

Washington Update

March 6, 2009

1. Congress has settled in and it is time to contact your elected representatives to urge them to introduce legislation supporting human rights, democracy and economic development in Ethiopia. Ethiopian-Americans should especially contact Rep. Donald Payne, tel. (202) 225-3436, and Rep. Chris Smith, tel. 202-225-3765. In the Senate, contact Sen. Russell Feingold, (202) 224-5323. Callers should mention their support for legislation that passed the House last year. Also, discuss an excellent report issued last month by the State Department on human rights in Ethiopia.

The State Department's 2008 report on human rights in Ethiopia stated: "Human rights abuses reported during the year included limitations on citizens' right to change their government in local and by-elections; unlawful killings, torture, beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces, usually with impunity; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of suspected sympathizers or members of opposition or insurgent groups; police and judicial corruption; detention without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights including illegal searches; use of excessive force by security services in an internal conflict and counterinsurgency operations; restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists; restrictions on freedom of assembly and association; violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation (FGM); exploitation of children for economic and sexual purposes; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities and religious and ethnic minorities; and government interference in union activities, including harassment of union leaders."

The report is available at

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119001.htm>

2. We are making excellent progress in establishing high level contacts with members of the Obama administration and hope to persuade them that the President's promises about U.S. support for democracy and human rights should guide future American policy to

Ethiopia. The State Department and National Security Council are reviewing U.S. Africa policy and there is every reason to be hopeful that they will adopt positive positions on Ethiopia. As part of this review, State Department officials recently visited Engineer Hailu Shawel, President, All Ethiopia Unity Party, in Addis Ababa.

3. The Voice of Kinjit radio, For those that reside in the area we recommend to stay tuned to this educational & informative program that broadcasts every Sunday, at 11:30 a.m. Easter standard time on WZHF 1390 A.M. Andenetledemocracy.org will also make effort to bring the program on its site. which broadcasts every Sunday at 11:30am on AM1390 in the Washington, DC area has been interviewing All Ethiopia Unity Party regional representatives. Recent interviews have been with AEUP vp western region, Shaleka Getachew Mengiste, Ato Abate Tegegne, Dr. Tadios Bogale, AEUP Southern region head, Ato Mamushet Amare AEUP youth council head and H/Gabriel Tamrat AEUP Addis Ababa youth council headthe peaceful organization of Ethiopians for a future transition to democracy. discussions have focused on

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