

## **Washington Update January 27, 2009**

The successful passage of H.R. 2003 in the most recent Congress, passed UNANIMOUSLY!, must now be used as a building block for this session, the 111<sup>th</sup> in American history. Ethiopia won great bipartisan support in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. This term we must continue to work with our Congressmen and Senators and with the leaderships of the House and Senate.

It is essential that all Ethiopian-Americans contacting Representatives Donald Payne (D-NJ) and Chris Smith (R-NJ) who are respectively the Chairman and ranking member of the House African Affairs Subcommittee. They are crucial to obtain a quick reintroduction of the Ethiopia Human Rights Accountability Act.

We also need to contact the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and its Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) and ranking member Richard Lugar (R-IN). The Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will be crucial. There the contacts should be with Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA). They will be the first to deal with any bill to be presented to the full Committee and Senate.

Recently a letter by for distinguished Senators was sent to Meles regarding the many serious human rights violations in Ethiopia. It was sent by Senators Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Chairman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as well as Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), chairman of the State & Foreign Ops Subcommittee Committee on Appropriations, and Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL), Human Rights & the Law Subcommittee Committee on the Judiciary and formally copied directly to the Secretary of State and the United States Ambassador to Ethiopia.

This letter struck at the heart of the regime's methodologies for

control of the Ethiopian people and denounced the criminal behavior of that regime in the field of human rights. It particularly emphasized the Senators condemnation of the new “law” restricting NGO’s operating in Ethiopia today. This “law” is in contravention of all international standards and transparently an act of a fearful government; that is, one fearful of its own people.

Today I spoke with the United State State Department’s Africa desk, and was told that State had an special concern with this NGO “law” in particular and the human rights situation in Ethiopia in general. The Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Philip Carter, has been detailed to travel to Addis Ababa to meet with Ambassador Yamamoto and Meles.

Last Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, we had the weekly broadcast of The Voice of Kinijit/AEUP Radio on WZHF- am 1390 in Washington, DC at 11:30 am EST. The show featured a discussion about the Senatorial letter and the regime response. In the very near future we will have a Web site where these programs can be accessed. For those in areas beyond the DC Metro area we can make available the show in your area if we can get funding for it. Just let us know!

In conclusion we need to remind Ethiopians, Ethiopian-Americans, and all friends of Ethiopia to support The All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP). The All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) is the only opposition group in Ethiopia with membership in all regions of Ethiopia and members of all religious and ethnic groups. The AEUP stands for a United Ethiopia and creating a new government by peaceful means - one that serves all the Ethiopian people!

Mesfin Mekonen, Kinijit/AEUP International Foreign Relations