

ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA: PROMOTING STABILITY, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HUMAN
RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

OF THE

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THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2005

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS
AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:09 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The Subcommittee will come to order. Good afternoon, everyone.

Seven years ago this month, the East African nations of Eritrea and Ethiopia began a devastating 2-year conflict that cost the lives of as many as 100,000 soldiers and civilians. The war, which largely took place on Eritrean territory, displaced a third of that country's population and caused massive destruction. The deprivation in both countries continues long after the war ended, and the suffering goes on.

Eritrea's economy has been battered by 4 years of drought which has further diminished this country's ability to feed its own people. The U.S. Department of State estimates that large budget deficits have been caused by continued high defense spending. If not for remittances from Eritreans living abroad, the country's economy would be hard pressed to sustain itself.

In Ethiopia, the United Nations Children's Fund has identified 25 hot spots around the country where people are facing serious risk of malnutrition. This current crisis, according to UNICEF, is at least partly caused by delays in the start of the government's safety net program and continued military spending, which will only further exacerbate the problems with an economy now surviving due to foreign assistance.

Human rights and democracy are also diminished by the concentration of both governments on resolving the border issue.

In the current U.S. Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Eritrea was cited for its poor human rights record, and I quote the pertinent part from the record:

"Citizens did not have the ability to change their government. Security forces were responsible for unlawful killings; however, there were no new reports of disappearances. There were numerous reports that security forces resorted to torture and physical beatings of prisoners particularly during interroga-

tions, and security forces severely mistreated army deserters and draft evaders. The government generally did not permit prison visits by local or international groups, except for the International Committee for the Red Cross. Arbitrary arrests and detentions continued to be problems, and an unknown number of persons were detained without charge because of political opinion.”

Congress has been particularly interested in the case of Aster Yohannes, an Eritrean national who has been held incommunicado without due process since trying to visit her husband in jail in December 2003. A number of my colleagues and I sent a letter to Eritrean President Isaias on January 6, 2004 concerning this matter, and we respectfully urged the President to release Aster Yohannes immediately and allow her to return to her family. We will regard this as a first step toward restoring human rights to Eritrea. We look forward to resolving this and other important issues in the very near future.

I personally have met with the Eritrean officials at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva and here in the United States specifically on this issue. I did so both last year and just a few weeks ago when I was in Geneva. Yet more than a year later, Mrs. Yohannes is still imprisoned with no trial in sight, as are two U.S. Embassy personnel held without trial since 2001 which we will hear about, I am sure, momentarily.

Eritrea's half-Christian, half-Muslim population has historically coexisted peacefully, but there are recent tensions that could lead to more serious problems. There have been incidents of violence involving Muslim extremists, and even violent incidents involving Coptics and other Christian groups. Government concern over the rapidly growing Pentecostal group has led to mistreatment of believers. On the whole, security issues seem to have put religious freedom aside in the priorities of the Eritrean Government. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was unable to be with us today, but they have submitted for the record a statement and report that detail troubling limitations on religious freedom in Eritrea.

For the first time last year, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice designated Eritrea as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. Finally, after a promising start to its democracy at independence, Eritrea cracked down on the political opposition in September 2001 and continues to seriously limit the ability of citizens to express themselves through the vote.

The State Department report noted improvement in Ethiopia's human rights record, but it continues to note serious remaining problems, and I quote the report very briefly. The State Department says that Ethiopia's “security forces committed a number of unlawful killings, including alleged political killings, and beat, tortured, and mistreated detainees. Prison conditions remain poor.” The report goes on to say:

“The government continued to arrest and detain persons arbitrarily, particularly those suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the OLF [Oromo Liberation Front]. Thou-

sands of suspects remained in detention without charge, and lengthy pretrial detention continued to be a problem. The government infringed on citizens' privacy rights, and the law regarding search warrants was often ignored. The government restricted freedom of the press; however, compared with previous years, there were fewer reports that journalists were arrested, detained or punished for writing articles critical of the government. Journalists continue to practice self-censorship. The government at times restricted freedom of assembly, particularly for members of opposition political parties; security forces at times used excessive force to disperse demonstrations."

In Ethiopia, Human Rights Watch has documented incidents of murder, rape and torture committed by the Ethiopian military against Anuak people in the southwestern region of Gambella. As our witness will detail in his testimony, hundreds of Anuak villagers have been killed in a series of attacks by soldiers and civilian mobs since December 2003. Beatings and tortures of Anuaks have become all too commonplace in Ethiopia under a government whose attention is not focused on egregious human rights violations.

Concerns over a repeat of the irregularities surrounding Ethiopia's 2000 and 2001 elections prompted some of my colleagues to introduce H.R. 935 to urge the Government of Ethiopia to ensure free and fair elections on May 15. I want to commend the sponsors of this legislation and support the call for orderly, peaceful, free and fair elections in Ethiopia.

The short time remaining, however, may limit the impact of this important piece of legislation, which is aimed specifically at the upcoming elections. Therefore, I would like to work with the cosponsors of this bill on legislation soon after the elections in Ethiopia that would allow us to become more comprehensive and develop a legislative response that is consistent with the importance of this country in America's overall Africa policy.

Today, a number of colleagues join me in sending a letter to Ethiopian Prime Minister Zenawi urging him to rescind the expulsion of three American NGOs helping to build democracy. They are the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. For the sake of continuing democratic progress in Ethiopia, we hope the Prime Minister will respond positively to our request.

Again, Eritrea and Ethiopia are concentrating on building their military forces, and they are neglecting the very pressing needs of their people. Now their mutual militaries seem poised to renew open warfare due to unresolved issues involving the common border.

Both nations have increased their deployment of troops on the security zone border. Ethiopia recently added 30,000 troops for an estimated total of 90,000 armed men, most said to be within 40 kilometers of the frontier. While it is unclear exactly how many troops the Eritreans have deployed, they feel empowered to threaten military action if the current stalemate concerning the International Border Commission's ruling is not fully accepted by the Ethiopian Government.

As recently as Tuesday of this week, Eritrean President Isaias announced at his ruling party conference that war with Ethiopia is imminent. Imminent. President Isaias said his upcoming budget will be planned with war in mind, and presumably that budget will include funding for the arms the Eritreans agreed to buy last month from Russia.

If the war resumes, Ethiopia's Tekeze dam and Eritrea's port of Assab clearly will be prime targets, which will only make worse an already precarious state of development in both nations.

It is difficult to understand why these formerly friendly nations would risk further devastation for territory not particularly blessed with natural resources. However, one must keep in mind that this border dispute actually dates back to the somewhat vague borders drawn by Italy, the former colonial power. So long as Eritrea and Ethiopia were united under colonial or dictatorial rule, the border issues were not pressing.

The peace process that eventually ended the war was predicated on an international commission impartially ruling on the demarcation of a 1,000-kilometer border between the two countries. However, the decision of the commission has only been accepted in principle by the Ethiopians, who stand to lose their access to the Red Sea. The Ethiopian Government is publicly complaining about the loss of the town of Badme, hardly a strategic center. Meanwhile the Eritreans refused to even discuss the matter further.

United States policy, it seems to me, should be clear on the Eritrea-Ethiopia dispute, but it appears to have depended on the old paradigm. We are supportive of both Eritrea and Ethiopia; however, such issues as the fight against global terrorism and the effort to contain Sudan's hostile government have caused American policy to tread lightly on development, democracy and human rights issues in those countries.

We should not have to choose between security and democracy and human rights. It is not an either/or situation, but a both/and situation. We must find a new framework for United States policy in the Horn of Africa and look forward to a clear articulation of that from our first witness today, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Don Yamamoto, on how the Administration is addressing the full range of our concerns in the region.

Both Eritrea and Ethiopia make themselves more vulnerable to internal turmoil by their inability to address the many other vital issues they face, even if there is a stalemate on the border dispute. This is neither in the short-term interest of these two nations nor the long-term strategic interest of the United States. Identifying a more effective policy toward resolving the Eritrea-Ethiopia dispute is the focus of today's hearing.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

Seven years ago this month, the East African nations of Eritrea and Ethiopia began a devastating two-year conflict that cost the lives of as many as 100,000 soldiers and civilians. The war, which largely took place on Eritrean territory, displaced a third of that country's population and caused massive destruction. The deprivation in both countries continues long after the war ended, and the suffering goes on.

Eritrea's economy has been battered by four years of drought, which has further diminished this country's ability to feed its people. The U.S. Department of State estimates that large budget deficits have been caused by continued high defense spending. If not for remittances from Eritreans living abroad, the country's economy would be hard-pressed to sustain itself. In Ethiopia, the United Nations Children's Fund has identified 25 hot spots around the country where people are facing serious risk of malnutrition. This current crisis, according to UNICEF, is at least partly caused by delays in the start of the government's safety net program, and continued military spending will only further exacerbate the problems with an economy now surviving due to foreign assistance.

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"We respectfully urge you to release Aster Yohannes immediately and allow her to return to her family," the letter stated. "Web will regard this as a first step toward restoring human rights in Eritrea. We look forward to resolving this and other important issues in the very near future."

I personally have met with Eritrean officials at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva and here in the United States specifically on this issue last year and only a few weeks ago. Yet, more than a year later, Mrs. Yohannes is still imprisoned with no trial in sight, as are two U.S. Embassy personnel held without trial since 2001.

Eritrea's half Christian-half Muslim population has coexisted peacefully, but there are tensions that could lead to serious problems. There have been incidents of violence involving Muslim extremists and even violent incidents involving Copts and other Christian groups. Government concern over the rapidly growing Pentacostal group has led to mistreatment of believers. On the whole, security issues seem to have put religious freedom aside in the priorities of the Eritrean government. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was unable to be with us today, but they have submitted for the record a statement and report that details troubling limitations on religious freedom in Eritrea.

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In Ethiopia, Human Rights Watch has documented incidents of murder, rape and torture committed by the Ethiopian military against the Anuak people in the southwestern region of Gambella. As our witness will detail in his testimony, hundreds of Anuak villagers have been killed in a series of attacks by soldiers and civilian

mobs since December 2003. Beatings and torture of Anuaks have become all too commonplace in Ethiopia under a government whose attention is not focused on such egregious human rights violations.

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Today, a number of colleagues joined me in sending a letter to Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, urging him to rescind the expulsion of three American NGOs helping to build democracy—the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. For the sake of continuing democratic progress in Ethiopia, we hope the Prime Minister will respond positively to our request.

Again, Eritrea and Ethiopia are concentrating on building their military forces, and they are neglecting the very pressing needs of their people. Now their mutual militaries seem poised to renew open warfare due to unresolved issues involving their common border.

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If the war resumes, Ethiopia's Tekeze dam and Eritrea's port of Assab will be prime targets, which will only make worse an already precarious state of development in both nations.

It is difficult to understand why these formerly friendly nations would risk further devastation for territory not particularly blessed with natural resources. However, one must keep in mind that this border dispute actually dates back to the somewhat vague borders drawn by Italy, the former colonial power. So long as Eritrea and Ethiopia were united under colonial or dictatorial rule, the border issues were not pressing.

The peace process that eventually ended the war was predicated on an international commission impartially ruling on the demarcation of the 1000 kilometer border between the two countries. However, the decision of the commission has only been accepted "in principle" by the Ethiopians, who stand to lose their access to the Red Sea. The Ethiopian government is publicly complaining about loss of the town of Badme, hardly a strategic center. Meanwhile, the Eritreans refuse to even discuss the matter further.

U.S. policy should be clear on the Eritrea-Ethiopia dispute, but it appears to have depended on the old paradigm. We are supportive of both Eritrea and Ethiopia; however, issues such as the fight against global terrorism and the effort to contain Sudan's hostile government have caused American policy to tread lightly on development, democracy and human rights issues in those countries. We should not have to choose between security and democracy and human rights. It is not an "either-or" situation but "both-and." We must find a new framework for U.S. policy in the Horn of Africa, and I look forward to a clear articulation from our first witness today, Deputy Assistant Secretary of state Don Yamamoto, of how the Administration is addressing the full range of our concerns in this region.

Both Eritrea and Ethiopia make themselves more vulnerable to internal turmoil by their inability to address the many other vital issues they face even if there is a stalemate in the border dispute. This is neither in the short term interest of these two nations nor in the long term strategic interest of the United States. Identifying a more effective policy toward resolving the Eritrea-Ethiopia dispute is the focus of today's hearing.

Before we proceed, let me note that written statements from Ethiopian Ambassador Kassahun Ayele and Eritrean Ambassador Girma Asmerom will be entered into the record of this hearing.

Mr. SMITH. I would like to yield to my good friend and colleague, Don Payne, for any opening comments that he might have.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me again commend you for calling this very important meeting, express my appreciation for this timely hearing on Ethiopia and Eritrea.

With your permission, I would like to enter a statement from Congressman Mike Honda of California, who requested that I submit for the record——

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, it will be made a part of the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

**Statement of Congressman Mike Honda
Before the Subcommittee on
Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations
Committee on International Relations
US House of Representatives**

**Hearing on Ethiopia and Eritrea: Promoting Stability, Democracy and
Human Rights**

May 5, 2005

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Payne, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit my statement today regarding the state of democracy in Ethiopia today.

I thank Chairman Smith for his and Ranking Member Payne's leadership in bringing up the issue of democracy in Ethiopia, particularly as we are only ten days away from the third democratic elections in Ethiopia's distinguished history.

The United States has maintained diplomatic relations with Ethiopia for over one hundred years, the longest relationship of its kind with any African nation. During this time, the United States and Ethiopia have collaborated to curtail the effects of famine and disease as well as to foster the growth of democracy in the country.

In recent months, Ethiopia has taken great strides to address the issues which have plagued previous elections. In one instance we have seen them re-run elections in a region which experienced elections irregularities. I am also encouraged by the recent conference between the ruling and opposition parties which negotiated several, mutually agreeable amendments to the electoral law. I hope that this tradition of broad coalition building will continue between the various factions.

The optimism generated from this progress was dampened, however, with the decision of the Ethiopian Government to expel from the country three renowned organizations performing elections related activities - the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

While I am encouraged to see that the Ethiopian High Court has overturned the rules under which these organizations were expelled, I would urge the Government of Ethiopia to accept this ruling and allow the re-entry of these critical democracy building organizations.

Within the next month, I will travel to Ethiopia to learn more about the country as well as view firsthand the issues it faces. I am very eager to visit Ethiopia and am confident that

this trip will immeasurably increase my knowledge and understanding of the country. I consider myself to be a friend to Ethiopia and this trip will allow me to be more effective and helpful to Ethiopia with respect to the issues it faces.

Again, I thank the subcommittee for allowing me to make this statement today and I look forward to working with Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Payne in addressing the issues of stability and democracy in Ethiopia.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, as you are well aware, the 2-year war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, once staunch allies, killed more than 100,000 people, displaced millions and left the two countries in a state of instability and uncertainty. It was disturbing because the leaders of both Ethiopia and Eritrea joined together in opposing the Mangistu regime that had a reign of terror on Ethiopia for many years, and as allies they were able to finally see a conclusion to that problem and Mangistu being expelled from Ethiopia. And so it is sad that two men who fought together for so many years then turned guns on each other and, as I mentioned, have killed more than 100,000 people and displaced many millions. All of this could have been avoided had the two sides chosen to resolve their dispute peacefully.

We were pleased when Prime Minister Meles agreed to allow Eritrea to have its independence, which had been in dispute ever since the Italians' occupation and the protectorate that Ethiopia was given under the Emperor Haile Selassie in a vote that should have been taken in 1962 that would have solved the problem at that time, which was never carried out. However, I have to commend Prime Minister Meles for respecting the integrity of Eritrea, and the country became independent, of course, cutting Ethiopia off from the port, which many Ethiopians felt was wrong; however, it was the right thing to do.

And so these men who have worked together and their governments, once again, it is a shame that we are in the situation that we find ourselves in. Conditions on the ground in both countries remain fragile, and because of this dispute, the likelihood of another war is real. Should Ethiopia and Eritrea decide to go to war this time around, the damage done as a result is likely to be irreversible and will have serious consequences in the entire East Africa region, which, as we know, is volatile at this time with Somalia attempting to develop a government and the Horn of Africa being fragile.

What is at the core of the current stalemate? In April 2002, the Border Commission issued its ruling, and both Eritrea and Ethiopia initially accepted it. But prior to the Border Commission's decision, both Ethiopia and Eritrea, in Algeria, agreed to the Algerian Accords and said that they would respect the decision of the Border Commission and appointed members of their country to be a part of the debate that went on in The Hague. Both countries agreed that the decision would be binding and final.

Of course, there could be dispute about the maps. I have looked at some drawn in the late 1800s, some in the early 1900s, sometimes different, drawn by different authorities, and this certainly was unclear. Although in the founding of the OAU in 1948, it was determined by African countries that they would not go to war over border disputes since the borders were drawn at the Berlin Commission in the 1800s, and for them to go to war against each other from lines that were drawn by the European powers in Berlin would be wrong, and that negotiations would be the way to determine the outcome of these artificial lines that were drawn by people who had never even been on the continent. Ethnic groups were separated by rivers and oceans, artificially, therefore still creating

many problems when a problem arises in one country, and cousins are simply across the border at another country, but they are all one family. This was never taken into account by the infamous Berlin Commission back in the 1880s.

In September 2003, after several attempts to reverse the decision of the Commission on the disputed Badme village, the Government of Ethiopia formally rejected the Commission's decision. However, in November 2004, Ethiopia proposed a five-point plan reversing its earlier rejection of the Border Commission's decision.

We were pleased that there was movement on the part of Ethiopia by saying that they would accept the Border Commission in principle, and that is, once again, where the problem has arisen. We felt it was wrong to reject the Commission's report initially, but were pleased that Ethiopia did amend its overall opposition and said that, in principle, it would accept the Border Commission's report.

Mr. Chairman, in August, I met with both President Isaias and Prime Minister Meles, and we discussed the impasse between both countries. And we visited Badme and talked to the residents there, and were attempting to see if the leaders would agree that this should be negotiated. In December I returned and met with the Prime Minister again to discuss the situation.

I have been very involved in the Horn for 35 years and regret what is happening in that area. I believe that the peace plan offers an opportunity to end the stalemate. The United States Government must engage the parties and facilitate the implementation of the Commission's decision and encourage dialogue between the two parties in order to address the root causes of the problem and normalize relations. Dialogue between the parties is essential as long as it does not impede the implementation of the Commission's demarcation directives.

Both Ethiopia and Eritrea face enormous challenges. The continuation of the status quo will only worsen the situation on the ground. Millions of people in both Ethiopia and Eritrea continue to face hunger in part due to natural causes, but also due to bad policies and stubborn political positions taken. Some are natural, some are manmade, but the problem of hunger still remains. In Ethiopia alone more than 2 million people are in need of emergency food assistance, and more than 5 million are at risk as we sit here today.

I am also concerned about the deteriorating human rights conditions. Although there have been improvements in some areas, in Eritrea, a number of former senior government officials remain incarcerated without being charged. The continued detention of Aster Yohannes, who went back to Ethiopia to rejoin her children, as we heard earlier, without being formally charged of any crime, to be in detention is unacceptable.

Similarly, in Ethiopia many people are incarcerated allegedly for corruption. I am particularly concerned about Alazar Dese, an Ethiopian-American who left his high-paying job to help his country. I had met with Alazar in August in his prison cell in Addis. He deserves better. He does not deserve this kind of treatment. We are simply asking the authorities to bring the case up and let it go through the judicial system, but they refuse. So both countries are in violation of people being incarcerated without charges.

The violence against civilians in Gambella must end, and the government should bring those who committed these atrocities to justice.

