

WASHINGTON UPDATE October 15, 2009

Famine still stalks the Ethiopian countryside. In areas of the country not favored by the ruling regime many people are starving. According to the United Nations their numbers are between six and eight million persons or about 10 % of the entire population.

Knowledgeable commentators have written about the risk of this famine exceeding in its horrible toll that of the famine of 1984 which is well documented in history. Of course, we can help stop history from repeating itself, but an indifferent or even hostile regime in Addis Ababa is a major impediment.

Famine is a crude political tool for the Meles regime. Grudging toleration of their rule is the minimum price of food. Right now millions of Ethiopians face the choice of supporting the regime or seeing their families slowly starves to death. There are solutions that can deal with this. One ameliorative thing we can do is to provide food aid via Congress and USAID on an expedited basis similar to the way the Congress under the leadership of the late Henry Hyde (R-IL) did earlier in this decade.

But for a long term solution mere food aid is not enough. Ethiopia requires a comprehensive development program focused on the needs of all Ethiopians. It should seek to use the resources of the Blue Nile and Awash rivers to foster the introduction of extensive agriculture. The projects would also yield electricity via hydroelectric power benefitting wide areas of Ethiopian life.

Of course the calendar continues to progress and even Meles has a timetable set for elections in May of next year. Rest assured that he and his cronies are working diligently as we speak to rig them. Our task is to frustrate his corrupt plans. We must continue to publicly insist on the core principles of democracy. We insist on an independent election board, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the release of all political prisoners, and freedom of movement for all political parties and their activities and not just those favored by the present government.

The All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) is campaigning all over the country on a platform that includes all these demands and advocates for a untied Ethiopia that is modern, and democratic with a sustainable developed economy. It advocates for 'one man, one vote'. Ethiopia must once again reemerge as a untied country, a nation not divided up into squabbling territories fighting for scraps handed out by the regime.

The AEUP provides the rallying mechanism to Ethiopians to make the needed changes and will do so when it replaces the Meles regime.

We are now waiting for policy input from the Obama administration to finalize its position with regard to Ethiopia. We need to let Washington know how important this is. Millions of lives depend on us. Please contact your elected officials to let them know of your concerns. Write, phone, Email, and fax your Congressmen, Senators, and the White House. Urge them to assist Ethiopians in their work. As Ethiopian-Americans and taxpayers this is your right and duty.