

## Washington update – April 11, 2009

Here in Washington, DC it is now the height of the political season. This is the best time for contact with the Congress. Ethiopians and Ethiopian-Americans should be contacting their representatives in the House and the Senate; and in particular the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House International Relations Committee and their relevant subcommittees; the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs and the House African Subcommittee.

We should all understand that millions of dollars have been invested by the Meles regime in high powered Washington lobbying. The chief actor for the regime is a firm called DLa Piper: [www.dlapiper.com/](http://www.dlapiper.com/). *This firm is retained by the regime to influence the American government in Washington, D C and to influence any legislation coming forward regarding the crimes of Meles and his regime. For this they are being paid well over half a million dollars per year. Of course this money comes from a citizenry which has millions of people on the verge of starvation.*

*These are very savvy people who we are faced with. We need to make a unified and concerted effort to rebut and to advance our legislation. So, to repeat, we must continue our dialogue with Congress!*

*Recently we have had discussions with State Department and White House officials regarding the human rights situation in Ethiopia. We received very favorable responses. We will continue to keep this avenue open and will report on it to you.*

*Last week at the conference of world leaders in London, (G-20), President Obama took a moment out of his busy schedule to speak with Meles and rebuke him for his regime's bad human rights record. Continuing his trip to London Meles at first cancelled a scheduled open press conference (no surprise there!) but then was interviewed on BBC TV on the HardTalk show.*

*On camera Meles said, with a straight face that growth in the Ethiopian economy over the last five years averaged 11% growth! If this were true then with compound interest Ethiopia would have almost doubled in this period. Obviously, this not true.*

Professor Alan Winters, the Chief Economist of the British Department of International Development recently visited Ethiopia and reported, "What I have learned from them is that in a sense, the crisis is beginning to bite in Ethiopia. Ethiopia had got itself into a bit of macroeconomic muddle with very high

borrowing resulting in 20very high inflation,” (Prof. Winters) said.

I am sure he chose his words diplomatically but his sense is clear; that Ethiopia has not progressed as Meles stated. The Professor’s statements have been buttressed by official reports from the United States Agency for International Development and myriad NGOs.

Speaking of NGOs, Meles in the interview defended his attacks on NGOs by accusing these humanitarian groups of seeking to “...undermine the funding of civil society organizations with the intent of getting (them) involved in political activities in Ethiopia with foreign financial sources.” People trying to assist the Ethiopian people to survive are now being prevented from doing so as they are perceived by 20Meles as a threat to his regime.

Recently the Voice of America conducted an interview with the President of the All Ethiopia Unity Party, (AEUP), Engineer Hailu Shawel. You can listen to it at this Web address:

<http://www.kaeup.com/media/play.asp?audio=I-VOA-HailuShawel-040201.mp3>

In the interview Hailu Shawel said that the AEUP is working for peace and development in Ethiopia and is working to organize and coordinate political supporters from all over Ethiopia to work together for change.

To learn more about this and other news from Ethiopia please go to our Web site:

<http://www.kaeup.org>

On Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup> we will again 20be broadcasting the radio show “Voice of Kinijit/AEUP” at 11:30 am in the Washington, DC metro area on WZHF- am 1390. This week our guest is from Mekele-Tigre region of Ethiopia. She is Wzro. Meselu Reda, the 20people’s organizer for AEUP in the Mekele-Tigre region. Don’t miss this.

Mesfin Mekonen, KAEUP International Foreign Relations