Mr. Chairman, in September 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell designated Eritrea as a country of particular concern (CPC) for severe violations of religious freedom. I personally have serious reservations about this designation. Eritrea is a secular country. The two main religions, Islam and Christianity, coexisted peacefully for centuries. Indeed I am troubled by some of the reports concerning the Jehovah's Witnesses and some other Evangelical groups, who in many instances are in different countries in Africa and are kind of creating somewhat of a concern by some leaders in these countries. But to place Eritrea in the same category as Sudan and as China for the way that they treat religions is unnecessary and to me is offensive. I think that category goes too far, and it is not correct.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I am very troubled and disappointed about the recent statements and measures taken by the State Department relating to Sudan. I think it is very troubling to hear Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick deliberately downplaying the genocide in Darfur, saying that the numbers, he thinks, are 60,000 when we are still hearing numbers going in excess of 400,000.

And why should a representative of the United States Government decide to question the number of deaths so that we can ease the pressure on Sudan? It is absolutely unconscionable to deliberately downplay genocide and refuse actually to call these atrocities genocide, indicating perhaps that this was simply Secretary Powell's interpretation and that the State Department has nothing to do with it; he was just simply some impartial person coming in. The Secretary of State's statement of genocide now is being questioned by our Administration. It sounds like what happens with the Sudan Government when they talk to the Africa Union.

I am also troubled that the Administration allowed the head of Sudan security, Abdalla Gosh, to be flown to Washington in a luxury jet from Khartoum as we flew him here to meet with the CIA officials last month. A person who leads the killing, who instructs the Janjaweed, who has blood on his hands, who allows rape to go on, who condones killing of children, burning of villages, bombing of cities—he was flown to Washington, DC to meet with our State Department and the CIA officials. It is a disgrace. This man is responsible for atrocities in Darfur, and we bring him here in a jet, first class, feeding him, letting him feel comfortable, meeting with him and flying him back at taxpayers' expense. It is a disgrace. It is a disgrace that this Administration would allow a person like that into this country. It is a disgrace.

He has even turned around and has said, our government, Sudan, which did not allow the head of the Senate, Majority Leader, into their country in August when he applied to visit the country, said that the leader of our Senate, who may be a candidate for President of the United States, who could possibly even be the President of the United States, did not qualify to visit Sudan—that their country—I guess he did not reach the standards that Sudan has to let the person who may lead this country.

And the same Administration sends a letter under Secretary Rice commending them for cooperation on some 6-year-old files on Osama bin Laden—and is saying that this is so great that they are giving us all of this information.

So on one hand we are winking and nodding. On one hand we are saying, well, the genocide is really not so bad. We are saying that the only thing that is important to this Administration is the war on terror.

It is the same thing that happened when we had the fight between communism and democracy where we propped up people like Mobutu, who killed his people with our guns, who stole the money and put it in banks; people like Savimbi, because he said, “I am against the Communists.” Well, we don’t care about your people. Kill who you want, rob who you want to, rape who you want to, maim who you want to. Congo is still in disrepair because of what happened by Mobutu’s regime, and he has been gone for 10 years, 15 years. And they are going to struggle for the next 10 and 15 years. And so we are going to allow the same thing to happen with Sudan.

The fact that Jon Corzine 3 days ago asked to go to Sudan; rejected, said that you are not good enough to come to our country. And so, where are we going? We are allowing these people to come in. That is tantamount to inviting the head of the Nazi SS troops into Washington during the height of the Holocaust.

Mr. Chairman, in light of this apparent shift in policy of appeasement, because the only thing important to this country is the war on terror; the CIA that has messed up everything it has done, can’t do the job, so they have got to depend on Sudan’s CIA to—a place where Osama bin Laden stayed for 6 years, planned the bombing of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam Embassies, gave passports to the terrorists that tried to kill President Mubarak at the OAU meeting in 1995, gave them passports, gave them weapons, supplied the planes, planned it out, and almost were successful; this is the same government that we are saying is giving us all the information.

If we are winking and nodding with them, what do you think they are doing with the terrorists? They are winking and nodding at them, saying the U.S. is crazy enough to think we are going to give you all this information that you need because we haven’t seen any kind of action taken against the Government of Sudan by these terrorists. They take anybody on. How can Sudan sit twiddling their thumbs, saying they can cooperate with the United States, give them all this information, and there is not a single negative thing that happens to the Government of Sudan? They are not invincible.

So they are winking and nodding with the terrorists and selling us a bill of goods that we are giving the U.S. everything they need to have because they are going to make it easy for us to get off this sanctions list, and are probably winking and nodding and laughing all the way to their torture chambers.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Payne follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONALD M. PAYNE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. Chairman, let me first express my appreciation to you for calling this important and timely hearing on Ethiopia and Eritrea. I have a statement from Congressman Mike Honda of California that I request be submitted for the record, Mr. Chairman.

As you are well aware, the two year war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, once staunch allies, killed more than 100,000 people, displaced millions, and left the two countries in a state of instability and uncertainty. All of these could have been avoided had the two sides chosen to resolve their dispute peacefully.

Despite a peace agreement signed by the two countries five years ago, conditions on the ground remain fragile and the likelihood of another war is real. Should Ethiopia and Eritrea decide to go to war this time around, the damage done as a result is likely to be irreversible, and will have serious consequences for the entire East Africa region.

What is at the core of the current stalemate? In April 2002, the Boundary Commission issued its ruling and both Ethiopia and Eritrea initially accepted it.

In September 2003, after several attempts to reverse the decision of the Commission on the disputed Badme village, the government of Ethiopia formally rejected the Commission's decision. However, in November 2004, Ethiopia proposed a five-point peace plan, reversing its earlier rejection of the Boundary Commission's decision.

Mr. Chairman, in December, I met with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to discuss Ethiopia's five point peace plan. I had extensive discussion with President Isaias Afwerki in August 2004.

I believe the peace plan offers an opportunity to end the stalemate. The United States government must engage the parties and facilitate the implementation of the Commission's decision and encourage dialogue between the two parties in order to address the root causes of the problem and to normalize relations. Dialogue between the parties is essential as long as it does not impede the implementation of the Commissions Demarcation Directives.

Both Ethiopia and Eritrea face enormous challenges; the continuation of the status quo will only worsen the situation on the ground. Millions of people in both Ethiopia and Eritrea continue to face hunger in part due to natural causes, but also due to bad policies and a stubborn political culture. In Ethiopia alone, more than 2 million people are in need of emergency food assistance and more than 5 million are at risk.

I am also concerned about the deteriorating human rights conditions, although there have been improvements in some areas. In Eritrea, a number of former senior government officials remain incarcerated without being charged. The continued detention of Aster, who went back to Eritrea to rejoin her children, without being formally charged of any crime is unacceptable. Similarly in Ethiopia, many people are incarcerated, allegedly for corruption. I am particularly concerned about Alazar Dese, an Ethiopian American who left his high-paying job to help his country. I met with Alazar in August in his prison cell; he does not deserve this kind of treatment. The violence against civilians in Gambella must end and the government should bring those who committed these atrocities to justice.

Mr. Chairman, in September 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell designated Eritrea as a "Country of Particular Concern (CPC)" for severe violations of religious freedom. I have serious reservation about this designation. Eritrea is a secular country. The two major religions—Islam and Christianity—coexisted peacefully for centuries. Indeed, I am troubled by some of the reports concerning the Jehovah Witnesses and some Evangelical groups. But placing Eritrea in the same category as Sudan and China is unnecessary and offensive.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I am very troubled and disappointed about recent statements and measures taken by the State Department relating to Sudan. I think it is very troubling to hear Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick deliberately downplaying the genocide in Darfur and refusing to call the atrocities there genocide as Secretary Powell did in September 2004. I am more troubled that the Administration allowed the head of Sudan's security, Abdalla Gosh to visit Washington to meet with CIA officials last month. This man is responsible for the atrocities in Darfur. Under his direction tens of thousands of innocent civilians have been murdered, countless women raped, hundreds of villages burned to the ground. Allowing him to visit Washington at this time is tantamount to inviting the head of the NAZI SS at the height of the Holocaust.

Mr. Chairman, in light of this apparent shift to a policy of appeasement, I hope you will schedule a markup hearing for HR 1424, which has over a hundred co-sponsors.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. I don't have any questions right now. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Ms. Lee.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I must associate myself with the Ranking Member's remarks. And I want to thank him for taking the opportunity to bring us up to date on this tragedy that is taking place in the Sudan and try and get some understanding of what our role really is in trying to stop the genocide.

I am very delighted that we are having this hearing today on Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Berlin Conference of 1885 actually planted the seeds for the borders and the divisions in Africa, divisions of land in Africa, which continues to evolve today. And when we look at our maps, we see dividing lines between countries that often share the same language, resources, history and pride.

For a long time Americans have held Africans to a colonial standard of borders. But Africans have historically understood that lines on a map have no more value than the paper that they are printed on. Trees, for example, make up the borders between Tanzania and Kenya, Victoria Falls divides Zambia and Zimbabwe, and river beds divide Badme on both sides of the Ethiopian and Eritrean border.

During the 108th Congress, I think it was last year, this Subcommittee held a similar hearing examining ways to help both Ethiopia and Eritrea come to some resolution on border demarcation. But today, unfortunately, the conflict remains unresolved, and the border has not been demarcated.

Observers have called into question the safety of both the Border Commission and U.N. peacekeeping troops. The war is over, but there has not been a true reconciliation between the countries. The 1998 war devastated each country politically, socially and economically, and over 100,000 lives were taken, and a million people were displaced. So it is high time that we figure out a way to help bring closure to this conflict and to prepare for progress for the future.

I don't believe there is any more time to argue the merits of the binding Algiers Agreement. Instead I think we must move on and take this opportunity to see what obligations we have and what obligations there are to deal with the after-effects, and we must focus on the people of both countries, not the politics.

Just last month hundreds of Ethiopians fell victim in floods in the southeast region. Today the World Food Program is attempting to feed approximately 4.6 million Ethiopians and a million Eritreans who are hungry as a result of crop failure and drought. At least 21 percent of Ethiopia's 71 million people required food and emergency assistance, and the United States provided nearly 1 million metric tons of food. Eritreans are fighting for the same basic needs, with nearly 80 percent—80 percent—of Eritrean households receiving some form of food aid.

Today over 3 million Eritreans and Ethiopians are living with HIV and AIDS. And I visited Ethiopia last year and had the oppor-

tunity to look at the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic there, and believe me, it is a ticking time bomb.

Today only 7 percent of Eritreans live in rural areas, and less than 27 percent of the entire Ethiopian population has access to potable water.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think the time for peace is now. There are enormous challenges which both countries face. I remain hopeful that we can work together and wage a humanitarian assault on poverty, on hunger, hopelessness and despair. So I look forward to this hearing. I want to welcome the witnesses, and I hope that we can make sure that we play a very constructive and positive role in assisting Ethiopia and Eritrea in bringing peace and mutual respect and needed development and international humanitarian assistance to the respective countries. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Lee, thank you very much.

Before introducing our distinguished first witness, I would like to just point out that the Ethiopian Ambassador Ayele and Eritrean Ambassador Girma both have written statements that, without objection, will be made a part of the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR KASSAHUN AYELE

BRIEFING NOTE ON THE STATUS OF THE UPCOMING NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ELECTION
IN ETHIOPIA

There can be no doubt that the creation of a democratic system through free and fair election plays a crucial role in fostering economic development and good governance. It is in this same spirit that the Government of Ethiopia has identified building a democratic system as one of the three major challenges for the very survival of the country, economic development and sustainable peace being the other two. In fact establishing a democratic order is a long process that presupposes the building up and strengthening of institutions of democratic governance in the country, which are crucial for the development of democracy.

In the past decade, tremendous efforts have been made to concretize the young democracy in the country by putting in place the necessary constitutional, legal, policy and institutional frameworks. These measures have so far positively contributed to ensure the participation of the people in the political, economic and social life of the country.

Multiparty democracy is promoted in Ethiopia. To date 76 political parties have been registered and are now engaged in peaceful political activities in the country. Ethiopia also recognizes the critical role of ensuring freedom of the Press for the democratization process. This freedom is guaranteed under the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Consequently, the private press has flourished and the inhuman conditions of suppression, mass imprisonment, torture and murder of people for holding different views have been brought to an end. Today over 80 private magazines and newspapers are in circulation through out Ethiopia.

In the last decade, Ethiopia has taken a series of measures to ensure the protection of human rights including the justice sector reform and the establishment of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman Office.

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) under Article 38 unequivocally guarantees to every Ethiopian national the right to vote and to be elected without discrimination based on color, race, nation, nationality, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion. The Election Proclamation No. 111/1995 and the recent Election Amendment Proclamation No. 438/2005, which the House of Peoples' representatives adopted as part of the efforts to make the upcoming elections more democratic are both issued on the basis of the Federal Constitution with the view to ensuring political order that enjoys the full mandate of the people. The national Election Board of Ethiopia, which is accountable to the House of Peoples' Representatives of the FDRE, is responsible for administering elections at national and state levels, as well as those for Zonal/Special Woreda (District) Councils, Woreda Councils, Kebele (Neighbourhood) Councils and municipal elec-

tions, recall elections and referenda. The Board's functions and powers are set out in the Constitution and the aforementioned pieces of legislations.

Since the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1995, two democratic elections have been conducted that helped concretizing the young democracy in the country. In fact the federal elections of May 1995 and May 2000 were essentially the litmus test of the strength of the Federal Constitution. In this regard, the Government's decision to re-run the 2000 parliamentary elections in some constituencies where election irregularities were reported is worth noting as a clear testimony of the Government's commitment to holding free and fair election. In its second report on the 2000 re-election, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), which had been observing the process stated "the conduct of election officials in general was very good, carrying out the responsibilities and duties entrusted to them properly . . . There were no serious problem either with regard to observing the official time table . . . or with respect to other procedures. Election officials, voters and security personnel deserve appreciation and encouragement in this regard." As such, the majority of Ethiopia's international partners also confirmed that the elections were fair and transparent.

Preparations are currently underway for the Third national and regional election, which is scheduled to take place on 15th May 2005. The Government of Ethiopia has identified two basic goals for this upcoming election: the first one being ensuring a free and fair election and the second one is to ensure voter participation not only through running and/or voting, but also by serving as election observers and monitors. And indeed this issue has been made one of the major preoccupations of the Government for the present budget year.

The registration of voters and candidates has been completed now. And it is reported that over 25.6 million people have already been registered to vote in the upcoming election, which is the highest figure in the history of the country. Some 547 constituencies and 38,469 polling stations have been readied. Besides, 1,870 regional and woreda (district) election coordinators and executives as well as 105,000–120,000 executives are being assigned at polling stations.

Thirty-five political parties contesting in the upcoming elections for seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives and regional councils have agreed to a campaigning code of conduct and the establishment of a joint consultative forum. The forum, which will be established at national and polling stations levels, is aimed at ensuring free and fair elections by peacefully resolving any disputes among parties that may arise during the election process.

The Government of Ethiopia has so far undertaken a series of proactive measures to ensure free, fair and credible elections to take place in Ethiopia. In this regard the following are worth noting:

- The House of Peoples Representatives of the FDRE amended the Election Proclamation No.111/1995 taking into account the constructive proposals put forward by the opposition parties in Ethiopia as well as the need to enhance public participation in the elections and creating a more favorable atmosphere for competing political parties. Note that majority of the amendment proposals put forward by the Oppositions were accepted and incorporated in the Amended Proclamation.
- The Government has provided with equal and fair access to Government media for all candidates. Accordingly the Government allocated airtime and newspaper space to the parties. According to the Guideline on the use of state owned mass media, each of the two major opposition parties, i.e. Coalition for Unity and Democracy and United Ethiopia Democratic Party-Medhin, are allocated 32% of the airtime while the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Party (the ruling party) which has 85% of the seats in the parliament is allocated 44% of the total air time. This would surely enhance public participation through the dissemination of balanced information to the people.
- International observers are invited to observe the election process. Many countries and international organizations including the US Government and Carter Center are already invited to observe the election. The Carter Center has already started operation on the ground. So far some 320 international observers have been registered with the National Election Board to monitor the election.
- In the last five months a series of forums have been organized by which contending political parties undertook intensive debates through the public media on cardinal political, social and economic issues of concern to the Ethiopian people. These forums are designed to provide the electorate with policy alternatives. It at the same time gives the political parties equal opportunity to introduce their respective programs to the Ethiopian people. Note that the

debates are transmitted live through state radio and TV throughout the country.

- Due attention has been given to civic education for voters. The national Election Board is closely working with 24 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on a nationwide program of civic and voter education. Moreover training has been offered to election executives at different levels focusing on the concept of civics and election related activities.
 - Election codes of Ethics for police officers as well as election observers have been issued.
 - The National Election Board of the FDRE announced that the Board would receive and scrutinize any inconveniences to be reported by election executives, observers or representatives of political parties. Accordingly the Board has taken a number of measures including the removal of 87 election executives in Hadiya Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples State due to their partisanship to the ruling party. Among other things, this is one of the litmus test for the impartiality of the Board.
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EMBASSY OF ERITREA

1708 NEW HAMPSHIRE AVE NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20009
TEL: (202) 319-1991, Fax: (202) 319-1304

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith
Chairman
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 4, 2005

Dear Mr. Chairman:

It is with great pleasure that I submit the enclosed statement for the record for the hearing your subcommittee is holding tomorrow, May 5, 2005 on the topic of *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Promoting Stability, Democracy and Human Rights*.

Please allow me to thank you on behalf of my government and the people of Eritrea for your interest in our country and your tireless dedication to the noble goals of stability, democracy and human rights.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ginna Asmerom'.

Ginna Asmerom
Ambassador



EMBASSY OF ERITREA

1708 NEW HAMPSHIRE AVE NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20009
TEL: (202) 319-1891, Fax: (202) 319-1304

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations Hearing: *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Promoting Stability, Democracy and Human Rights* Thursday, May 5, 2005

Statement by the Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to the United States and Canada, H. E. Girma Asmerom

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee on International Relations,

It is with great pleasure that I avail myself of the opportunity to submit my remarks to this distinguished panel today. Promoting stability, democracy and human rights are truly noble endeavors, which my government wholeheartedly embraces. For Eritrea this is much more than just talk; countless Eritrean citizens have laid their lives down for these goals during the many decades of Eritrea's struggle for liberation and independence.

Before I address each of the areas covered by today's hearing, let me reaffirm Eritrea's continued commitment to stand as a dependable ally to the United States in the Global War on Terror and the Coalition of the Willing. Also let me point out that many Eritreans have made their home in this great country and form an indelible link between our two nations. Finally, allow me to underline the overwhelming success our nation achieved in fighting AIDS, infant mortality and malaria (see the April 24 World Bank feature story "Success in Eritrea").

Promoting Stability by Border Demarcation

I find the order of the goals in the hearing's title particularly well chosen. History is full of examples that it is only in the context of peace and stability that democracy and human rights can truly flourish. War and the threat of violence are the antithesis of human freedom.

Allow me therefore to address first the issue of stability. My country of only 3.5 million people today is faced with the threat of war by Ethiopia, a large country with 70 million inhabitants. As you know, a tragic and bloody conflict erupted between Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1998 to 2000. After more than 120,000 Ethiopians and 19,000 Eritreans died and more than one million had been displaced from their homes, the Algiers Peace Accords brought an end to the fighting in December 2000. This accord was guaranteed and witnessed by the United States, the European Union, the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) and the United Nations. It was also endorsed by the UN Security Council.

Crucial to the Algiers Peace Agreements was the acceptance of both countries to entrust the resolution of the border conflict, which could not be resolved through bilateral dialogue and international mediation in the 1990s, to an independent body in The Hague, the Ethiopia Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC). Both countries agreed that the EEBC's decision would be "final and binding".

