

Washington Update – July 14, 2009

Dear Fellow Ethiopians, Ethiopian-Americans, and friends of Ethiopia:

We are continuing the work for congressional action in support of human rights in Ethiopia. The progress towards passage of this legislation is continuing smoothly. We should have more news soon about this.

The big news this past week included the address made by President Barack Obama to the Ghanaian parliament in Accra. It was a wide ranging speech but of particular interest to Ethiopia and Ethiopians were his remarks about good governance as a necessary condition for social and economic progress in Africa. The President said:

“...First, we must support strong and sustainable democratic governments. Across Africa, we have seen countless examples of people taking control of their destiny and making change from the bottom up...

...This is about more than holding elections - it's also about what happens between them. Repression takes many forms, and too many nations are plagued by problems that condemn their people to poverty...

...What we will do is increase assistance for responsible individuals and institutions, with a focus on supporting good governance - on parliaments, which check abuses of power and ensure that opposition voices are heard; on the rule of law, which ensures the equal administration of justice; on civic participation, so that young people get involved; and on concrete solutions to corruption like forensic accounting, automating services, strengthening hot lines and protecting whistle-blowers to advance transparency and accountability...

...No country is going to create wealth if its leaders exploit the economy to enrich themselves, or police can be bought off. You have the power to hold your leaders accountable and to build institutions that serve the people.”

We need to take President Obama’s words as a challenge; we must meet him halfway and continue to work for democracy and human rights in Ethiopia knowing that we have a powerful friend supporting us.

The news from Ethiopia is, however, not so good. The economy of the country is crippled by the corruption and mismanagement of the regime. The World Bank has just announced that the country’s Trade Deficit for 2008 had ballooned to a total of:

\$ 4,500,000,000.00

At the same time hunger stalks the country; Five million people go hungry every day as was reported. This is an unsustainable model! Either more people die or the government must change -- soon!

So what does the regime do? It issues an “Anti -terrorism” Proclamation. This decree issued by the Meles regime and rubber stamped parliament attempts to criminalize the legitimate activities of the opposition. The All Ethiopia Unity Party has the widest support of any political group in the country. It is the AEUP and other oppositions are the target of this edict. The “antiterrorism” verbiage is a smokescreen to divert the attention of the rest of the world from their brutal dictatorship.

Recently in Southern Ethiopia the AEUP had a visitor from the

United States Embassy in Addis Ababa and another from the well known NGO Human Rights Watch. The discussion with members of the AEUP there ranged from the scheduled elections and discussions of the many beatings of AEUP members by the 'cadres' of the regime. The AEUP members informed their visitors that no free fair elections can take place until the 7/8 points demanded by the AEUP are met, which include freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of movement for political parties, freedom for all political prisoners, and a neutral and honest electoral board. The visitors agreed with the representatives of the AEUP that these steps will be necessary.

The many chapters of the AEUP in the USA, the AEUP vice president and AEUP Advisory Board members as observers, met last week in Chicago. The meetings were successful and the various chapters elected the chairman, the secretary, the treasurer, public relation and auditors of the chapters of the United States.

The meeting supported the program of the AEUP, provided financial support for the activities of the AEUP in Ethiopia and endorsed the KAEUP's work on legislation in Washington to promote human rights in Ethiopia.

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