we join the Coalition for H.R. 5680?**

The Coalition for H.R. 5680 is not a political organization or affiliated with any particular political organization in the United States, Ethiopia or elsewhere. It is a civic organization with the sole agenda of pushing passage of H.R. 5680 and undertaking other activities which seek human rights improvements in Ethiopia. That is all!

The Coalition is open to any groups, organizations or individuals who share the objectives of the Coalition. The Coalition has members in the vast majority of states in the United States who work independently, but in collaboration with the Coalition in implementing grassroots advocacy strategies for the bill.

For more information on the Coalition and H.R. 5680, please visit [www.hr5680.org](http://www.hr5680.org) or send communication to: [passhr560@hr5680.org](mailto:passhr560@hr5680.org)

**What can we do to avoid or anticipate problems in pushing passage of H.R. 5680 in the new Congress?**

There are many lessons to be learned from our efforts over the past year or so. Among the major lessons include:

Ethiopian Americans have emerged as a formidable force in the grassroots advocacy movement on the Hill. We are known in many House and senate offices for our vigorous advocacy activities.

There is a need for improved coordination among grassroots groups, organizations and advocates of H.R. 5680. One of the principal complaints from a number congressional offices has been that the supportive effort lacks coordination, and consequently congressional offices have to respond to the same queries numerous times resulting in an unnecessary waste of staff time. Greater effort is needed to coordinate grassroots advocacy efforts.

Grassroots advocates should be more familiar with the human rights issues and be prepared to articulate their demands to Congressional members, particularly, staffers, without being argumentative or obnoxious. Advocates who undertake face-to-face interactions with members or their staffers should be thoroughly familiar with all of the human rights reports issued by various organizations over the past year. Failure to do could result not only in ineffective advocacy but also personal embarrassment and confusion in the minds of members and staffers.

It is important to develop one core message about H.R. 5680, and avoid giving confusing and inconsistent messages. One complaint not infrequently heard from congressional offices is that different groups, organizations and individuals present different messages on the same bill. They ask if there is a commonly agreed upon message on the bill. We should strive to fashion such a message and deliver it consistently.

Advocates of H.R. 5680 should continuously strive to improve their advocacy skills and factual knowledge about the bill. The most effective advocates for H.R. 5680 are likely to be those individuals and groups that have an in depth understanding of the legislation and the historical and contemporary facts on human rights abuses in Ethiopia.

All of us can achieve such understanding if we develop our knowledge and sharpen our advocacy skills. For instance, when demanding release of the prisoners of conscience, we should be familiar with the charges made against the prisoners of conscience, and be prepared to explain why those charges are unjustified and nonsensical. When we ask for improvements in human rights, we should at least be familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and those articles in the ruling regime's constitution that guarantee certain liberties to make an effective case.

### **What can be expected from the ruling regime in opposition to H.R. 5680 or its substitute in the new Congress?**

The adversary will spare no expense to oppose passage of H.R. 5680 or its substitute. Though the enemies of freedom in Ethiopia have unlimited amounts of money to spend in defeating the cause of democracy and human rights, they do not, and will never, have two things: 1) a righteous cause -- the cause of freedom, democracy and human rights; and 2) a grassroots advocacy network system.

Regardless of the amount of money they spend to defeat freedom, democracy and human rights in Ethiopia, they will fail, totally.

As the author William Pitt has observed: "Only dictators, tyrants and fools believe they can have it all their way. Every dictator, tyrant and fool in history who has tried to have it all his way has failed in spectacular fashion. Often, that failure brings about the destruction of their family, their army, or their entire nation. Yet the lessons of history do not resonate with dictators, tyrants and fools. That, more than anything else, is why they always fail." Ethiopia has survived for 3,000 years, and shall rise with the morning sun for the next ten thousand!

### **How can you say the efforts we make in the Diaspora will have any effect on the tyrannical regime in Ethiopia?**



Gandhi has answered this question definitively: “Whenever I despair, I remember that the way of truth and love has always won. There may be tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they may seem invincible, but in the end, they always fail. Think of it: always.”

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**Abbreviated Letter to President Bush**

**[Modify this letter to suit your views]**

Month, xx, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to ask your support for human rights in Ethiopia and passage of H.R. 5680, also known as “The Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Act.”

As you are aware, Mr. President, following the May 2005 parliamentary election in Ethiopia, the human rights situation has deteriorated significantly. Over the past year and half, hundreds of thousands of political opponents have been arrested, imprisoned, tortured and killed. An official Inquiry Commission set up by the leader of the ruling regime, in its briefing to the United States Congress, documented the wanton killings of 193 unarmed protesters, and wounding of 763 others over a 14 day period in June and November, 2005. The Commission also documented the imprisonment of 30,000 suspected political opponents.