When the EEBC announced its decision in April 13, 2002, both Eritrea and Ethiopia issued statements accepting the verdict. The UN Security Council and the international community also adopted and endorsed

the EEBC's decision as final and binding. However, once the EEBC was ready to carry out the Algiers Agreements' mandated demarcation of the border on the ground, Ethiopia began to renege on its commitment. On September 19, 2003, the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi rejected the border ruling, which he called "totally illegal, unjust and irresponsible." Ethiopia to this day refuses to implement the border decision as it stands, calling rather for "adjustments" and an "alternative mechanism". The announcement by Ethiopia that it accepts the ruling "in principle" does not represent a policy change at all. It simply means that the large country agrees to the parts of the final and binding decision it likes and is trying to find ways to force the small country to undo the parts it does not care for.

For the international community to ignore or tacitly support any such departure from the rule of law would seriously undermine the hope of future conflicts being resolved through international arbitration. This is something the Members of the Committee should seriously consider: Why should countries in any conflict stop fighting and seek binding arbitration, if Ethiopia can not only get away with flouting the rule of law but also be rewarded with increases in highly fungible non-earmarked U.S. aid? This question is all the more relevant given the recent warnings from the UN Security Council that Ethiopia is preparing for war.

The Congress of the United States has demonstrated its awareness of these problems last year by passing legislation that calls for funds to be withheld in case of non-compliance with the Algiers Agreements (Section 592 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005; Public Law 108-447, Division D, Title IV). Unfortunately, the U.S. policy seems to be moving in an opposite direction from the intent of Congress and PL 108-447. Ethiopia is not complying. Its assistance from the U.S. is increasing.

Unfortunately, many would be hard-pressed to explain what exactly U.S. policy is on border demarcation. We hear that there is support for the final and binding EEBC decision, but there is little incentive from the U.S. to encourage Ethiopia to agree to implement the EEBC's decisions. This is a serious miscalculation on the part of U.S.

What is called for is decisive leadership by the United States such as in the case of urging the unconditional withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and the signing of the Sudanese peace deal by the Government of Sudan. The U.S. should use its clout to see international law upheld and peace and stability promoted by unconditional and speedy demarcation of the border. We are not asking for you to "take sides," we are only asking you to uphold the rule of law. Is a UN-endorsed final and binding arbitration decision and an Ethiopian signature just so much dried ink on paper or does it have real legal meaning?

Eritrea consistently has demonstrated that it abides by international law whether it likes the outcome or not. When the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 1998 awarded disputed Red Sea islands to Yemen and gave Eritrea six months to withdraw, Eritrea vacated the islands within twenty-four hours, even though we disagreed with aspects of the ruling.

In short, the key to promoting stability, and as a consequence democracy and human rights, too, is to make sure that Ethiopia complies with international law, withdraws from sovereign Eritrean territory and allows the demarcation of the border to go forward as mandated by the Algiers Peace Agreement without any preconditions. Without this, peace and stability in the Horn of Africa cannot be achieved.

Fostering Democracy

This takes me to the second concern that today's hearing addresses: democracy and human rights. Eritrea formally gained independence in 1993. Only three years thereafter, Eritrea had finished the process of developing a full-fledged democratic constitution.

Elections at the local and regional levels have since been held several times (the third regional elections were concluded only this week). Admittedly, other important parts of the constitution have not yet been

implemented. Why? For a country to hold its first-ever national elections during a border war against a neighbor twenty times its size hardly seems like anything anyone would advise or expect. Even centuries-old democracies carefully restrict certain civil liberties in times of war. While it is true that the fighting stopped in 2000, to this day we live in a war footing situation (which incidentally has cost the United Nations close to a billion dollars to maintain). Until the border is demarcated, the defense of Eritrea's territorial integrity and national security is the supreme concern and duty of Eritrea's government. We yearn for freedom and democracy and we look forward to national democratic elections in Eritrea once the border issue is settled. I personally fought for a free, independent and sovereign Eritrea, and like all Eritreans, we want a bright future of freedom, and not a future of war and suffering.

Upholding Religious Freedom

The accusations of violations of religious freedom against our country are particularly unfair and unfounded.

Eritrea has a population of roughly fifty per cent Muslims and fifty per cent Christians who have peacefully lived together for centuries. One only needs to look to our Western neighbor Sudan to see how unusual this is in our region. For many years the government has had a policy in place restricting the efforts of religious fundamentalists to spread their message when it causes potentially uncontrollable forces within our society. Given Eritrea's demographic realities, it is imperative that this policy be equally applied to all religions.

It is true that, just like in the United States, you will find people of diverse faith to be imprisoned in Eritrea today for violating the law of the land. However, unlike some reports claim, not a single one of them is in jail because of their religious beliefs or convictions. Some may be common criminals, others may be draft dodgers, yet others may have attempted to sow social discord and, and a few have even taken steps to overthrow the government. Unless our accusers agree to discuss specific cases rather than claiming unsubstantiated, widely varying and anonymous figures of alleged religious prisoners, there appears to be little we can do to clear up the misconceptions. My government has on several occasions offered to U.S. government representatives to investigate and discuss any alleged wrongful imprisonment. We have watched the numbers of alleged prisoners vary wildly. We asked our friends at the State Department to please share a list of those they are concerned about. That list has not been forthcoming.

The events of the last years have shown that human intelligence, even intelligence gathered by the mightiest nation, the United States, is fallible. In contrast to these baseless reports, allow me to quote His Holiness Abune Antonyos I, Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Eritrea; Shiek Alamin Osman, Mufti of Eritrea; His Grace, Abun Mengestabe, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church of Eritrea and the Reverend Asfaha Mehari, President of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea, who in a joint statement rejected the false impressions created by the State Department's International Religious Freedom Report, saying that the "lack of religious strife in our country has been exemplary by all standards and [a] source of pride to our nation."

Some might not be inclined to believe the statements of a representative of the Eritrean government. However, it would appear to me that the words of these widely respected religious leaders, who have firsthand knowledge of the realities on the ground, would deserve to be heard.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to invite all Members of the Committee to visit Eritrea. Please come. We welcome you and we look forward to you getting to know us. We are a new country, and we need your understanding and friendship. I am sure that when you visit us and see the truth of Eritrea, you will strongly question those who have for so long led you to believe that Eritrea is anything but one of the best countries in Africa and one with the brightest future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and my personal best regards to all Members of the Committee.

Attachments:

Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission, Sixteenth Report to the UN on the Work of the Commission. February 24, 2005

Statement by the Religious Leaders of Eritrea in Response to the Publication by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the U.S. State Department. October 8, 2004

Eritrean Ambassador Challenges U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, February 18, 2004

Eritrea: A Secular Country with Absolute Freedom of Belief. January 6, 2004

Election to Take Place in 46 Administrative Areas in the Central Region, April 7, 2005

Election Concluded in Gash-Barka and northern Red Sea Region, March 11, 2005

An Electoral Process with Dual Benefits, March 14, 2005

Mr. SMITH. And in like manner, Betty McCollum also has a written statement, and, without objection, her statement will be made a part of the record as well.

[The prepared statement of Ms. McCollum follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BETTY MCCOLLUM, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

BETTY MCCOLLUM
U.S. District Court, Minnesota

1229 Lafayette House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
USOT 205-6021
Fax: 202-726-1598

165 WESTEN AVENUE, NORTH
SH-101-17
ST. PAUL, MN 55103
651-224-2151
Fax: 651-224-3251



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May 5, 2005

Hon. Chris Smith
Chairman, HIRC Subcommittee on
Africa, Global Human Rights and
International Operations
2373 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Donald Payne
Ranking Member, HIRC Subcommittee on
Africa, Global Human Rights and
International Operations
2209 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Payne:

I will be unable to attend today's subcommittee hearing because I will be returning to Minnesota in order to attend my daughter's college commencement ceremony. I believe today's hearing, "Promoting Stability in Ethiopia and Eritrea," is very important and I commend the Chairman for holding this hearing.

I would respectfully request the following questions be submitted to Deputy Assistant Secretary Yamamoto for a written response.

1. I am concerned that the mobilization of Ethiopia and Eritrea's military to the disputed border area has resulted in extraordinary military expenditures by two nations with extremely impoverished populations. At the same time, the U.S. government is expending hundreds of millions of dollars in development and emergency humanitarian assistance to meet the basic food and medical needs of the Ethiopian people and significantly less to Eritrea. It appears that the State Department's failure to directly engage the two parties in solving the border dispute, while funding the growing humanitarian needs of these two countries, is not advancing U.S. interests and in fact is contributing to greater instability.

Is the U.S. willing to become directly engaged in resolving the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea? And, is our government considering using humanitarian and development assistance as a diplomatic tool to leverage a permanent border demarcation and a demilitarization of the border area?

2. Confronting the root causes of food insecurity and extreme poverty in Ethiopia cannot be achieved unless rapid population growth is addressed. In Ethiopia, the population has doubled in the last 25 years and nearly 50% of the population is under age 15. Estimates project Ethiopia's population could reach 150 million by the year 2050. This rate of population growth in Ethiopia is economically and environmentally unsustainable. Furthermore, the inevitable competition for water, land and natural resources will contribute to political instability at a national and regional level.

What is the U.S. government doing to expand access to contraceptives and voluntary family planning, especially for couples living in the heavily populated rural areas where most families have no access to modern healthcare and food insecurity is already a chronic problem?

Mr. Smith and Mr. Payne, I appreciate you allowing me to submit these questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Betty McCollum". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "B" and "M".

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Mr. SMITH. Before going to our witness, I would like to just say to all assembled and to the Committee that we welcome back Greg Simpkins, who is returning to this Subcommittee. He served on this Committee several years ago. Since leaving the Hill, Greg has worked for the Corporate Council on Africa and most recently the Leon Sullivan Foundation. Greg has worked on African issues as a journalist and as an analyst since the late 1970s, and I am very pleased as Chairman to have him back. We are fortunate to have the benefits of his counsel, insights and wisdom. And so, Greg, thank you for joining us again.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Chairman, yield?

Mr. SMITH. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. PAYNE. I, too, would like to commend you for your recent hiring of Mr. Simpkins. I worked with him when he worked with Mr. Royce for the Africa Subcommittee years ago, and also with his working with the Sullivan Foundation and the Corporate Council on Africa, and couldn't think of a more competent and qualified individual for you to bring on board. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

I would like to now introduce our first distinguished witness. Donald Yamamoto currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of African Affairs. He served as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti from 2000 to 2003. Prior to this appointment, he was Deputy Director for East African Affairs from 1998 to 2000.

Ambassador Yamamoto entered the Foreign Service in 1980. Former assignments included U.S. Embassy, Beijing, as Ambassador Staff Aide, and Human Rights Officer during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here, and please proceed however you would like.

STATEMENT OF MR. DONALD Y. YAMAMOTO, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and all Members and staffers from the Committee. It is indeed a great honor to be here, and I feel very humbled, given the high quality of the witnesses that you have appearing here today.

Mr. Chairman, you have succinctly and cogently articulated the fundamental issues that are facing us in this relationship not only with Ethiopia-Eritrea, but the region as well. And I would just like to read a very short statement and move on to the questions.

Avoiding another war between Ethiopia and Eritrea is key to ensuring stability in that troubled region. The United States played a major role in negotiating an end to the previous conflict between these two countries. The obligation of these former belligerents were outlined in the Algiers Agreement of December 2000. A core feature of the Algiers Agreement was the establishment of a Border Commission that would delineate, delimit and demarcate the Eritrea-Ethiopia border. Both sides determined that any discussion of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission would be considered final and binding.

The Commission pronounced its decision in April 2002. Unfortunately the demarcation process has come to a standstill. The result has been a cold, but increasingly tense peace between the two countries, with both maintaining large numbers of troops along the border.

Over the past 2 years, we, along with the international community, have sought to find a common ground between the two governments without much success. The United States has supported the United Nations Mission to Eritrea-Ethiopia (UNMEE) since its creation in 2000. In the July 2004 to June 2005 period, UNMEE's budget of \$216 million, with the U.S. paying 27 percent of that peacekeeping operation's costs through our assessed contributions to the United Nations.

The border remains a fault line, and both governments are re-arming. While there is no rush to war, the prospects for renewed conflict are real and troubling. Despite our best efforts to separate our bilateral interests from the border, the dispute casts a pall over our relations with both governments.

I will characterize our relationship with Ethiopia as a complex one reflecting a 100-year history of bilateral dialog and exchange. As a major bilateral donor, approximately \$345 million in fiscal year 2004, we have been working with the Ethiopian Government and civil society on the full gamut of development issues ranging from health to food security to democracy. The breadth and scope of our development program in Ethiopia provides us with an appreciation of that country's political and socioeconomic trajectory. Development is a nonlinear process, and just as there are areas of progress, such as HIV/AIDS prevention, there are areas of concern. And the United States continues to discuss improved human rights and greater political and economic freedoms with Ethiopia.

The recent expulsion of three American democracy nongovernment organizations is a concern. Their expulsion on the eve of parliamentary elections raises questions about that process. It also raises questions about the government's commitment to real, meaningful democratic reforms and the development of democratic institutions. The government has claimed that these NGOs did not follow the procedures for registration. In our formal reclama we have noted in detail the actions of these organizations to file the appropriate documents with various Ethiopian Government authorities. These organizations did not enter into Ethiopia surreptitiously. They acted with the full knowledge and in full sight of the government. We have asked the government to allow these reputable organizations to return to Ethiopia to continue their important capacity-building work in advance of the election.

I would also note, however, that we are supporting another American NGO to observe that election. The Carter Center, along with the European Union, will field over 300 monitors to observe Ethiopia's May 15 election.

While our relationship with Eritrea extends less than 15 years to the country's founding in 1991, our bilateral relationship has been a challenging one. Over the past 2 years we have had a frank dialogue with Eritrea's leadership about U.S. expectations in the areas of human rights, democracy, religious freedom and economic liberalization, particularly as it pertains to our two detained For-

eign Service national staff members and other Eritreans held without charge for political reasons. Eritrea's leaders know where the United States stands on these issues, and in some areas our exchanges on these issues can be quite energetic.

On the issues of religious freedom, there are two portraits of Eritrea. The first is of a society where two great religions, Islam and Christianity, have long peacefully interacted with mutual understanding. Members of the four registered religious traditions, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Catholics and members of the Evangelical Church, are by and large allowed to practice their faith.

However, the second portrait is a disturbing one. Since May 2002, unapproved religious communities have been shut down and have been unable to practice their faith. Some of their members have been detained. Several groups have completed the government's requirements to be officially registered, but they have been rebuffed by the government. Groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses in particular have been subject to severe restrictions.

Because of these violations of religious freedom in Eritrea, in September of last year the United States designated Eritrea as a country of particular concern. The United States continues to engage Eritrea to press for improvements in religious freedom. We continue to receive assurances from the government that it will register these churches that have properly completed the process to do so. We need to see actions by the government to fulfill these promises.

These and other issues facing us in Eritrea and Ethiopia are complex and not easily defined, nor can they be resolved easily or simply. A looming famine in both Eritrea and Ethiopia and in areas of East Africa complicates our efforts and makes the need to engage both governments even more compelling. I hope my brief comments have highlighted some of these complexities, and I look forward to hearing your questions and observations.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yamamoto follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. DONALD Y. YAMAMOTO, DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Thank you for the opportunity to explore with you concerns surrounding the current state of affairs in Ethiopia and in Eritrea as well as relations between the two countries. Before examining specific questions you may have on these two countries, I would like to provide some context for that discussion.

The immediate relevance of these two countries to U.S. interests is their location in the Horn of Africa and stability in the Horn is a priority for the United States government in the Global War on Terrorism. With Somalia, the world's only failed state at one end and the humanitarian crisis of Darfur at the other, and with famine outcomes evident in the worst hit areas, meeting this priority is no mean feat.

Avoiding another war between Ethiopia and Eritrea is key to ensuring stability in that troubled region. The United States played a major role in negotiating an end to the previous conflict between these two countries. The obligations of these former belligerents were outlined in the Algiers Agreement of December 2000. A core feature of the Algiers Agreement was the establishment of a border commission that would delineate, delimit and demarcate the Eritrea-Ethiopia border. Both sides determined that any decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission (EEBC) would be considered final and binding. The Commission pronounced its decision in April 2002. Unfortunately, the demarcation process has come to a standstill. The result has been a cold but increasingly tense peace between the countries with both maintaining large numbers of troops along the border. Over the past two years, we, along with the international community, have sought to find a common ground between the two governments without much success. The United States has supported United Nations Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) since its creation in

2000. In the July 2004–June 2005 period, UNMEE’s budget \$216 million, with the U.S. paying 27 percent of that peacekeeping operation’s costs through our assessed contributions to the United Nations. The border remains a fault line and both governments are rearming. While there is no rush to war, the prospects for renewed conflict are real and troubling. Despite our best efforts to separate our bilateral interests from the border, the dispute casts a pall over our relations with both governments.

I would characterize our relationship with Ethiopia as a complex one, reflecting a 100-year history of bilateral dialogue and exchange. As a major bilateral donor (approximately \$324 million in fiscal year 2004), we have been working with the Ethiopian government and civil society on the full gamut of development issues: ranging from health to food security to democracy. The breadth and scope of our development program in Ethiopia provides us with an appreciation of that country’s political and socio-economic trajectory. Development is a non-linear process and, just as there are areas of progress (such as HIV/AIDS prevention), there are areas of concern. The U.S. continues to discuss improved human rights and greater political and economic freedoms with Ethiopia.

The recent expulsion of three American democracy non-governmental organizations (International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, and IFES) is a concern. Their expulsion on the eve of parliamentary elections raises questions about that process. It also raises questions about the government’s commitment to real meaningful democratic reforms and the development of truly democratic institutions. The government has claimed that these NGOs did not follow its procedures for registration. In our formal reclama, we have noted in detail the actions of these organizations to file the appropriate documents with various Ethiopian governmental authorities. These organizations did not enter into Ethiopia surreptitiously. They acted with the full knowledge and in full sight of the government. We have asked the government to allow these reputable organizations to return to Ethiopia to continue their important capacity-building work in advance of the election. I would also note however that we are supporting another American NGO to observe that election. The Carter Center along with European Union will field over 300 monitors to observe Ethiopia’s May 15th election.

While our relationship with Eritrea extends less than 15 years to that country’s founding in 1991, our bilateral relationship has been a challenging one. Over the past two years, we have had a frank dialogue with Eritrea’s leadership about U.S. expectations in the areas of human rights, democracy, religious freedom, and economic liberalization, particularly as it pertains to our two detained Foreign Service National staff members and other Eritreans held without charge for political reasons. Eritrea’s leaders know where the United States stands on these issues and in some areas our exchange on these issues can be quite energetic.

On the issue of religious freedom, there are two portraits of Eritrea. The first is of a society where two great religions, Islam and Christianity, have long peacefully interacted with mutual understanding. Members of the four registered religious traditions—Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Catholics and members of the Evangelical Church—are by and large allowed to practice their faith. However, the second portrait is a disturbing one: since May 2002, unapproved religious communities have been shut down and have been unable to practice their faith. Some of their members have been detained. Several groups have completed the government’s requirements to be officially registered, but they have been rebuffed by the government. Groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, in particular, have been subject to severe restrictions. Because of the severe violations of religious freedom in Eritrea, in September last year the United States designated Eritrea a Country of Particular Concern. The United States continues to engage Eritrea to press for improvements in religious freedom. We continue to receive assurances from the government that it will register those churches that have properly completed the process to do so. But we need to see action by the government to fulfill these promises.

