

1. Obama signs bill limiting military uses of American aid. President Obama signed H.R. 1125, the "Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009" on March 11. The bill includes language that limits the use of certain American military assistance to several countries, including Ethiopia. American assistance for military training, military financing and other purposes could only be allocated for Ethiopia if the administration submits a report to Congress detailing how the funds will be used and certifying that the uses comply with U.S. law. This should have the effect of making it more difficult to divert U.S. foreign assistance for the suppression of peaceful political activities. The spending bill also authorizes the expenditure of money to help train non-military personnel on human rights and civilian control of the military. By itself, this legislation will not change the Ethiopian regime's policies, but it is a step in the direction of aligning America's pro-Democracy rhetoric with the reality of its actions. The Bush administration talked about Democracy but it did little if anything to pressure the Meles regime to abide by internationally accepted norms of democracy and human rights.
2. Unified opposition. Following the transition to a true democracy, it is inevitable that political divisions will occur in Ethiopia. But in order to get to the point where honest political debate is possible, the credible, peaceful opposition must coalesce in a unified effort to bring about that transition. We need to create a true coalition around the most significant opposition leaders, and also take care to avoid entangling ourselves with anyone who advocates violence. Hailu Shawel, leader of the AEUP, the largest and most widely respected opposition movement, is urging leaders of organizations that are also working for a peaceful transition to democracy to work together for their common objectives. The history of the world, and especially the history of Ethiopia, shows that anyone who uses force to come to power, rarely lives up to promises to institute democracy. The last two Ethiopian regimes used force to come to power and then governed violently. We must not repeat this mistake.

3. Radio broadcast.

This week's program includes News and Interviews with AEUP Support America (ASA) Provisional Coordination Committee Chairman (PCC), Ato Teferi Cherinet. The interview provides updates on the formation of AEUP support executive committee in the short term , the coordination committee tasks & past activities including financial contributions, update on AEUP chapters including the associated hurdles and more. For those that reside in the Washington Metro area we recommend to stay tuned to this educational & informative program that broadcasts every Sunday, at 11:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time on WZHF 1390 A.M.

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