Human rights, democracy and justice remain as elusive as ever in Ethiopia. Leaders of the opposition parties, human rights defenders and civic leaders remain in detention today facing trial in a kangaroo court. They are shuttled back and forth to court endlessly, and told their matter has been continued. This has been going on now for nearly a year and half.

The human rights situation in Ethiopia has now reached a critical stage. It requires America’s urgent attention.

In your second inaugural speech, you made a magnificent promise to all people in the world who endure under despotism and dictatorship, “All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.” Today, Ethiopians the world over are standing for liberty, and we ask you to stand with us.

Mr. President. I believe there are those enemies of freedom who seek to chain the unholy cause of terrorism to the holy cause of liberty and human rights. But please be not misled because, as you know very well, the devil can quote Scriptures.

The truth is Ethiopians know all too well the scourge of terrorism that has been unleashed on the world. We appreciate and support America's role in spearheading the struggle against these elusive forces of evil. You should rest assured that Ethiopians wherever they are will never abandon America in its struggle against global terror. Never! Never! Never! But, Mr. President, America must also never, never, never abandon the cause of human rights in Ethiopia.

Mr. President, I echo your words when I say the fight for human rights is fundamentally a fight against terrorism; and I believe the "world beyond terror" that you spoke of so eloquently to be a world in which human rights are truly respected and upheld, and the dignity and liberty of ordinary men and women preserved and protected under the rule of law.

Mr. President, you have said, "When America gives its word, it keeps its word." Now is the time to stand up with the Ethiopian people and human rights in Ethiopia. Now is the time to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Ethiopia, and to demand freedom for all jailed opposition leaders and human rights defenders. Now is the time to demand justice: "Bring the killers and those who ordered the killing of 193 men and women and children to account for their crimes." Now is the time to declare: "All who violate the human rights of their people will have to account for their crimes before the bar of justice." Now is the time to state with conviction: "America has had enough! American taxpayers will no longer bankroll tyrants and dictators!" Now is the time to candidly tell Ethiopia's dictators. "Stop playing games with human rights. Stop making a mockery of democracy." Now is the time, Mr. President, to proclaim to the Ethiopian people: "It's high time for you to enjoy the blessings of freedom, democracy and human rights! America stands by you!"

Mr. President, show us you stand for liberty, for democracy and for human rights in Ethiopia. Support H.R. 5680.

This bill, Mr. President, provides for a comprehensive scheme to advance democracy and human rights in Ethiopia. It demands the release of all prisoners of conscience in Ethiopia, including opposition party and civic leaders. It provides ample resources to undertake democratic institution building, including strengthening of the electoral process, legislative bodies, political parties and civil society organizations. It aims to help in the development of an independent judiciary and professional prosecutorial agencies, and fosters the growth of independent private journalism.

Mr. President I ask you to support H.R. 5680 because we know that you firmly uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I am equally confident in my knowledge that you will support our efforts to build a democratic society in Ethiopia

where there are no arbitrary arrests or detentions, where citizens are free from torture, cruel, inhuman treatment or punishment, where those accused of criminal offenses are given a fair trial by an independent and impartial tribunal, and the rights of free speech, press, assembly and petition for grievances and privacy are respected, and the rule of law reigns supreme.

Mr. President: I ask you to support H.R. 5680. I ask you to demand the release of all political prisoners, and opposition leaders and human rights defenders. I ask you to stand with us and demand a stop to human rights violations in Ethiopia.

God Bless America.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

[Optional]

cc:

Vice President Richard Cheney  
Dr. Condoleeza Rice, Secretary State  
Jendayi Fraser, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs  
Representative Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House  
Representative John Boehner, U.S. House, Minority Leader  
Representative Steny H. Hoyer, House Majority Leader  
Representative James E. Clyburn, House Majority Whip  
Representative Roy Blunt, House Minority Whip  
Representative Tom Lantos, Chair, House Committee on International  
Relations  
Representative Donald Payne, Chairman, House Subcommittee on Africa,  
Global Human Rights and International Operations  
Representative Chris Smith, U.S. House of Representatives  
Representative Michael Honda  
Senator Harry Reid, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate  
Senator Russ Feingold, Chair, Subcommittee on African Affairs  
Senator Richard Durbin, U.S. Senate Assistant Majority Leader  
Senator Mitch McConnell, U.S. Senate Minority Leader  
Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense  
Ambassador Donald Yamamoto