These and other issues facing us in Eritrea and Ethiopia are complex and not easily defined. Nor can they be resolved easily or simply. A looming famine in both Eritrea and Ethiopia complicates our efforts and makes the need to engage both governments even more compelling. I hope my brief comments have highlighted some of these complexities and I look forward to hearing your questions and observations.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for your testimony.

I would like to begin with former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy’s mission and mandate. The mandate, as I understand it and as reiterated by Kofi Annan’s statement about a year ago, and this is the quote from Annan’s statement:

“The offer of good offices was intended not to create a new or alternative mechanism, but to focus on the implementation of the Algiers Agreement, the decision of the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission and the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Security Council.”

Yet, as we know, the Eritreans won't even meet with them. The Ethiopians, for whether it be domestic or political considerations, seem to be sending a mixed message. They certainly haven't accepted it, which raises real issues because we thought that they had initially accepted it, and our government's view was that it was final and binding.

My sense is—and maybe it is wrong—that war may be imminent. I am sure you share that concern that when you are on a hair-trigger response, any perceived slight, anything that might look like a provocation could lead to an all-out hostility with absolutely devastating consequences.

Are we, the international community, the United States, and the AU, focusing enough on this issue? Also, could you speak a little bit further to Axworthy's mission?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The issue of the conflict between—or potential conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea over the border remains a critical criteria and priority for us. Last year, when we sent our interagency team, we met with both President Isaias and Prime Minister Meles, and with the senior leadership of both countries to discuss and find ways in which we can move forward on the decisions made by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, and also to find ways to normalize relations between both countries, and to move forward on our most important issues, the bilateral relationships which we have with both Ethiopia and Eritrea.

In that context we had raised with both leaders the concept and idea of a special envoy, and in regards to that, the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan had selected former Foreign Minister of Canada Lloyd Axworthy. We have remained solidly in support and in close contact with Lloyd Axworthy, and he has, for the international community—since his appointment last year, we have envisioned his position as being kind of a coordinator for all the international community and for all the international efforts to focus on how we can move the peace process between these two countries forward.

We remain committed to this process. We have discussed with both Ethiopia and Eritrea their support for not only Lloyd Axworthy, but finding ways in which we can move both countries together to meet to coordinate, to normalize relations, and to move the peace process forward. We still remain in close contact with Lloyd Axworthy, and after his delivery of his assessment after 1 year to the United Nations, he remains in close contact with the entire international community.

And for your information Mr. Chairman, we will be meeting with our European colleagues, and also we remain in close contact with the African Union and the other international community as well as both parties on just how we can better coordinate and really move forward on this.

Mr. SMITH. In your view, is war eminent?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. The situation along the border is tense. We believe that war can happen at any time; that despite both countries having very disciplined militaries, that a mistake can happen. A miscalculation, a misunderstanding could occur. That is of great concern to us, and this is why it is so imperative that we try to ease the tensions, try to bring back those military troops away from the areas and find areas or common bonds in which both sides can start to look at trying to normalize relations and ease the tensions along the border.

Mr. SMITH. I appreciate that.

Concerning our two U.S. Embassy personnel that have been held without trial since 2001—and I know you were good enough to go there and to meet with them—could you give an update as to their well-being and whether or not the Eritrean Government will soon be releasing them? How much pressure is being put on the government to do that?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. We have no indications from the government as to what the next stage is for our two local employees. I worked very closely with both of them when I was Charge d'Affaires in Asmara. I know them well. And last year, during our trip to Asmara, President Isaias allowed us access to the two Eritrean nationals. They were in reasonably good health; bored. But the issue comes in that we had stressed, and we continue to stress, and we continue to interact with the government to either charge them or release them, and also to have them undergo due process.

And it is extraordinarily sad. As you know, one of the FSNs, local staff, received our highest honor for local employees working in our Embassies overseas, the FSN of the Year award. So we remain in very close contact with the governments, with the families on this issue.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Whatever we can do as well to help, please, we will do so.

With regards to Aster Yohannes, I know that Mr. Royce, who chaired the Africa part of the Committee previous to my assuming the Chairmanship, has also raised the issue. As a matter of fact, he actually give me a letter to give to the Eritrean Ambassador when I went to Geneva a year ago which spelled out very clearly, I thought, the assurances by the Eritrean Ambassador to the U.S. here in Washington that she pretty much had a clean bill of health to go back. From my reading of that letter, it seemed very clear that she had nothing to worry about, and yet, upon her setting foot there, she quickly found herself incarcerated. Are we making any progress on that case?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your concern particularly on not only this case, but the other human rights issues. We have been, you know, in close contact with Aster before she left and, of course, afterwards with the Government of Eritrea on her status. And again, we have no information or word, but we continue to press that issue at every chance we have.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Finally, let me just ask about the CPC designation. And as you may or may not know, that legislation went through our Committee, and I worked very hard to establish the International Reli-

gious Freedom Act half a dozen years ago. The idea was that we would set up some basic standards, and then the Administration, when it looked clearly at the record, would make a determination whether or not it was a country of particular concern.

This year I am happy to say Saudi Arabia was added to that list, and they certainly are deserving of it because of their ongoing repression of basic human rights vis-a-vis religion.

I would disagree with my good friend and colleague from New Jersey, Mr. Payne, about Eritrea until shown otherwise, because based on all the information I have seen, and I have met with the Ambassador here in Washington to talk about this issue, there are seemingly hundreds of members of minority religious faiths, including Jehovah's Witnesses which you have mentioned and others, who are imprisoned, and the size of the country is really irrelevant.

It is fitting as well that a country like the People's Republic of China, which obviously represses with absolute impunity anyone who is not part of the officially-recognized church be added to the list. They torture the Falun Gong to death, they mistreat the Uighurs, they mistreat the Catholics, Buddhists, and Christians who are not part of the officially-recognized church.

So the size of Eritrea being small does not preclude, I don't think, the kind of review that they have received. And the information we have gotten from the Commission, which is being made a part the record, backs that up. So I would hope that the Department would move quickly on the penalty phase, if you will, if indeed there is no amelioration of their egregious records.

[The information referred to follows:]

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

POLICY FOCUS: ERITREA

Spring 2005

Eritrea, with a population roughly half Christian and half Muslim, is poised on a major African cultural and religious fault-line. Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993 following a 30-year struggle. Eritrea's leaders have been molded by their experiences in that struggle in which discipline and unity were deemed crucial for survival and eventual success. After five brief years of peace, Eritrea was again at war with Ethiopia from 1998 to 2000, a costly conflict that curtailed earlier progress toward economic development and political liberalization. Following a political crackdown in late 2001, dissent has been suppressed, plans for democratic elections have been shelved indefinitely, and the Constitution, although ratified, has not yet been implemented. Eritrea today is a single-party dictatorship, lacking the democratic foundations of free and fair national elections, an independent press, lawful political opposition, civil society, and indigenous human rights organizations. The government has kept the country on a near-war footing in the face of a continuing perceived threat to Eritrea's national existence from Ethiopia.

Although spared much of the inter-communal strife seen elsewhere in Africa, Eritrea has in recent years experienced serious erosion of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief, as well as of other basic human rights. In the face of real and perceived external and internal threats, including by foreign-backed Islamic extremists, the Eritrean government has sought to impose discipline on religious life, as on almost all other aspects of the nation's existence. In doing so, the government has targeted a number of small, minority religious communities with no history of violence or subversion. Those affected lack legal avenues for redress of violations of Eritrea's own international obligations to protect human rights, including freedom of religion and belief.

In February 2004, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom publicly recommended, for the first time, that Eritrea be designated as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) for systematic and egregious violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief. The State Department subsequently acted on that recommendation, designating Eritrea as a CPC on September 15, 2004. The State Department's annual International Religious Freedom Report, issued the same day, made the judgment that an already serious situation in Eritrea had "continued to deteriorate." Other information available to the Commission, including detailed and credible accounts of violations of freedom of religion, reinforced this conclusion.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.

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800 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NW SUITE 790 | WASHINGTON, DC 20002 | 202-523-3240 | 202-523-5020 (FAX)

In October 2004, Commission staff visited Eritrea. During a six-day visit, staff discussed the situation there with government officials, leading members of Eritrea's sanctioned and unregistered faiths, third-country diplomats, United Nations personnel, resident representatives of foreign relief organizations, and others. Meetings with independent journalists and human rights monitors, normally a staple of such visits, were not possible, since the government does not permit such journalists and monitors to function. The staff visit confirmed the existence of the systematic and egregious violations that led to the CPC designation.

Background

In contrast to the country's material poverty,ⁱⁱ Eritrea has a rich religious heritage. Both Christianity and Islam were introduced early in their respective histories. Eritrea's population of approximately 4 million is usually described as roughly half Christian, mostly Coptic, and half Muslim, almost entirely Sunni.ⁱⁱⁱ The overwhelming majority of the Christian population belong to the Eritrean Orthodox Church, an autonomous branch of the Coptic Orthodox faith, which is closely tied to Eritrea's history, culture, and national identity. Also included in the Christian population are Roman Catholics and Protestants, the latter including various Evangelical and Pentecostal groups. There are also followers of indigenous African faiths and a small Baha'i community. Due to emigration, Eritrea's resident Jewish community now consists of only a handful of individuals, all foreign passport holders, although a synagogue is still maintained in Asmara and used for worship, mainly by expatriates and other visitors.

Relations between members of Eritrea's two largest faiths, Coptic Christianity and Sunni Islam, generally have been amicable. Eritrea's historical experience has underlined the importance of avoiding division along religious lines. The long struggle with Ethiopia led many Eritreans, whether Christians or Muslims, to work together to build one nation out of their multi-religious and multi-ethnic society.

The prevailing view of an Eritrean identity transcending religious differences has been challenged by a relatively small number of Muslim militants. Eritrean officials report that, following independence, foreign Muslim groups sought to import an intolerant Wahhabi ideology from Saudi Arabia under the cover of ostensibly charitable and educational work. Government officials have also alleged that there were efforts to introduce the Muslim Brotherhood.^{iv} According to government officials, these groups preached against co-existence with Christianity and sought to radicalize Eritrea's traditional, popular Islam, which has been much influenced by Sufism. Jihadists, allegedly backed by Sudan, called for the establishment of an Islamic state and undertook terrorist activities, the threat of which continues today. They also promoted the perception among some Muslims that they actually constitute a majority of the population and are disadvantaged under the current regime, seen by Muslims as dominated by individuals with a Christian background.

In recent years there have also been tensions between some followers of the ancient Coptic Orthodox faith practiced by most Eritrean Christians and those following other expressions of Christianity. Eritrea, like much of sub-Saharan Africa, has witnessed an upsurge in charismatic and Pentecostal forms of Christianity, which are viewed with suspicion by traditionalists, particularly but not exclusively in the Coptic Orthodox community. During the Commission staff visit in October 2004, representatives of Eritrea's sanctioned Christian denominations complained of aggressive proselytizing by newer groups competing for the allegiance of their young people and allegedly threatening social disruption by dividing families. Government officials have equated the exclusive claims to salvation preached by some of the newer faiths with the intolerance of religious diversity taught by Islamic fundamentalists. In contrast to the

Jihadists, however, none of the charismatic or Pentecostal Christian groups is known to have engaged in or to have advocated violence.

Violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief

Unlike nearby Saudi Arabia and neighboring Sudan, Eritrea is a secular state. There is no state or official religion. Following independence in 1993, the government of Eritrea initially pursued a non-confrontational policy toward religious groups, with the exception of the Jehovah's Witnesses, treated in greater detail below. The Constitution provides strong guarantees for religious freedom. According to Article 19, "Every person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief" and "Every person shall have the freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice." Moreover, under the Constitution's guarantee of equality under the law, "no person may be discriminated against" on the basis of a number of criteria, including specifically "religion." Although the Constitution was officially ratified by Eritrea's Constituent Assembly in May 1997, the Constitution's provisions for fundamental freedoms have not been enforced.

Restrictive Registration Requirements

Starting in the late 1990's, as rising tensions and occasional incidents of violence occurred between Orthodox community members and the followers of newer Christian groups, the government began to view the latter as a potential threat to national unity. In May 2002, the government imposed a registration requirement on religious groups and ordered the closure of places of worship and the cessation of public religious activities, including worship services, pending registration. Each religious group applying for approval was required to provide detailed financial and membership information, as well as background on the group's presence in Eritrea.

Exempted from the ban and from the strict requirements for registration were four "sanctioned" faiths, probably representing over 98 percent of the population: the Eritrean Orthodox Church, Sunni Islam, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Lutheran-affiliated Evangelical Church of Eritrea. The latter two provided an umbrella for some smaller Christian groups, such as Asmara's sole Anglican church.

Affected by the ban were a number of evangelical and Pentecostal Protestant denominations, as well as the Baha'is. Although some of these groups are relatively new to Eritrea, having been introduced during Ethiopia's rule, others, such as the Kale Hiwot ("Word of Life") Church and the Baha'is, go back to the Italian colonial period.

As of this writing, the government has failed to approve any requests for registration, although some groups are known to have complied with all the requirements. Some other groups partially complied, but refused to provide names and addresses of individual members asserting concern that such personal information might be used to facilitate their arrest.

Arrests and Detentions

As a consequence of the public religious activities of those persons not belonging to officially recognized religious denominations, Eritrean security forces have disrupted private worship, have conducted mass arrests of participants at prayer meetings and other gatherings of people of faith, and have detained those arrested without charge for indefinite periods of time. Hundreds of members of unregistered churches are believed to be detained at any given time, typically

without charge, even for extended periods.^v Among those detained have been the elderly and persons in ill health.

Commission staff met with former detainees and heard first-person accounts of their incarceration. Staff heard credible reports that the security forces have used coercion on detainees to secure repudiation of their faith and such coercion has included physical mistreatment. Although Commission staff were not able to confirm such reports directly, repression of unauthorized religious activities is reported to be particularly severe in the armed forces. Almost all allegations of religious freedom violations are routinely denied or ignored by the Eritrean authorities, who have not permitted investigations by international human rights groups.

Following Eritrea's designation as a CPC, there have been several reports of new arrests and detentions in late 2004 and early 2005. Among those recently arrested were not only Evangelical or Pentecostal pastors and activists, but also a few reform-minded Orthodox and Roman Catholics. Private religious gatherings for Bible study or prayer were raided. Also reported were mass arrests, sometimes involving scores of people, at social events such as a New Year's Eve party, a wedding, and a wedding reception, whose attendees were predominantly from one or more of the unregistered religious groups.

The Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses have been the particular target of official repression, as well as societal discrimination, in Eritrea. Many in Eritrea's small community of Jehovah's Witnesses refused on religious grounds to participate in the 1993 referendum on independence or to accept the national military service required of all citizens, both male and female. Eritrea does not recognize the right of conscientious objection or provide for alternative national service not having a military component.^{vi} Some Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned, without charge, for 10 years for refusing national service.

The government chose to interpret these actions by Jehovah's Witnesses as a rejection of Eritrean citizenship, issuing a Presidential decree to this effect in October 1994. This decree ordered Jehovah's Witnesses be denied government jobs, business licenses, and government-issued identity and travel documents. Any such existing employment, license, or document was to be terminated. Lack of Eritrean identity cards effectively denies Jehovah's Witnesses a range of government services, including legal recognition of marriages and land purchases. These actions, which continue, are customarily taken without due process of law or any administrative appeal. Moreover, the requirement of a military training component for secondary school graduation effectively denies educational and employment opportunities to young Jehovah's Witnesses, encouraging many to flee their homeland.

Jehovah's Witnesses were not among the groups offered the opportunity to register when the government announced the new registration procedure in 2002. Like other unregistered groups, the Jehovah's Witnesses are not permitted public religious activities. Meetings by Jehovah's Witnesses in private homes are disrupted by the authorities.

U.S. Relations with Eritrea

U.S.-Eritrean relations have been heavily influenced by past and current U.S. ties with Ethiopia. The United States opposed self-determination for Eritrea in the early 1950's, favoring instead Eritrea's union with then Cold War ally Ethiopia. The United States quickly recognized Eritrea's independence, however, following a popular referendum in 1993. U.S. assistance had a

major emphasis on rule of law, democracy, and good governance prior to renewed hostilities with Ethiopia in 1998. In December 2000, the United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and the African Union's predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, were formal witnesses to the Algiers Peace Agreements ending the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia.^{vii} The United States is the largest financial contributor to a costly UN peacekeeping operation – the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) – separating the two armies.^{viii} The United States also has contributed substantially, and continues to do so, to ameliorate the humanitarian crisis caused by the 1998-2000 war and by prolonged drought.^{ix}

Eritrean-Ethiopian relations remain tense due to Ethiopia's refusal to permit demarcation of the boundary according to the decision of April 2002 by an independent commission based at the International Court of Justice. The generally perceived threat of Ethiopia, intensified by Ethiopia's refusal to cooperate in implementing the international decision on border demarcation, undercuts support among Eritreans for a change in the government's current authoritarian policies, including curbs on religious freedom. The current impasse could result in renewed hostilities, with potentially high human costs.

The government of Eritrea has reacted strongly to mounting criticism by the U.S. government regarding religious freedom violations. The Embassy of Eritrea in Washington has maintained publicly that the U.S. government has based its evaluation of the religious freedom situation in Eritrea on false reports fabricated by groups hostile to Eritrea. On the contrary, the Commission's findings, based on a careful consideration of the evidence, including information gathered on the October 2004 staff visit to the country, indicate that systematic and egregious violations are occurring.

The Eritrean government has recently shown some willingness to engage the U.S. government and the European Union (EU) on religious freedom issues. Although not all meeting requests were granted, Commission staff were received at a high level by the government and were briefed by the Department of Religious Affairs. The same week as the staff visit, Ambassadors of EU member countries represented in Asmara met as a group with the Department of Religious Affairs to discuss religious freedom issues within the framework of an ongoing EU-Eritrean political dialogue.

Designation of Eritrea as a Country of Particular Concern

In September 2004, the Commission welcomed the State Department's acceptance of its recommendation that Eritrea be designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA). The State Department has continued to discuss violations of freedom of religion and belief with Eritrea during an IRFA-mandated consultation period that expired on March 15. No positive steps were taken by the government of Eritrea during this consultation period. Officials have not yet registered any of the religious groups whose places of worship have been closed and public religious activities prohibited pending compliance with registration requirements imposed in 2002. The recent series of arrests and detentions without charge of clergy and others engaged in the practice of their faith has drawn renewed attention to the situation.

IRFA requires the President to take action to oppose religious freedom violations in CPC countries through a flexible menu of options provided in the statute. Such action must be taken within 180 days of CPC designation. In February 2005, the Commission recommended specific steps that the President should take, Recommendations 1 and 6 below. When the deadline to take action passed on March 15, 2005, the State Department announced that it would be asking Congress for additional time to finalize required actions under IRFA. The Commission believes

that delays in the process serve only to signal that the U.S. government does not take seriously its stated, and mandated, commitments to promote religious freedom and other human rights throughout the world.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The U.S. government should engage in vigorous advocacy on religious freedom and other universal human rights at all levels of involvement with the government of Eritrea and draw international attention to religious freedom abuses in Eritrea, including in multilateral fora such as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Recommendation 2. The U.S. government should urge the government of Eritrea to undertake the following actions to improve the religious freedom situation in that country:

- Implementation of the Constitution's existing guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice;
- Institution of a registration process for religious groups that is transparent, non-discriminatory, not overly burdensome, and otherwise in accordance with international standards;
- Prompt registration of those religious groups that comply with the requirements issued in 2002; religious groups should not be required to provide identifying information on individual members;
- Official, public action by the Eritrean authorities to permit religious groups to resume their public religious activities pending registration, including reopening of places of worship closed by the ban in 2002;
- Issuance of a public order to the security forces reminding them that religious practice is not to be interfered with except in those circumstances permitted by international law;
- Release of detainees held solely on account of their peaceful religious activities; and
- Increased engagement by the Eritrean authorities with the international community regarding respect for freedom of religion or belief, including by making an official invitation for visits by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief and by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Recommendation 3. The U.S. government should encourage unofficial dialogue with Eritreans on religious freedom issues, specifically by:

- The promotion of visits to Eritrea by U.S. leaders concerned with freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief in order to meet with Eritrean authorities and other opinion-makers and to facilitate dialogue among all Eritrea's religious communities;
- The expanded use of educational and cultural exchanges, such as the Fulbright Program, the International Visitor Program, and lectures by visiting American

scholars and experts, in order to introduce more Eritreans to the workings and benefits of societies in which religious freedom and other human rights are respected; and

- Support for a conference that would bring together international experts, government officials, and representatives of international organizations, religious communities, and civil society to discuss international human rights standards and best practices related to a) the registration of religious organizations and b) conscientious objection to military service.

