

**Washington Update
January 18, 2008**

1. There are good signs that Congress and the Obama administration will press for human rights and political freedom in Ethiopia.

Four influential U.S. senators wrote to Meles this week expressing strong concerns about the erosion of political freedom and the rule of law in Ethiopia. Their letter cites the arrest of Unity for Democracy and Justice Party leader Birtukan Midekssa and the reinstatement of her life sentence. It also expresses disappointment with enactment of legislation barring non-governmental organizations that receive foreign funding from working on human rights and other issues in Ethiopia. The letter suggests that the failure to improve the human rights environment and to allow basic political freedoms will endanger the U.S. relationship with the Meles regime.

The letter was signed by Senators Russell Feingold (D-Wisconsin, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee's Africa subcommittee; Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont), chair of the Appropriation=2 0Committee's State and Foreign Operations subcommittee; Johnny Isakson (R-Georgia), ranking member on the Africa subcommittee; and Richard Durbin (D-Illinois), Chair of the Judiciary Committee's Human Rights subcommittee.

The Ethiopian community in America must act to inform new members of Congress and the State Department about the history of political repression and economic corruption that endanger the lives of Ethiopians and are threatening to destabilize the country.

2. The All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) now has a radio program that started broadcasting as of Sunday, January 11 at 11:30 a.m. Eastern standard time on WZHS 1390 A.M. Washington, DC. It is called: Voice of Kinijit/AEUP Radio”

Engineer Hailu Shawel, president of All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) addressed Ethiopians on Voice of Kinijit/AEUP radio today. He praised two patriotic Ethiopians, Abeyeneh Berhanu and Dr. Taye Woldesmait, for their contributions to Ethiopia, for their sacrifices for Ethiopia, and for their continued work for peace, democracy, human rights and development in Ethiopia. He advised Ethiopians not to fight over small things but look at the big picture and participate in efforts to move from dictatorship to democracy, from conflict to peace, and from poverty to prosperity. He also warned Ethiopians that the road to democracy long and they should be prepared for a difficult journey.

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