Recommendation 4. The U.S. government should seek the cooperation of other countries in promoting greater understanding by Eritreans of international standards regarding freedom of religion or belief.

Recommendation 5. In order to expand Eritrean citizens' currently limited access to remedies for human rights violations, the U.S. government should support, and offer to provide funding for, the creation of an independent human rights commission in Eritrea, in line with the Paris Principles^x for such organizations, including independence, adequate funding, a representative character, and a broad mandate that includes freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief.

Recommendation 6. The U.S. government should conduct a review of development assistance to Eritrea with the aim of redirecting such assistance to programs that contribute directly to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Increases in other forms of development assistance should depend on measurable improvements in religious freedom, including those outlined in Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 7. The U.S. government should intensify international efforts to resolve the current impasse between Eritrea and Ethiopia regarding implementation of the boundary demarcation as determined by the "final and binding" decision of the International Boundary Commission established following the 1998-2000 war.^{xi}

ⁱ Although precise figures are unavailable, Eritrea may have suffered 100,000 casualties and a million internally displaced persons, in addition to the costs of integrating as many as 75,000 Eritreans or persons of Eritrean background expelled by Ethiopia.

ⁱⁱ Eritrea ranks 156th on the United Nations Human Development Index of 177 countries surveyed. The Index is available on-line at http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/indic/indic_12_1_1.html.

ⁱⁱⁱ Exact figures are unavailable. Eritrean identity documents do not indicate religious affiliation.

^{iv} An international political movement founded in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood advocates that the state should be based on Islamic law. Some factions of the Muslim Brotherhood have engaged in violence.

^v Most detainees are subsequently released. Typically no charges are brought, whatever the length of the detention. Statements made to Commission staff by unregistered church leaders in Asmara tracked closely with the State

Department's 2004 International Religious Freedom Report, which states "There are numerous credible reports that over 400 members of non-sanctioned religious groups have been detained or imprisoned. Government restrictions make it difficult to determine the precise number of current religious prisoners, but it is likely over 200."

^{vi} Many Jehovah's Witnesses object to military service on religious grounds but would accept alternative civilian service. For international standards on conscientious objection to military service see *Civil and Political Rights, including the Question of Conscientious Objection to Military Service*, Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2004/55, February 16, 2004; United Nations Commission on Human Rights, *Conscientious Objection to Military Service*, UN Doc. E/CN.4/Res/1998/77, April 22, 1998; Human Rights Committee, *General Comment 22 (48) (Art. 18)*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4 (1993), ¶11, July 30, 1993.

^{vii} UN Doc. A/55/686-S/2000/1183.

^{viii} With a current strength of 3875 military personnel, 233 international civilians, and 262 local civilians, UNMEE has an annual budget of over \$200 million. The United States pays 27 percent of the cost of UN peacekeeping operations. Further information on UNMEE is available at www.unmeeonline.org.

^{ix} According to the State Department's March 2005 *Background Note* for Eritrea, "In FY 2004, the United States provided over \$65 million in humanitarian aid to Eritrea, including \$58.1 million in food assistance and \$3.47 million in refugee support."

^x Principles Relating to the Status and Functioning of National Institutions for Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, found in the Annex to *Fact Sheet No. 19, National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights*, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (<http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu6/2/fs19.htm>, accessed January 31, 2005).

^{xi} See United Nations Security Council Resolution 1586, March 14, 2005, UN Doc. S/RES/1586 (2005): "The Security Council...calls on the witnesses to the Algiers Agreements to play a more concerted and active role to facilitate their full implementation." A U.S. contribution to the peaceful resolution of the border dispute would give the U.S. government greater leverage with Eritrea on reforms, including on religious freedom issues.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. And I would like to make one additional comment to your comments, Mr. Chairman, and that is, you know, for the vast majority of Eritrean citizens who are members of the traditional Christian Coptic Church or the Muslim sect, Eritrea is a model for intercommunal harmony and mutual respect. The issues of the registration of the religious groups, the three religious groups, as well as the detention of members of religious groups has been a major concern to us, and we have raised these issues with the Government of Eritrea, and we will, Mr. Chairman, continue forthrightly and judiciously on this issue.

Mr. SMITH. I appreciate that. Very often we have seen this in other countries. The registration requirement is a pretext for discrimination and for repression.

Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And just in regard to that, I agree that any kind of discrimination on a religious basis is wrong. However, as I indicated, I think that it is not the size of the country that I base my judgment, that I think that Eritrea is being put in the same light as the PRC in China and Sudan, is that the record there has been that there has been a religious tolerance. If there has been some problems recently with some new religions that have come in, it would appear to me rather than to thrust Eritrea into the category of a Sudan or a China, that it would appear that we could perhaps have some dialogue, have some discussions, try to ascertain why this was happening; not to condone it, but to see if you have had centuries of coexistence, well, what is new, what is different, why this turn in policy?

I am the first to condemn wrongdoings; however, I think that we don't put things on the same level. We have, as we all know, the biggest deficit of trade with China. We have opened all of our trade to China. We have allowed China to flood our country: 1,800 percent increase in January in the importation of trousers from China, 1,200 percent—100 percent—not double, 1,200 percent; 1,800 percent in the increase in importation from China of shirts. However, we restrict Eritrea from being in the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) simply to say maybe you can start a factory to try to get an industry going to make a few shirts that you may export perhaps to the U.S., not billions and billions of dollars.

So my only point was that this is gravity. It is sort of like Dante's Inferno. You know, there are seven levels of purgatory. I think if you put Eritrea on the same level of Sudan and China, and not try to have some negotiations, then I think that we are overreacting and are moving in the wrong direction.

So I just wanted to clarify, and I appreciate the Chairman's position; however, I maintain that I think that it was too harsh. And secondly, to eliminate Eritrea from AGOA, when China actually executes people, where they don't in Eritrea, but we open the floodgates, they can trade as much as they want. I am just simply looking for some balance in our policies around the world.

Let me just go on to a question. It is in regard to the special envoy. I recall that, I think, the Secretary-General Kofi Annan went, as has been indicated by the Chairman, at—Lloyd Axworthy was appointed as a special envoy. In talking to President Isaias, I

asked well, why would you reject a special envoy, and I think that he explained to me that he was just wondering what the responsibilities of the special envoy would be, that it was a decision that was binding, the decision was not accepted by Ethiopia. So, therefore, if the meeting with Kofi Annan did not come to any conclusions, then what would a person under him, like a special envoy, be able to achieve? I think that the concern was that the envoy would be there to try to renegotiate the Commission's report.

Did you get any of that when you were at the meeting with Kofi Annan? And did you kind of get that feeling that this is an attempt to make us change our acceptance of the Border Commission and to really allow it to be renegotiated? I think the example of Nigeria and Cameroon was cited, which was a bad example, because there were not similar determinations by The Hague.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Let me start with the latter point. In our conversations with Mr. Axworthy and both sides, the Boundary Commission decision was characterized by both Ethiopia and Eritrea as final and binding prior to the decision. It is not because we have determined that, the parties have.

So we support their decision. In that context, we have stated that our position in the international community is to ensure that both parties can implement that decision. Now, Eritrea has come out, from the very beginning, to say they accept the Boundary Commission decision. Ethiopia has demurred. But as of last November they said they accept it in principle.

Whether or not that could be—that probably could be the start of a dialogue between the two countries or of just normalizing relations. That is an issue between the two countries. Our position is that because both sides have concurred that it is a final and binding decision, then that is what we will hold those parties to.

The issue is on the envoy. Again, as I said before, Lloyd Axworthy is basically the coordinator, looking at how he—how the United Nations and international community can bring those sides together and move the peace process forward to a very successful and peaceful conclusion.

Let me just add, Congressman Payne, I agree with you totally 100 percent on your first comments, that we have a deep and important relationship with both Ethiopia and Eritrea. You have two very valued, important allies, not only on the global area of terrorism but on a wide range of bilateral issues, which is very robust and vibrant and very important.

You have two leaders who are perhaps the most intelligent, the brightest, the most gifted, talented leaders you can imagine to head countries, and you have people who are very dedicated, devoted, dynamic. It is not our intention to sanction or to seek sanctions against both countries, it is to work with those countries and to help these countries improve and work cooperatively, peacefully in what is perhaps both our national interests, which is regional peace, economic development and stability.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, I think that perhaps the—and I can't speak for the President, although I had a discussion with him—perhaps the manner in which the special envoy, I think that the initial reaction was that here is a special envoy to try to get me to back down from the decision that we won, that we both said

we would agree to both Ethiopia and Eritrea's. So I think perhaps the manner in which it was introduced is here, perhaps here is one who will perhaps try to get you to change your position. Unfortunately, you know, first impressions are sometimes even misunderstood. I think what you say makes a lot of sense.

However, I think that his reaction was that they want me to say this binding decision, I should not accept it, when we agreed we would.

So, just on the other side, and on Ethiopia, the five-point plan. Now, initially, as we indicated, Ethiopia said that they would not accept the Boundary Commission report. I have been back and forth in correspondence, personal meetings with both of these leaders, both of whom, as you characterize, are bright, intelligent, and worked together for many years.

And let me say one other thing. Neither of them want war, that is clear. Now, they may not say it publicly, but both are intelligent enough to know that another war is devastating to both countries. They know what their needs are. They know what their problems are, and I think both of them are trying to figure out how we can get around this without going to war. They don't want war. Of course, the way they behave sometimes doesn't seem to live up to that. But internally, neither one of them—and they know what the consequences are, because they have been through war for decades.

The five-point plan that Ethiopia for the first time saying that we agree in principle—and perhaps trying to get Ethiopia to accept the agreement, I once suggested to Prime Minister Isaias that maybe he should—that perhaps he ought to accept it in principle and then move forward on many little things. And perhaps the problem is that I suggested something that he did, and now he is in more trouble, because they want to know, well, what do you mean in principle? But it was a step away from denial or lack of any kind of recognition of the agreement.

The five-point plan goes forward, it talks about participating financially, it talks about other things. So in your opinion, is this somewhat of a move and something that we can try to work with Ethiopia on continuing to try to move forward with the five-point plan?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Congressman Payne, you have the gift of being a very good facilitator for both Ethiopia and Eritrea. I know in our discussions that both leaders have always praised you. If there is anyone who can move both sides, perhaps you can. One of the issues on the five-point plan is when it was made in November, we did not make any comments, not because we did not think it merited discussion, it does. Anything that either leader states merits discussion and is positive. The issue is that on this border issue the audience is not the United States or the international community. The audience is each other, that Ethiopia must direct its issues with Eritrea directly and vice versa.

To say the five-point plan is bad or lacks merit or positive issues, it does. But that is an issue for both Prime Minister Meles and President Isaias to discuss, and in that context we would support any communications or positive discussions they would have between them.

Again, all our position is to find any way to move the peace process forward and to see how we can implement this decision.

Mr. PAYNE. Well, thank you very much. I think I have exhausted my time. But in conclusion I, one, would certainly like to commend you for the work that you have done, very respected in the region and very skilled at your job also. Perhaps I need to—although I am criticized by the press for traveling, perhaps I need to get back on the plane again and visit my two good friends and perhaps continue our dialogue. As I indicated, neither wants war. Both are very proud, as you know. It is somehow that we need to try to move them both a bit.

I think that Badame is almost secondary now. I think even President Isaias could say they could put five flags up there if they want to. Ethiopia, Eritrea, anyone else. You know, it is not so much of an issue as it was, and I think the same thing with Ethiopia, when I went there and talked with the people. There were people who came from Eritrea, people who talked who were from Ethiopia and talked about the tree near the hut that their grandfather built. So they have both been there a very long period of time.

Again it is about going over some mountain range or over the pond and through the mountains where these border disputes occur, as I said, by virtual people who really didn't foul things up many, many years ago.

So I am just ending with the hope that we, one, can avoid war, I am consistent about the avoidance of war, because it is horrible. I do think that we should continue to try to engage both of these leaders in order to try to avoid war.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I would just like to understand a little bit more about the dispute. You know, we have a situation, I have heard it from the countries, but we have a dispute where you know we have binding arbitration that both sides agree and then, you know, one side, Eritrea, said they would accept it. Ethiopia says they will in principle, and then it is not getting done.

What is it about the settlement? Are there villages that are on the line that they are concerned about? Is there some natural resource that one side or the other would like to have, or is it just using it as a reason to perhaps go to war, if you want to go to war? Is it the populations of Ethiopia, whatever, that they, you know, politically is something that can't be done? I guess I would like to understand your view, exactly, on what the hangup is.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Well, Congressman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Or all of those.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. That actually is a complex issue. If we can understand that, I think we can understand the fundamental issues which divide both Ethiopia and Eritrea, because this is a tragedy, a national tragedy and regional and international tragedy, and it is a tragedy in our relationship with both countries.

When I was the Charge in Eritrea and we saw the Ethiopian jets coming in for the bombing run on the airport in Asmara, which significantly—just started outwardly the conflict between the two countries, the issue is that—is it the issue of the border or is it

something further down? Is it reflective of fundamental issues such as the economy? Before the conflict on the border, you had exchange currencies on both sides, development of a new Birr and a new Nakfa for Eritrea.

There are different aspirations for the regional issues, all these issues coming together and focusing on the town of Badame, which if you visited the area is really not very much of value, economically speaking.

So the causes are complex, the ropes for the division remain very complex, and it is not a precise answer. I defer you to other experts who will be your witnesses here, like Ambassador David Shinn and others. But, yes, it is the border, and on the one hand it is not the border, it is also about the relationship as a whole and the principle between the two countries that is focused on this border.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Mr. PAYNE. Just one little technical point. That bombing did come from Ethiopia. However, that followed Eritrea pushing Ethiopia authorities out of Badame, which Ethiopia felt was an attack on them, even though, as we know, the disputed town—I am not saying that the bombing was justified or Eritrea coming in and replacing the Ethiopian authorities and pushing Ethiopia out of Badame was right. But that was the first action, and this overwhelming overkill reaction from the Air Force of Eritrea.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. I apologize. I stand corrected on that issue, Mr. Congressman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Chairman, I would just say that if the Ranking Member would like to get on a plane and go over, I certainly would not be critical of his efforts as far as travel.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask one final question, if I could. The Administration is proposing to give a substantial amount of money to Ethiopia under the transition initiatives accounts.

Mr. Secretary, does this conflict with the prohibition on the provision of certain forms of assistance to any country failing to comply with the Algiers Agreement? And is it your view that Ethiopia has complied with the Algiers Agreement by agreeing in principle to the border decision? Is that sufficient?

I don't remember one way or another, but was there a national interest waiver that may have been invoked—is that why the legislation is not being implemented?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. This is on which accounts?

Mr. SMITH. The transition initiatives account.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. You know, for a full answer, I would have to get back to you on precisely the explanation for that. It is only a request. We have not allocated yet.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just ask one final question. Human Rights Watch and their statement makes it pretty clear that political dissent is now totally suppressed in Eritrea. In Ethiopia, the human rights situation is much more mixed. Does your information comport with that as well?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. I am sorry?

Mr. SMITH. That in Eritrea political dissent is, just to quote it accurately, "totally suppressed in Eritrea." This is the *Human*

Rights Report. And in Ethiopia the human rights situation is much more mixed.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. All right. In Ethiopia it is mixed. We can go into greater details on the issues of the election process, the opposition, formation, et cetera. In Eritrea also, again, it is a very mixed picture as well. I refer you to our *Human Rights Report* that was issued this year, which articulates the situation in both countries.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. One other thing. In terms of scenarios, obviously, we have got to be looking at worst case scenarios should war break out. Could you give us any insights as to what might happen? In Ethiopia, as we know and one of our witnesses will say later, 80 percent of the Ethiopians are living on \$1 a day. Obviously, both of these countries have very severe problems associated with poverty, HIV/AIDS and other issues of impoverishment. This can only exacerbate and make things significantly worse, lead to more displaced people internally or refugees, and obviously lead to a diversion of scarce wherewithal within each country that should be used for humanitarian, educational and other purposes.

This to me seems to be one of the ugliest growing scenarios in Africa, and I am not sure a tourniquet is being put on this by the international community. I am not sure it can be, but it is all of our hope collectively—and that is why we called this hearing. I even gleaned from my meeting with the Eritrean Ambassador to the U.S. a very, very stiff-necked approach. He said they have agreed that this would be binding, this Border Commission finding, and that is it.

Well, I agree that it is binding or should be binding, but, is it worth losing tens of thousands of your 18- and 19- and 20-year-olds and all the men and women and children, the innocents and children who will be killed as a result? I don't think so.

So are we doing enough? Let me ask one other thing. Would a special envoy from the United States have any worth or value in this effort as well?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Mr. Chairman, as a matter of fact, your interest and holding these hearings and also your prior focus on this area, that in itself has helped bring focus on—for the international community and also to both countries. Yes, it is a hypothetical issue, what would happen if there is conflict or if there is not conflict. We have gone over, as you have, as has Congressman Payne and the other Members have, on the consequences of conflict and war.

What we would do, or what the international community would do in case of conflict, that is an issue we have discussed. But, again, it depends on the circumstance and the situation. But you are quite right. Whatever happens in a war, it is going to be devastating. Just the mere fact of insurances for ships to come in to Djibouti to provide food, let us say, or Massawa and Massab. That is one area. That is a continuation of our programs in education and health care. It would disrupt—everything would be disrupted and it would be a detriment to both countries.

An American envoy, we discussed that in our interagency process. Last year the decision was in concert with the Secretary-General that the Canadian Foreign Minister would be the envoy. We have not discussed anything as an alternative to that at all.

Mr. SMITH. Is there an active review right now, given the escalating or spiraling-down situation there?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Well, we review the situation on the ground constantly every day, and we discuss it with, well, Mr. Axworthy, but also with our allies and with the countries itself, and so it is in a continuation, I guess, of flexible response.

Mr. SMITH. Could you provide the Committee with a little insight as to what his day would be like? I mean, is he in the country? Is he still in Canada? I mean, how frequently does he get in contact with both governments or at least try to get in contact with Eritrea?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Well, Mr. Axworthy, as you know, is now the President of Winnipeg University. Given his responsibilities there, and also—well, he makes frequent trips to Ethiopia, to Europe to speak with the European colleagues and also with the African Union. He still remains, with request in hand, to go through Eritrea, which so far he has not. We in the United States remain in almost, I wouldn't say daily, but in weekly contact with him.

Mr. SMITH. Does he have the flexibility to drop everything, including his duties at the college, university?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Oh, yes, for this he is committed if there is any opportunity for him to play even a greater or more productive role.

Mr. SMITH. Is he waiting for a callback, or is he continuing to make the entreaties?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. He is continuing to meet with us and the Europeans and the African Union, and he just made a trip to Ethiopia.

Mr. SMITH. Right. I know that.

Don, do you have anything?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes, just one question regarding the elections. There, as you have mentioned, the IRI and NDI have both been expelled from Ethiopia in addition to IFES, a lot of instances. One, IRI or NDI, would get expelled, but rarely do both get out at the same time.

However, what do you think the rationale is—let me say it before, I preface my remarks, I met with the elections commission. To be honest, I could not have met with a more distinguished group of individual people anywhere in the world, professional people, very sophisticated, very intelligent men and women, very proud and independent people, in my opinion. So the elections commissioners as individuals, and collectively, seem to be dedicated—extensive notes, handbooks, and et cetera. Of course, it wasn't the commission that expelled these groups. It was the government.

So I wonder, in your opinion, how could IRI, NDI and IFES be expelled but the Carter Center remain? Is there any rationale that you have other than that they say they weren't registered? Of course, the only reason they weren't registered is because they wouldn't register them. But how do you figure that out? Did President Carter visit Ethiopia one time or what is the difference between the four groups and the rationale for one being—and I am glad the Carter Center is still there, and I think AU and others, but why these three, in your opinion?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. It is very—well, it is troubling, yes, and it is also confusing. This is, we believe, the first time that these organizations have been expelled from any country. We defer to the govern-

ment of Ethiopia, as we have explained to them directly, that the government of Ethiopia needs to explain its reasons behind this decision to expel these three organizations. We can speculate here, but it really remains for the Ethiopian Government to explain in detail.

Mr. SMITH. Will my friend yield on that?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. Has the Carter Center in any way made an intervention on behalf of the three expelled NGOs or groups?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. I would imagine so but I have not been in contact with them.

Mr. SMITH. Would you provide it for the record?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. It has been my experience, with all respect to the Carter Center, that when they find elections that some of us would find appalling, they give them the thumbs up.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes. But we have—from the U.S. Government side, we have been in complete contact with the Ethiopians.

Mr. PAYNE. Yes. Just another sort of domestic issue on Ethiopia. I know they have started a move to move people to more fertile land, I think it is—probably the government felt that, you know, a country of 60 million people, and people living in an area need to be moved to a place where they could better function. How is that going on, and has there been internal opposition, or has it been accepted as an a necessity?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. The resettlement program by Ethiopia is an Ethiopian Government plan. It is not a U.S. or international—

Mr. PAYNE. I know it is a Ethiopian Government plan.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Again, how—I would have to refer you to our USAID explaining precisely—how that is playing, the results of it.

But, again, the looming famine, because we are not in a famine situation yet, but it is looming, it is on the horizon, and we are catching it early. This is the third crisis in the last 5 to 6 years, not only from the drought, but policies, by the government, actions and activities.

You are correct, Mr. Congressman, that this is an issue that we need to have a much more comprehensive approach to, to get not only a handle on it but ways and solutions to resolve it, of course, committing to economic reforms by the government, policy restructuring, et cetera. So those are issues that we are still discussing.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Secretary, thank you very much, and we look forward to hearing back from you on some of those remaining questions that were raised. I appreciate everything that you are doing on behalf of our country. Thank you.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. I would like to now welcome our second panelists, beginning with David Shinn, currently Adjunct Professor at the Elliott School at George Washington University. Ambassador Shinn served 37 years in the U.S. Foreign Service at seven Embassies in Africa and one in the Middle East, including as Ambassador to Burkina Faso from 1987 to 1990 and Ethiopia from 1996 to 1999.

Most of his service in the State Department in Washington concerned Africa, including State Department Coordinator for Somalia

during the U.S. and U.N. Intervention and Director of East African Affairs. He continues to work on development in HIV/AIDS issues with a half dozen nongovernmental issues in the Horn of Africa and lectures around the world on a variety of topics concerning Africa, especially the Horn. He coauthored in 2004, *A Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*.

We will then hear from Michael Clough, who is the Interim Advocacy Director for the African Division of the Human Rights Watch. Prior to his work with Human Rights Watch from 1997 to 2001, he was a research associate at the University of California's Institute of International Studies. From 1980 to 1987, Dr. Clough taught International Affairs and African Politics at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. From 1986 to 1987, he served as the Study Director of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on South Africa. From 1987 to 1997, he was Senior Fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations, where he conducted the CFR's African Studies Program. He is author of numerous books and articles, including *Free at Last?: U.S. Policy Toward Africa and the End of the Cold War*, which was published in 1992, "Grass-Roots Policymaking: Say Good-Bye to the 'Wise Men'," *Foreign Affairs* in 1994. And *Darfur: Whose Responsibility to Protect?*, which was HRW's war report, 2005.

Then we will hear from Dave Peterson, who is the Director of the Africa Program of the National Endowment for Democracy. Since 1988, Dave Peterson has been responsible for NED's program to identify and assist hundreds of African nongovernmental organizations and activists working for democracy and human rights, free press, justice and peace.

He is formerly Director of Project South Africa, of the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund and a freelance journalist in Africa and Turkey. He has visited more than 40 African countries since 1984 and has published numerous articles on African politics.

Mr. Shinn, if you could begin, Mr. Ambassador, sir.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DAVID SHINN, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, ELLIOT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Mr. SHINN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have submitted a lengthier paper. I would like to pick and choose a few of the items that I mentioned in that paper and then reserve as much time as possible for questions and answers.

The point that I begin and end the paper with is that the relationship between Ethiopia and the United States—and I am focusing primarily on Ethiopia, it is a country that I know much better than Eritrea—is a very long one and a very complex one. I think it is always a mistake to try to pigeonhole that relationship in the context of any particular problem or issue, because there are so many of them.

You have the Ethiopian democratization process, which is very important to them, and it is important to the United States. You have the Ethiopian-Eritrean boundary problem, a current and troublesome issue. But you also have other regional issues that are ongoing. You have trade, you have counterterrorism, you have U.S.

assistance and you have food emergencies. All of these get wrapped up in a very complex web.

I have gone to some length in the paper to point out why Ethiopia is important, on the one hand, and why it has some significant challenges on the other. I am not going to get into those for the sake of time. Let me move quickly to the first issue that I cite, the democratization issue. You have others on the panel who will certainly get into that in more detail than I will.

The May 15th national elections constitute the most important upcoming event in Ethiopia. The way the election is conducted and the outcome will tell us much about the progress or lack thereof on democratization in the country.

The runup to the election has had both positive and negative developments. So far the positives have been, I would argue, more significant than the negatives. There has been a lively discussion in the media, representing all points of view. There have been a few debates between the ruling party on the one hand and some of the opposition parties on the other.

The government invited outside organizations to observe the campaign period and the actual election. More than 300 international observers are present in the country or soon will be there, including more than 200 from the European Union, representing their third largest delegation ever overseas. But on the other hand, the ruling party views are still the prevailing ones by far in the government-controlled radio and television.

In April, the National Election Board published new rules that said local groups must be registered as election observers at the time that they were originally created before they could function in the role of observers in the May election. This ruled out many of the groups. They took the matter to the high court, which recently overturned that governmental decision. The government is appealing and it is not clear whether it will be sorted out before the May 15th election.

The government did agree to consider registering about 10 local groups that met the election observer criteria at the time of their original incorporation.

More inexplicably, as you have already commented on, the government asked three American organizations to leave the country on short notice because they allegedly had not properly registered. This decision, frankly, has done some harm to the United States-Ethiopian relationship. But at the same time the government, as you also noted, invited the Carter delegation with about 50 members to participate in the observer process.

With the election only a week-and-a-half away, it is pointless at this juncture to try to judge the impact as to what is likely to happen. We will know soon enough. We will know in terms of what the international observers tell us about the process of the election on the one hand and, more tellingly, we will learn about the results of the election.

If, for example, there are gains by opposition and independent members, that will be very telling indeed. But let us wait and find out, and I don't make any predictions, except that I think it is probably safe to assume the EPRDF governing party will win a majority.

Perhaps the most contentious issue of the day is the one that this session is actually focused on the dispute over the demarcation of the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The problem is much greater than a demarcation question. It is really the totality of the Ethiopian-Eritrean relationship going back until at least 1991.

In the ideal situation, Ethiopia would accept the binding arbitration of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission, and the two countries would then start resolving all of their numerous problems. But like so many interstate issues today, this is not the ideal situation. The United States is working with the hand that it was dealt in terms of trying to ameliorate the problem.

Prime Minister Meles proposed on November 25th of last year a five-point peace plan that you are aware of, saying among other things that Ethiopia accepts in principle the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission position. This was a change in policy, I would argue, at least in terms of opening a crack in the door.

But the same statement went on to note that dialogue should begin immediately, with the goal of implementing the Boundary Commission's decision. Eritrea quickly rejected the five-point plan as nothing new and took the position that demarcation should take place first followed by dialogue. That was the obverse of the Ethiopian position and the deadlock continues.

The problem has been complicated recently by suggestions from the Eritrean side that Ethiopia's unwillingness to accept the demarcation decision will lead to war. I would argue that there is certainly no reason why Ethiopia would want to initiate war. One, it holds those border territories that are in dispute; that is, it physically is holding them. Two, the United Nation's buffer force continues to monitor and sit on the 15-mile buffer zone, all of which is inside territory administered by Eritrea prior to the outbreak of war in 1998.

Frankly, I don't think that Ethiopia wants to risk the opprobrium of the international community by attacking Eritrea. I would argue that applies to Eritrea, too. I don't think they want to incur the wrath of the international community.

In response to your earlier question, Mr. Chairman, as to whether war is imminent, frankly, I would argue it is not. I think there is always the possibility that a mistake, some sort of a foolish group doing something stupid, could lead to war. That is true, and I don't deny that, but I don't think the likelihood of that is great. Certainly, I don't think war is imminent.

What has to happen now, in terms of pushing this thing forward, is an end to the public slanging match. There will be no solution to this issue so long as you have a public slanging match. Both sides unfortunately engage in it.

Only quiet, behind the scenes discussions, preferably assisted by the good offices of an outside party acceptable to both governments, will help achieve a solution. If it isn't done quietly and behind the scenes without any public discussion whatsoever, I just don't think it is going to happen.

Turning briefly to a couple of other issues that have already been touched on, one is the current food needs of Ethiopia that were announced yesterday. This is a very important part of the United States-Ethiopian relationship. This is obviously one more setback

in terms of what is going on in the region. Indeed, the food needs on a proportional basis are probably even greater in Eritrea.

I think you will be hearing there will be additional needs in Somalia, where there will be food deficits this year and probably even minor ones in Kenya and Djibouti. So that is one of the issues that has to be kept into the back of one's mind in terms of dealing with the Ethiopian-United States relationship.

Another one that has been mentioned today is the counterterrorism issue. You are certainly aware that the State Department *Report on Terrorism* for 2004 stated that Ethiopia's support for the global war on terrorism has been consistently solid and unwavering.

There are trade issues that are less significant in the grand scheme of things. Ethiopian Airlines signed an agreement with Boeing last month for the purchase of five Boeing 787 aircraft over the next 3 years with an option to purchase five more. The list goes on and on.

Let me stop there, Mr. Chairman, and I will be happy to take questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shinn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DAVID SHINN, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR,
ELLIOT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

The official U.S.-Ethiopian relationship hit a bump in the road last fall and both sides are still trying to regain their equilibrium. The proximate cause was Ethiopian unhappiness over U.S. silence on Prime Minister Meles' five-point plan for ending the disagreement concerning the demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border. But there were a number of other issues that preceded and followed that event. This was not the first setback in relations and it will not be the last. In fact, if you review official ties going back to 1903, they are marked by regular disagreements irrespective of the governments in Addis Ababa and Washington. Each time in the past the two countries overcame their differences, although it took the better part of seventeen years in the case of the Derg government that ruled from 1974 to 1991. In the grand scheme of things, the current tiff is pretty minor.

Since the outbreak of World War II, relations between the U.S. and Ethiopia have been consistently important and unusually complex. It is a mistake to assess the ties in the context of any single issue such as the Ethiopian democratization process, the Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute, other regional issues, trade, counterterrorism, U.S. assistance or food emergencies. All of these questions and more form a complicated mixture that can not be disaggregated easily. Eventually, the most recent downturn will pass and the basic strength of Ethiopian-American relations will reassert itself.

Before commenting on the current situation, let me explain briefly why Ethiopia is important to the U.S. Ethiopia is critical to stability or instability in the Horn of Africa. If you have stability in Ethiopia, it will improve the prospect for stability elsewhere in the region. If you have instability, it will almost guarantee instability in one or more neighboring country. Ethiopia is the key to the Horn. The Horn serves as the back door to the Middle East. The Middle East is essential to greater Western interests.

Ethiopia is the 16th most populous country in the world today. According to the World Bank, in 2002 Ethiopia passed Egypt as the second most populous country in Africa after Nigeria. The United Nations Population Division projects that by 2050 Ethiopia will become the 9th most populous country in the world after Brazil.

Ethiopia has one of the strongest military organizations in Africa. Unlike most armies on the continent, it is battle tested. Because of its large population, it has a significant pool of young men to draw from in order to ramp up its military. Among African countries, Ethiopia has an impressive air power capability. It has comported itself well in UN peacekeeping operations dating back to Korea in the 1950s, the Congo in the early 1960s, the India-Pakistan Observation Mission and more recently in Rwanda, Liberia, and Burundi. It has one of the more efficient and effective internal security and intelligence systems on the continent.

For more than 100 years, with the exception of the Derg government that accepted far more Soviet loans for military equipment than it could ever hope to repay, Ethiopia has operated under a generally conservative fiscal policy. During the 1998–2000 war with Eritrea, it surprised many outsiders by coming up with cash squirreled away in special accounts to help pay the cost of war. As a result of this conservative policy and with the help of the international community during times of famine, Ethiopia has been able to survive some sharp economic shocks. Addis Ababa also serves as the headquarters for the African Union and Economic Commission for Africa, making it a center for Africa-wide diplomacy.

There is a large Ethiopian diaspora in the U.S. and the numbers continue to grow significantly each year as a result of the diversity visa program and family members joining those already here. The diaspora remains strongly divided on developments and issues inside Ethiopia. Increasingly, however, whether Ethiopian-Americans agree or disagree with the government in Addis Ababa, they are contributing by means of remittances and support for non-governmental organizations in a positive way to developments back home. Certain congressional districts have learned that they must pay close attention to their Ethiopian-American constituencies.

Ethiopia also faces some serious challenges. It must reverse almost two millennia of autocratic rule, albeit often benign, before it can become a truly democratic country. Three rounds of national parliamentary elections (the third one taking place this month) since the current government took power in 1991 will not completely reverse this historical pattern.

Following the independence of Eritrea, Ethiopia became a land-locked country. In fact, it became the most populous land-locked country in the world. This has exacerbated its economic problems, which were serious enough even when it had a coast line. The break in relations with Eritrea following the 1998 war, now works to the detriment of both countries. Ethiopia, Sudan, and Eritrea have a history of supporting opposition groups in neighboring countries. Although this is not occurring now between Ethiopia and Sudan, it is taking place in the case of Eritrea. Ethiopia supports a coalition of Eritrean organizations opposed to the government in Asmara while the Oromo Liberation Front has its headquarters in and operates out of Eritrea.

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to the World Bank, 82 percent of Ethiopia's population lives on less than one dollar per day. This is a very high percentage even for Africa. These statistics can be, however, misleading in the case of an agricultural country like Ethiopia that depends heavily on a barter economy where the informal economy does not enter official statistics. Ethiopian life expectancy is 10th from the bottom for all of Africa. Even Sudan and Somalia have a higher life expectancy. On the other hand, Zambia, Botswana, and Mali have a lower life expectancy than Ethiopia. Per capita GDP is 6th from the bottom for all of Africa. But Ethiopia is still ahead of countries like Tanzania and Malawi. Ethiopia's very large and overwhelmingly rural population (85 percent) tends to make the per capita statistics appear a little worse than they really are. Poverty is a huge problem, but it is important to keep it in perspective.

Ethiopia continues to experience serious, periodic food shortages and at more frequent intervals. It is unable to feed its entire people even in a good crop year. There is a structural food deficit in the country that affects about five million people annually. At 2.5 percent, Ethiopia has a relatively high population growth rate. This adds to the difficulty of achieving food security and economic growth. It depends heavily on one crop-coffee-for foreign exchange income. This also limits its ability to expand the economy, especially when the international price for coffee drops. To some extent chat, a narcotic, is replacing coffee as the cash crop of choice because it brings in more money for the farmer. But chat is contributing to social problems in Ethiopia.

HIV/AIDS is a major problem. Ethiopia has more HIV positive citizens than any country in the world except South Africa, India, and Nigeria. Nevertheless, the adult prevalence rate is about 5 percent, relatively low by African standards. The good news is that 90 percent of Ethiopians are still HIV-free and the country is now taking major steps to deal with the pandemic.

Like most African countries, Ethiopia has its share of ethnic tension. The Oromo Liberation Front and Ogadeni National Liberation Front continue their campaigns against the government. Ethnic conflict in Gambela during the past two years underscores the fragility of the situation in western Ethiopia and traditional Somali-Afar conflict has the same effect in southeastern Ethiopia. Ethiopia is located on a Christian-Islamic fault line with almost half of the population now being Muslim. Ethiopia has managed so far to avoid serious religious conflict, but the potential exists for problems to develop. Both of these situations contribute to long-standing human rights violations.

On balance Ethiopia has important strengths and worrisome weaknesses. Although Ethiopia does not have Nigeria's oil, South Africa's economic power or Egypt's political clout, it has sufficient other positive characteristics and a long history of close ties with the U.S. to put it in the top rank of African countries of interest to Washington.

The May 15 national elections constitute the most important upcoming event in Ethiopia. The way the election is conducted and the outcome will tell us much about the progress or lack thereof on democratization in the country. Some 35 parties are contesting at least some seats in the 547-member lower house known as the Council of People's Representatives. Voters will also elect representatives in nine regional state parliaments that will, in turn, appoint members of the 112-seat upper house known as the Council of Federation. The ruling party and affiliated groups now hold 519 of the 547 seats in the lower house.

The run-up to the election has had both positive and negative developments. So far, the positives have been more important than the negatives. There has been a lively discussion in the media representing all points of view. There have been a few debates involving the government party and some of the opposition parties. The government invited outside organizations to observe the campaign period and actual election. More than 300 international observers will be present, including about 200 from the European Union. This is the third largest EU delegation ever assembled after the one sent to Indonesia and Nigeria.

On the other hand, ruling party views still prevail on government-controlled radio and television. In April the National Election Board established new rules that said local groups must be registered as election observers at the time they were originally established before they could function in that role for the May election. This ruled out many of the groups. They took the matter to Ethiopia's High Court, which recently overturned the decision. The government is appealing, however, and there may not be enough time left to resolve the matter before the election. The government did agree to consider registering about ten local groups that met the election observer criteria at the time of their original incorporation.

More inexplicably, the government asked three American organizations—National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems—to leave the country on short notice because they had not been properly registered. This decision helped to sour relations with the U.S. At the same time, Ethiopia welcomed a delegation of about 50 election observers from the Carter Center, including former President Carter.

With the election only a week and a half away, it is pointless to judge now its impact on the democratization process. This can be done after we have the benefit of the conclusions of both local and international observers. The election results, of course, will also be telling. Gains for opposition and independent candidates will suggest the democratization process is moving in the right direction.

Perhaps the most contentious issue of the day is the continuing dispute over demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border. The problem is, in fact, much greater than the demarcation of the border and involves the totality of the Ethiopian-Eritrean relationship both today and since 1991. In an ideal situation, Ethiopia would accept the binding arbitration of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission and the two countries would then resolve their many other differences. But like so many inter-state problems, this is not an ideal situation.

Prime Minister Meles proposed on 25 November 2004 a five point plan that said, among other things, "Ethiopia accepts, in principle, the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission decision." This was a change in policy and opened the door a crack for a possible breakthrough in the stalemate. The statement also noted, however, that dialogue should begin immediately with the goal of implementing the Boundary Commission's decision. Eritrea quickly rejected the five-point plan as nothing new and took the position that demarcation should take place first, followed by dialogue. The deadlock continues.

The problem has become complicated recently by suggestions from the Eritrean side that Ethiopia's unwillingness to accept the demarcation decision will lead to war. There is, however, no reason for Ethiopia to initiate war. It holds those parts of the border awarded to Eritrea by the Boundary Commission. The United Nations force continues to monitor the 15-mile buffer zone, all of which is located in territory administered by Eritrea prior to the 1998 war. The buffer zone separates Ethiopian and Eritrean forces. Nor does Ethiopia wish to risk international opprobrium by attacking Eritrea. So long as this dispute remains a public shouting match, however, there is virtually no chance it will be resolved. It is at the point where only quiet, behind the scenes discussions, preferably assisted by the good offices of an outside party acceptable to both sides, will achieve a solution.

Another issue that will soon impact the Ethiopian-American relationship is Ethiopia's need for more emergency food aid. The problem is becoming particularly acute in the pastoral areas of Afar and Somali regions. The current situation follows the pattern of the 2002–2003 emergency. This comes as something of a surprise because the government has been touting the good harvest of 2004. Unfortunately, a change in the way cereal production is calculated gave the impression that a normal harvest in 2004 was a bumper one. International partners will have to gear up one more time to deal with the crisis. USAID is already making plans. This underscores the fact, however, that the U.S. is a reliable partner in efforts to avert a serious, new problem. This year the problem appears to be widespread in the region. Eritrea is experiencing a major shortfall in the availability of cereals. An estimated one million Somalis in Somalia will need assistance. Small amounts of food aid may also be required for Kenya and Djibouti.

In order to emphasize the complex nature of the Ethiopian-American relationship, it is useful to cite the annual State Department report on terrorism released last month that covers 2004. It states that "Ethiopia's support in the global war on terrorism has been consistently solid and unwavering." It commends Ethiopia for cooperating in the sharing of information with the U.S. on terrorist activities, for installing new security systems at Addis Ababa airport that allow the tracking of terrorists, and for introducing a new and more secure passport that includes anti-tampering features.

Finally, Ethiopian Airlines signed an agreement with Boeing last month for the purchase of five Boeing 787 aircraft over the next three years with an option to purchase five more. Ethiopian Airlines will be the first African airline to use the new Boeing 787. The agreement is worth at least \$600 million and as much as \$1.3 billion.

All these points underscore my opening remark that it is impossible to measure the state of Ethiopian-American relations based on one issue. They must be seen in their totality. Both countries will continue to disagree on some matters, occasionally important ones, but history suggests the overall relationship will survive the bumps in the road.

Mr. SHINN. I do apologize, Mr. Chairman. If it is possible to take questions before the other panelists begin, I am expected to teach a class at George Washington University at 4:00 p.m. I can be late, but I am still going to try to make the class.

Mr. SMITH. Would you gentlemen—

Mr. CLOUGH. The only problem is I actually have to catch a plane to fly to Africa.

Mr. SMITH. I apologize, Mr. Shinn. But we will go to the other witnesses.

Mr. CLOUGH. I think part of the solution is that we all be as brief as possible and get to the questions quicker. So I will try to do that, too.

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL CLOUGH, ADVOCACY DIRECTOR AFRICA (INTERIM), HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Mr. CLOUGH. As the Ambassador submitted a fairly lengthy testimony and also the reports that back up that testimony are available on our Web site, my testimony is based primarily on reporting from two recent missions to Ethiopia by our researchers and ongoing monitoring of human rights conditions in Eritrea. Unfortunately, we have not been able to visit Eritrea in the way that we have been able to visit Ethiopia.

As I mention in my testimony, my own experience goes back quite a while. I was actually quite involved at the time that the change in governments occurred. I think it is very important to remember what a hopeful period that was, because a lot of how we judge what is going on now has to be seen in light of the hopes of that earlier period.

Human Rights Watch's work on Eritrea and Ethiopia is focused exclusively on the protection and promotion of human rights. For that reason, we don't take a position or a report on the border disputes.

Let me turn now first quickly to Eritrea. The overall situation in Eritrea is detailed in our annual *Human Rights Report*, as I think has already been quoted. We have found that Eritrea is a highly repressive State. Since independence the only political party that is allowed to operate in the country is the Ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice by President Isaias Afewerki.

During this period no national elections have been held. They were scheduled in 1997 and 2001, but canceled both times. We find it very significant that in 1997 Ethiopia adopted or drafted a Constitution that was ratified by a national referendum. That Constitution would have guaranteed to Eritreans many basic rights that we would all love to see enacted into law. Unfortunately, so far the President has refused to implement that Constitution and we think that one of the first places that Eritrea could start in terms of moving down the path toward more recognition of human rights, more respect for human rights, would be to actually implement the Constitution that its people have already overwhelmingly endorsed.

Political dissent in Eritrea is now totally suppressed. An example of this is that in September 2001 the government arrested 11 leaders of the party after the release of a letter they sent to the President asking for implementation of the 1997 Constitution and democratic reform.

Since then, scores of other Eritreans have been arrested because of their alleged ties to the dissidents. It is important to note that those arrested were not opposition figures, they were former allies and members of the government.

Arbitrary arrests and prolonged imprisonment without trial have not been limited to political leaders. Journalists have also been arrested, and the government is currently retaining about 350 Eritreans who fled as Eritrea's refugees but were involuntarily repatriated.

In my written testimony, I detail our concerns with prison conditions and limits on access to information which continue, and I conclude, in short, by any possible measure the human rights situation in Eritrea is extremely bad. Unfortunately, there is little prospect for substantial improvement in the near future.

Let me now turn to Ethiopia. In Ethiopia the human rights situation is much more mixed. Since 1992, there have been positive developments, but as Human Rights Watch's recent reporting has documented, there are also very serious grounds for concern.

As I mentioned previously, one of the, I think, important windows into the situation in Ethiopia is to look back into the period of 1991–1992 when all of us were very, very hopeful about what would come. There were many signs that in fact we were going to see at long last the end of a brutal military dictatorship and the end of centuries of highly dictatorial rule.

Unfortunately, shortly after the transitional government was put in place in the runup to the 1992 national election, there was intimidation on behalf of all parties, particularly in Oromia. As you

will see, much of my testimony focuses on Oromia. Intimidation on both sides ultimately created what almost everyone who has looked at that election has found to be a very highly unfair and free election.

In advance of the election, the OLF withdrew. The OLF's withdrawal cleared the way for the EPRDF to gain a monopoly in political power in Oromia. We obviously do not take a position on who represents whom in Oromia, but the OLF has long been recognized as a prominent representative of Oromia nationalism.

Its decision—the OLF's decision to launch an armed struggle has unfortunately provided the EPRDF government an excuse for its systemic repression of political dissent in the region. We find the whole issue there to be a tragic area to what both sides play off each other.

A new Constitution was adopted in 1995, unlike in Eritrea. That Constitution has many extremely positive provisions. It does provide for regular elections. It recognizes the rule of law and creates a system of ethnic federalism that many people find to be quite imaginative and hopeful. The new Constitution notwithstanding, since the EPRDF came to power, the human rights of Ethiopian citizens have been ruthlessly violated, and political dissent has been crushed in much of the country. We talked briefly about the election. I think that has already been mentioned.

We do not get involved in election monitoring. However, we strongly believe that for elections to be a meaningful exercise of citizens' fundamental right to participate in the selection of a government, they must take place in an environment where all citizens have the opportunity to freely form and express their political ideas and voters are offered real choices among parties and candidates.

Unfortunately, that kind of freedom does not exist in most of Ethiopia today. Here I would say that we ought to keep in mind how much criticism there was of the elections in Zimbabwe. We were one of the organizations that was highly critical of the elections in Zimbabwe, but no one would question that in Zimbabwe there was a strong, powerful, well-supported opposition that did campaign. Unfortunately, it was met with some very repressive actions. So we think that the same standards that we are applying to Zimbabwe need to be applied to Ethiopia.

In my testimony—and I will try to go through this very quickly, because as I said it is documented in my testimony and it is documented in reports—we focus on two areas. I would emphasize that in both of these areas, Gambella and Oromia, where the situations are quite different, the reporting is based on on-the-ground interviews, missions by our researchers, where they talked to the people who usually most people don't talk to, the ordinary citizens.

In Gambella on December 13, 2003, government soldiers joined civilian mobs in a murderous rampage in a Gambella town. A massacre came in response to a series of Anuak ambushes of highlander civilians.

Unfortunately, after that, since December 2003, the Ethiopian Army, which had previously been relatively neutral in the ethnic struggles in the area, has carried out a brutal assault against the Anuak civilians, which is well documented in the report we issued

targeting the Anuak human rights violations and crimes against humanity in Gambella.

On the December massacre the government has taken steps, after initially denying that the military was involved. Unfortunately, so far those steps have been limited to only arresting and charging a handful of lower-ranking soldiers and doing nothing to hold accountable the officers, who we document in the report were present at the massacre itself. Nothing has been done to compensate the victims of the massacre.

We are also even more concerned that there has been this pattern of continuing abuses, which has included large-scale attacks on villages, extrajudicial killings, rape, beatings and torture, destruction of property and looting, and that so far the government has taken no steps to address that situation.

Let me turn quickly now to Oromia. Oromia is the largest and most populous of Ethiopia's nine regional States. I think it is fair to say that without having political control over Oromia it would be very difficult for any government to remain in power in Ethiopia.

In March, 2005, Human Rights Watch sent a mission to Oromia, and it interviewed 115 persons in Addis Ababa and several regions of Oromia, which are detailed in the testimony and which will be detailed later in a report.

Based on this research, Human Rights Watch found that local authorities and security officials in Oromia have routinely violated the human rights of people they believe to be critical or unsupportive of the government. Examples of this include 41 individuals who were detained in 2003 to 2005 by local security officers who accused them of conspiring against the government. All of them were imprisoned for weeks or months before being released without any evidence ever being presented against them.

In May 2004 the four top leaders of Mecha-Tulema Association, the oldest and most prominent Oromo civil society organization, were arrested and accused of providing support to the OLF and providing a grenade attack at Addis Ababa University. As of 2005 all four remained in detention awaiting trial.

Third, in numerous instances Oromo students have been detained and arrested because they participated in peaceful protests against government policies. Teachers and school administrators have been required to monitor and report on their students' activities, and some students who have been detained were also tortured.

Finally, a relatively recent and worrying phenomena that our researcher found was the creation of quasi-governmental self-help structures that have been set up throughout rural areas of Oromia and are being used to gather information, monitor and harass outspoken individuals, control and constrict the movement of the rural population and to disseminate political propaganda on behalf of the ruling OPDO. As I said, more details will be provided in a report that will be issued sometime later this month.

The actions of local authorities and police to punish dissent have had a widespread chilling effect on political activity in Oromia. Because of this pattern of repression, citizens in Oromia have been denied a genuine opportunity to participate freely in the Ethiopian political process.

I conclude by talking about U.S. policy and our suggestions there. It has already been—the aid relationship has been detailed. Let me just say, given the United States' relationship with Ethiopia, it is crucial that Congress direct U.S. policymakers to consistently urge the Ethiopian Government to end ongoing human rights violations. Specifically, the United States should insist that those responsible for crimes against humanity and other serious human rights abuses in Gambella are brought to justice and that the systemic suppression of political dissent in Oromia is ended.

In addition, the United States should take steps to ensure that all forms of military assistance and cooperation with the Ethiopian Government do not directly or indirectly aid or facilitate human rights abuses in Ethiopia.

The United States must also continue to deny non-humanitarian aid to Eritrea as long as the government continues to violate the human rights of its citizens.

Finally, U.S. officials in all branches of government, including the Defense Department, must clearly communicate to the government in both Eritrea and Ethiopia that cooperation against international terrorism cannot be used as a rationalization for human rights violations.

Thank you, and I will be happy to answer questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Clough follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL CLOUGH, ADVOCACY DIRECTOR AFRICA
(INTERIM), HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Chairman Smith and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Michael Clough. I am the Africa advocacy director for Human Rights Watch.

My testimony is based on reporting from two recent missions to Ethiopia by our researchers and ongoing monitoring of human rights conditions in Eritrea. But my own experience with this region goes back to 1990–91, when I was the director of the Africa program at the Council on Foreign Relations and organized a study group on the Horn of Africa.

During that period, I made three trips to Ethiopia. I will especially never forget my last trip. It was less than a month after the fall of the Derg's brutal military dictatorship—and the mood in the country was one of tremendous relief and cautious hope. I drove north from Addis Ababa hoping to make it all the way to Asmara to witness the birth of a free Eritrea. But my hopes were dashed when, after three days of driving through a seemingly endless stream of former Ethiopian soldiers walking home from the war, I reached the Tigrayan city of Adigrat and the border with Eritrea. In a move that tragically foreshadowed the future, immediately upon seizing control of Asmara, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) closed the border.

Since 1998, that border has been a battle line. Both Eritrea and Ethiopia face a bleak future unless they can find a way to end their conflict—and, more important, give all their citizens a full opportunity to realize their hopes for human rights, peace and freedom.

Human Rights Watch's work on Eritrea and Ethiopia is focused exclusively on the protection and promotion of human rights. For that reason, we have not reported or taken a position on the border dispute or the negotiations to end it.

I would now like to provide a brief overview of the human rights situation in these two countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN ERITREA

Eritrea is a highly repressive state. Since independence, the only political party that has been allowed to operate in the country is the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) led by President Issayas Afewerki. During this period, no national elections have been held. National elections were scheduled to be held in 1997 and in 2001, but both times they were cancelled.

In 1997, a constitutional assembly drafted a constitution that was ratified by a national referendum. The president however has refused to implement it. The constitution would provide for the fundamental rights to freedom of speech, religion, peaceful assembly and to form organizations. It would also provide for basic due process protections, including the rights of detained persons to habeas corpus and to fair and public trials. But these rights exist only on paper. President Afwerki's government will not permit anyone to practice them.

Political dissent is now totally suppressed. In September 2001, the government arrested eleven leaders of the PFDJ, after the release of a letter they sent to President Afwerki asking for implementation of the 1997 constitution and democratic reform, and criticizing his leadership. Since then, scores of other Eritreans have been arrested because of their alleged ties to the dissidents or for their perceived political views. The Eritrean government has also arrested publishers, editors, and reporters—and even two Eritrean employees of the U.S. State Department, apparently in retaliation for a U.S. statement critical of these other arrests.

All these citizens have been locked up and the key apparently thrown away. There are no charges pending against them in any court. They have no lawyers. No one, not even family members, knows where they are or what conditions they are kept in—even whether they are still alive or not. It has been almost four years since they were plunged into prolonged arbitrary incommunicado detention.

Arbitrary arrests and prolonged imprisonment without trial have not been limited to political leaders and journalists. For example, the government detains about 350 Eritreans who fled Eritrea as refugees but were involuntarily repatriated from Malta in 2002 and from Libya in 2004.

Prison conditions in Eritrea also raise serious human rights concerns. Many of those arrested are held incommunicado in secret detention sites. Prison escapees have reported that prisoners are subjected to psychological and physical torture. Because Eritrea prohibits prison visits by international organizations, including the International Committee for the Red Cross, it is impossible to determine the validity of these reports.

The Eritrean government also maintains a monopoly on access to information. In 2001, the government closed all nongovernmental newspapers and magazines. Since then, the government has expelled the BBC correspondent in Eritrea, the sole remaining resident foreign journalist in the country. In addition, it has placed all Internet cafes under government supervision.

In short, by any possible measure, the human rights situation in Eritrea is extremely bad—and, unfortunately, there is little prospect for a substantial improvement in the near future.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, the human rights situation is much more mixed. Since 1992, there have been positive developments. But, as Human Rights Watch's recent reporting has documented, there are also very serious grounds for concern.

The Unfulfilled Promise

When Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) assumed power in 1991 and formed a transitional government that included the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other parties, it created a moment of hope that Ethiopia would become a stable democracy committed to protecting and promoting human rights. This hope was based largely on the new government's promise to respect the political rights and cultural autonomy of long suppressed ethnic groups such as the Oromo, who constitute more than one-third of the Ethiopian population, and the Tigrayans, who are much smaller in numbers (seven percent) but have been the dominant force in the EPRDF. But hopes for a new era of peace quickly began to dim when charges of intimidation in the run up to national elections in 1992 caused the Oromo group, the OLF, to withdraw from the transitional government and its leaders to leave the country. The OLF's withdrawal cleared the way for the EPRDF to gain a monopoly over political power in Oromia; and its decision to launch an armed struggle has provided the EPRDF government with an excuse for its systematic repression of political dissent in the region.

A new constitution was adopted in 1995. On paper, it creates an imaginative new system of "ethnic federalism" based on the right of ethnic groups to self-determination. It establishes a parliamentary system with regular elections. And it recognizes the rule of law and guarantees Ethiopians a wide range of individual, economic and socio-cultural rights. The new constitution notwithstanding, since the EPRDF came to power, the human rights of Ethiopian citizens have been ruthlessly violated and political dissent has been crushed in much of the country.

In ten days, Ethiopia will hold its fourth national election since Prime Minister Meles and his government came to power. According to reports by international groups, including the National Democratic Institute (NDI), past elections have been marred by widespread violence and intimidation of political opposition. The May 15 elections, which will be observed by delegations from the European Union, the Carter Center, the African Union and several countries, are seen by many observers as an important indicator of Ethiopia's progress toward democracy.

In advance of the election, the Ethiopian government has enacted some reforms that could, on the surface, make this election more open and competitive than previous elections. Those reforms include granting opposition candidates access to state-owned media outlets and relaxing onerous registration requirements for opposition candidates. These reforms are a positive step. But it would be a mistake to focus solely on the mechanics of electioneering and the conduct of the vote on May 15.

For elections to be a meaningful exercise of citizens' fundamental right to participate in the selection of a government, they must take place in an environment where all citizens have the opportunity to freely form and express their political ideas and voters are offered real choices among parties and candidates. Unfortunately, that kind of freedom does not exist in most of Ethiopia today.

In recent months, Human Rights Watch has conducted research missions in two very different regions of Ethiopia: Gambella and Oromia. Based on this research, it is clear that hopes for a new era in which the basic freedoms and human rights of all Ethiopians are respected have not been realized.

Gambella

Gambella People's National Regional State (Gambella) is a low-lying region roughly the size of Rwanda that sits along the border with Sudan in the southwest of Ethiopia. It has an ethnically diverse population of roughly 220,000 people. As recently as 1980, the largest ethnic group in the area was the indigenous Anuak. Since then, however, migrations of Nuer from Sudan and "highlanders" from other parts of Ethiopia have turned the Anuak into a minority. This demographic transformation has fueled frequent ethnic clashes.

Before late 2003, Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) forces based in the region had mostly stayed out of these clashes. Then, on December 13, 2003, these government soldiers joined civilian mobs in a murderous rampage in Gambella town, the regional capital. This massacre, which came in response to a series of Anuak ambushes of "highlander" civilians, marked a turning point in the region's long history of conflict. Since December 2003, the Ethiopian army has carried out a brutal assault against Anuak civilians.

The nature and magnitude of the December 2003 massacre and the subsequent army assaults on civilians are detailed in a March 2005 Human Rights Watch report, "Targeting the Anuak: Human Rights violations and Crimes against Humanity in Ethiopia's Gambella Region." That report was based on a three-week investigation in Gambella and Addis Ababa and interviews with eighty-four Anuak civilians from nineteen different towns and villages.

The December Massacre

Based on our investigation, Human Rights Watch believes that more than 100 government army troops participated in the December 2003 massacre. Soldiers and other rioters killed more than 400 Anuak civilians, raped several Anuak women and burned more than four hundred Anuak houses. The commander of Gambella town's military garrison, Major Tsegaye Beyene, was in Gambella town throughout the massacre, and appears to have directly taken part in the violence.

One middle-aged woman, who was inside her house with her family on December 13, 2003, described what happened after her husband went outside to confront a group of soldiers and highlander civilians:

When they came we were in the house with our children. My husband, they shot him [in front of our home] . . . After he was fallen my son could not hide himself anymore and he went out to see his father. . . . They killed him as well. It was the military with guns and lots of our highlander neighbors.

An Anuak man who was hiding in the house of a highlander friend described what took place in an intersection a short distance from that house:

They were in a big group sitting there waiting for people because Anuak had to cross through that area to get to Anuak villages. I could see through the window. I saw about seven people being killed with my eyes. Four were knifed and beaten by highlanders and two were shot by the military. One man was shouting, "I am a Nuer, not an Anuak," but they recognized him as Anuak. . . . One

[man], the soldiers tied his hands to his legs and put him on the road and then ran over him with a military truck.

Initially, the Ethiopian government maintained that no soldiers had taken part in the massacre. But a commission appointed by the Ethiopian government concluded that “rogue elements from within the ENDF’s ranks had taken part in the killing.” The commission also estimated that only sixty-five people were killed. Based on interviews with twenty-four eyewitnesses to the massacre and interviews with Anuak community leaders and other knowledgeable sources, Human Rights Watch believes that the Commission’s report grossly underestimates both the extent of ENDF army involvement in the massacre and the number of people killed.

The Ethiopian government has arrested some highlander civilians and regional police personnel and a handful of low-ranking soldiers for participating in the killings. But no ENDF army officers have been held accountable. And the victims of the massacre have not been compensated for their losses.

Continuing Abuses in Gambella

Since December 2003, ENDF forces in Gambella have committed widespread violations against Anuak communities throughout the region. These abuses have included large-scale attacks on villages, extrajudicial killings, rape, beatings and torture, and destruction of property and looting. Some of these abuses have involved raids on Anuak neighborhoods and villages, but others have been attacks on individual Anuak citizens. Human Rights Watch’s March 2005 report presented case studies of three different areas of Gambella—Pinyudo, Tedo Kebele and Gok—that illustrate the pattern of abuse that has been taking place in the region.

While the Ethiopian government has taken some limited steps to address the December 2003 massacre, it has not acknowledged the continuing abuses in the region that Human Rights Watch documented. In addition, regional and police authorities in Gambella have been unable or unwilling to respond to persistent complaints of abuse by members of affected communities. Instead, victims told Human Rights Watch, military authorities have reacted to such complaints with hostility and threats of further violence. For example, one ENDF officer, Captain Amare, met with Anuak community leaders reportedly accused them of sheltering Anuak shifta (armed rebels or criminals) without offering any basis for these charges and told them that they are to blame for ENDF attacks on their villages.

Human Rights Watch believes that, under international law, the ENDF army attacks on the Anuak population may amount to crimes against humanity. In our report, we call upon the government of Ethiopia to immediately halt the commission of these crimes and investigate and prosecute ENDF personnel and government officials who are alleged to have been involved in the December 2003 massacre and subsequent attacks. We also urge Anuak leaders to take steps to reduce tensions between Anuak and highlanders.

Oromia

Oromia is the largest and most populous of Ethiopia’s nine regional states. It sprawls over 32 percent of the country’s total land area and is home to at least 23 million people. Oromia surrounds the nation’s capital, Addis Ababa, and divides Ethiopia’s southwestern states from the rest of the country. While Oromia’s population is ethnically diverse, the overwhelming majority of people who reside there are ethnic Oromo. The Oromo population shares a strong and distinct sense of ethnic and national identity. Because of the size of the Oromo population and the region’s central location and economic importance, the competition for political power in Oromia is crucial to the future of Ethiopia. Since 1992, Oromia has been controlled by the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO), which is a member of the EPRDF.¹

In March 2005 Human Rights Watch interviewed 115 persons in Addis Ababa and Oromia’s East Shewa, West Shewa, East Wollega, West Wollega and Jimma zones. Just over half of those interviewed were farmers from rural *kebeles*. Based on this research, Human Rights Watch found that local authorities and security officials in Oromia have routinely violated the human rights of people they believe to be critical or unsupportive of the government. Examples of what we found include:

- Human Rights Watch interviewed forty-one individuals who were detained in 2003–05 by local security officers, who accused them of conspiring against the government. They were imprisoned for weeks or months before being re-

¹The OPDO was originally created by the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) as part of the process that led to the formation of the ruling EPRDF just before the collapse of the old military regime.

leased. In all forty-one cases, courts or police investigators ultimately found that the allegations against the detainees were unsupported by any evidence.

- In May 2004, the four top leaders of the Mecha-Tulema Association, the oldest and most prominent Oromo civil society organization, were arrested and accused of providing support to the OLF and plotting a grenade attack at Addis Ababa University. As of April 2005, all four remained in detention awaiting trial.
- In numerous instances, Oromo students have been detained and arrested because they participated in peaceful protests against government policies or were suspected of being OLF supporters—and teachers and school administrators have been required to monitor and report on their students' activities. Some students of the detained students were also tortured.
- Quasi-governmental “self-help” structures have been set up throughout the rural areas of Oromia and are being used to gather information, monitor and harass outspoken individuals, control and restrict the movement of the rural population and disseminate political propaganda on behalf of the ruling OPDO.

The actions of local authorities and police to punish dissent have had a widespread chilling effect on political activity in Oromia. As one retiree in Dembi Dollo told Human Rights Watch:

People are afraid to say anything at all—they are always suspicious of the person sitting next to them. Even me—I choose the most neutral topic of conversation possible. I cannot even talk about the shortage of electricity or water because it points to the government. Even innocuous topics like that are off limits, let alone politics.

Because of this pattern of repression, citizens in Oromia have been denied a genuine opportunity to participate freely in the Ethiopian political process.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the past decade, despite clear evidence of widespread human rights abuses, which have been reported in the State Department's annual human rights report, the United States has developed close ties with Prime Minister Meles and the EPRDF government. As this subcommittee is aware, Ethiopia is a major recipient of U.S. assistance. In addition, it is regarded as an important partner in the global campaign on terror. In recent years, relations with Eritrea have been much more limited.

Given the United States' relationship with Ethiopia, it is crucial that Congress direct U.S. policymakers to consistently urge the Ethiopian government to end ongoing human rights violations. Specifically, the United States should insist that those responsible for crimes against humanity and other serious human rights abuses in Gambella are brought to justice by the Ethiopian government and that the systematic suppression of political dissent in Oromia is ended. In addition, the United States should take steps to ensure that all forms of military assistance and cooperation with the Ethiopian government do not, directly or indirectly, aid or facilitate human rights abuses in Ethiopia.

The United States must also continue to deny all non-humanitarian aid to Eritrea as long as President Afwerki's government continues to violate the human rights of its citizens.

Finally, U.S. officials in all branches of government, including the Defense Department, must clearly communicate to the governments in both Eritrea and Ethiopia that cooperation against international terrorism cannot be used as a rationalization for violations of human rights.

Mr. PAYNE. What time is your plane, Mr. Clough? And in regard to Ambassador Shinn, I think this is your last class. We could submit questions to you for the record, if you want to respond that way. We don't really feel comfortable with you remaining. For the questions that the Chairman and I have, we can send them to you and you can respond, if that is what you want.

Mr. SHINN. If you want, since Dave Peterson can stay longer, if possible, can you direct questions to two of us now?

Mr. SMITH. If Dave doesn't mind, that is fine.

Mr. PETERSON. I would be happy to do that.

Mr. CLOUGH. I appreciate that. We will pay him off later.

Mr. SMITH. Ambassador Shinn, let me ask you one basic question. You talked about the good offices of someone being used. Now Kofi Annan has used those very words to describe what Mr. Axworthy is at least attempting to do on behalf of the world body to try to tone down or try to bring some resolution to this boundary crisis. Who else would you recommend? Is there someone else—some other person or a group in the United States perhaps?

Mr. SHINN. I think the United States is obviously in a good position to do that so long as both Eritrea and Ethiopia find the United States acceptable. That is the key. If so, then I think the United States is a key player. I don't have a particular name in mind, but it is a process that should be done along the lines that was attempted when Tony Lake was involved. It requires quiet, behind the scenes, no publicity, just working with the two leaderships and trying to carry messages and to make sure that things can get back on track without the need for publicity attached to it. I think that is what is ruining things now. It will be hard enough even to do it that way, but I think impossible with the public spotlight on it.

Mr. SMITH. Are you suggesting that a hearing like this is not helpful, hurtful?

Mr. SHINN. No, not at all. I am just saying in terms of the negotiation process itself, in terms of getting the parties together in some fashion. That is what has to happen quietly and behind the scenes. But other discussions by groups like this are fine.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. I would just like to thank you for your testimony. I agree with you, I think that kind of quiet diplomacy would be what is necessary. Perhaps a person like former Secretary of State Colin Powell or someone that has the respect from both groups might be—both former military men and general chiefs of staff, joint chiefs of staff in many instances, do get respect from former combatants.

So I would have no questions. Your testimony is very clear, and I appreciate your participation in the hearing.

Mr. SHINN. If you have any more questions, I would be happy to take them or if you have any written questions, I am happy to field those also.

Mr. SMITH. We do have some more questions, but I prefer giving you time. We will just submit them.

Mr. SHINN. I thank you for your help.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Maybe we will go; you do have a flight, right, Dr. Clough?

Mr. CLOUGH. If I am out of here at quarter to 5:00, I will still be okay.

Mr. PETERSON. Shall I start?

Mr. SMITH. Okay. Yes, Dave, why don't you proceed? Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF MR. DAVE PETERSON, AFRICA DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY**

Mr. PETERSON. Thank you, Chairman Smith and Congressman Payne. It is certainly an honor to be here this afternoon. Also, thank you, Greg, and my friend Noelle there too, just to acknowledge you here.

The National Endowment for Democracy has made small grants to support democracy in Ethiopia since 1991, shortly after the fall of the Derg regime. These included support to human rights organizations, independent press efforts, education, women's rights, and the promotion of free markets through the Center for International Enterprise.

NED obtains modest grants program in Ethiopia, but it is a country that has been targeted in our current strategy for expanded programming. So far this year we have made \$312,000 in grants for projects in Ethiopia, and we intend to allocate an additional \$160,000 by the end of the year with special funds that have been approved by Congress.

NED's sister organizations, the National Democratic Institute and the National Republican Institute, have been involved in election support activities funded by USAID. Although both institutes were recently forced to leave, we hope the Ethiopian Government will soon reverse its decision.

NED has made just one grant in Eritrea more than 1 year ago, shortly after that country gained independence. It was for a press project that failed to get off the ground. Although I do not consider myself an expert in Ethiopia, it is a country we are very concerned about at NED due to its enormous political and strategic importance for the African continent. In terms of the advance of democracy in Africa, progress in Ethiopia is critical. Democratization is certain to have an impact on its neighbors as well as improving the lives of its own population of more than 70 million, which is the second largest in Africa.

The problem with Ethiopia has been the ambiguity of the political situation, which sees advances one day and retreats the next. Hopeful words followed by disappointing actions. There can be no doubt that Ethiopia is far better off in terms of respect for human rights, political pluralism, free press and economic policies than it was during the Mengistu era or that of probably any time in its elapsed history.

Perhaps taking the long view, things would suggest the need for patience. After all this is a culture that stretches back to Biblical times. This is also a desperately poor country, which always makes the challenges of political development much more difficult.

Nevertheless, in a spirit of friendship, I think it is worthwhile for the United States to continue to press Ethiopia to allow greater openness. I do not think Ethiopia can afford the luxury of taking a lot of time in its democratic development. Nor do I believe that it is poverty that should be considered an inseparable obstacle to freedom. On the contrary, our experience in Ethiopia has suggested that its citizens understand and desire democracy, and that many of the country's political and economic problems may be more readily addressed in a more open and democratic system.

Because Ethiopia could easily go either way, either join the community of democratic nations or stagnate in a kind of corrupt authoritarianism, it becomes so important now to invest strategically in the country and tip the balance in the right direction. Democracy is in Ethiopia's own best interests and the United States needs to help. The May 15th elections will be an important test.

Almost 6 months ago the Endowment hosted a forum here at our offices in Washington that brought together a spokesman from one of our grantees, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, as well as representatives from the Ethiopian Embassy and the government's political opposition. Although there were sharp points of disagreement, the meeting was heartening because both sides were able to talk to each other with reasonable civility. The government insisted on its commitment to political reform and electoral reform. The opposition expressed its willingness to participate in the process in a peaceful way.

Since then, certain reforms demanded by the opposition have been implemented, although not all. Opposition to political party members, especially those outside of Addis, are still subject to harassment.

Despite promises for several years, Ethiopia still does not allow private radio. Although a few years ago Ethiopia had the highest number of journalists in prison than any country in Africa, today there are none in jail.

It is clear, thus, that the Ethiopian authorities are ambivalent about change. But both domestic and international encouragement can produce results, as we have seen.

Again, to underscore this ambivalence, although NDI and IFES were expelled, the Carter Center and the EU have been given permission to monitor the elections. Although there were human rights—there were restrictions placed on many domestic groups to observe the elections, some groups, including our grantee, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, have been allowed to monitor the elections, although there has been some resistance.

Yesterday, the Ethiopian courts declared that all domestic groups, in fact, should be allowed to observe the elections. As I said, we are still hopeful that NDI and IRI may be able to conduct their programs there.

Most observers assume that the elections will be technically fine and that there will be little blatant fraud. The EPRDF government will easily hold on to power due to its strong control of the rural areas. Nevertheless, if opposition parties succeed in capturing a significant number of seats in the new parliament, that would be a breakthrough. The introduction of alternative voices in the government would go a long way to diffuse tensions between ethnic minority groups, addressing difficult policy issues and opening up the political culture.

In particular, the rights of the Oromo people, who make up nearly half the population, continue to be neglected and could be an explosive problem if not addressed democratically.

If Ethiopia fails to conduct credible and fair elections, then it would represent another setback and the clear trend in the deterioration of African politics. The elections in Zimbabwe were manipulated beforehand by the government, so that even though election day went smoothly the election results were unfair. Likewise, the elections in Togo last week were held too quickly to allow the opposition parties to organize properly. The disputed results have only increased that country's instability.

Other forthcoming elections, such as those in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Angola, D.R. Congo and Burundi may be influenced by

these developments. The AU and NEPAD's commitment to democracy and transparency will be sorely tested in the next year. Ethiopia, as a seat of the AU, needs to set the right example.

But, of course, democracy is more than elections. Ethiopia's progress will also depend on the steady expansion of freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, free markets, the rule of law, and all the other components of democracy. Democracy will also depend on fundamental changes in behavior and attitudes; in other words, equal rights and opportunities granted to all ethnic groups, the end of corrupt practices, the end of human rights abuses and the willingness for citizens to stand for their rights and fulfill their duties.

This takes education and role models both from the elite and from the grassroots, bottom up. But if Ethiopia presents some major political challenges, Eritrea is in an entirely different league. While Freedom House gives Ethiopia a partly-free rating, Eritrea is unequivocally not free. It ranks right along with Equatorial Guinea at the bottom of the list of countries in Africa.

The State Department's *Human Rights Report* is also damning. There is no free press, virtually no independent NGOs, no civil society, no opposition parties, nothing resembling democracy. It is one of the very few African countries that has never had an election. While much of the world supported Eritrea's claims to independence and the early idealism of its leaders, Eritrea is now perhaps the closest thing Africa has to an old-fashioned Stalinist system of government. Its aggressive behavior in the region is undoubtedly linked to the lack of freedom of its citizens, despite their understandable patriotism. Although the irredentist claims of certain Ethiopian groups are dangerous and wrong; this does not justify the continuing militarization of Eritrean society.

In recent years, NED has failed to identify credible groups in Eritrea with programs to promote, or democracy or human rights. We are nevertheless hopeful that within the next few months we will be able to begin modest support for such programs. As one of Africa's surviving dictatorships, Eritrea is exactly the kind of situation the Endowment focuses on in search of whatever opportunities for expanding political space can be found. It is difficult to predict the outcome of such efforts, but despite Africa's political difficulties, Eritrea is currently out of step with the rest of the continent. It cannot remain an island of dictatorship for too long.

Honorable Chairman and Congressmen, thank you again for this opportunity and I am happy to answer questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Peterson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. DAVE PETERSON, AFRICA DIRECTOR, NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA

Thanks to the Subcommittee for granting me the honor of testifying this afternoon.

The National Endowment for Democracy has made small grants to support democracy in Ethiopia since 1991, shortly after the fall of the Derg regime. These have included support to human rights organizations, independence press efforts, civic education, the promotion of private enterprise, and women's rights. NED maintains a modest grants program in Ethiopia, but it is a country that has been targeted in our current strategy for expanded programming. So far this year we have made \$312,213 in grants for projects in Ethiopia, and we intend to allocate an additional

\$160,000 by the end of year with special funds approved by the Congress. NED's sister organizations, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, have been involved in election support activities funded by USAID. Although both Institutes were recently forced to leave, we hope the Ethiopian government will soon reverse its decision. NED has made just one grant in Eritrea more than ten years ago, shortly after that country gained independence. It was for a press project that failed to get off the ground.

Although I do not consider myself an expert on Ethiopia, it is a country we are very concerned about at NED due to its enormous political and strategic importance for the African continent. In terms of the advance of democracy in Africa, progress in Ethiopia is critical. Democratization is certain to have an impact on its neighbors, as well as improving the lives of its own population of more than 70 million, which is the second largest in Africa.

The problem with Ethiopia has long been the ambiguity of the political situation, which sees advances one day and retreats the next, hopeful words followed by disappointing actions. There can be no doubt that Ethiopia is far better off in terms of respect for human rights, political pluralism, free press, and economic policies than it was during the Mengistu era, or that of Haile Selassie, or any other time in its history. Perhaps taking a long view of things would suggest the need for patience; after all, this is a culture that stretches back to Biblical times. It is also a desperately poor country, which always makes the challenge of political development much more difficult.

Nevertheless, in a spirit of friendship, I think it is worthwhile for the United States to continue to press Ethiopia to allow greater openness. I do not think Ethiopia can afford the luxury of taking a lot of time in its democratic development. Nor do I believe that its poverty should be considered an insuperable obstacle to freedom. On the contrary, our experience in Ethiopia has suggested that its citizens understand and desire democracy, and that many of the country's political and economic problems may be more readily addressed in a more open and democratic system. Because Ethiopia could so easily go either way—either join the community of democratic nations, or stagnate in a kind of corrupt authoritarianism—it becomes so important now to invest strategically in the country and tip the balance in the right direction. Democracy is in Ethiopia's own best interest, and the US needs to help.

The May 15 elections will be an important test. Almost six months ago the Endowment hosted a forum at our offices here in Washington that brought together a spokesman from one of our grantees, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, as well as representatives from the Ethiopian embassy and the government's political opposition. Although there were sharp points of disagreement, the meeting was heartening because both sides were able to talk to each other with reasonable civility. The government insisted on its commitment to political and electoral reform, and the opposition expressed its willingness to participate in the process in a peaceful way.

Since then, certain reforms demanded by the opposition have been implemented, although not all. Opposition political party members, especially those outside of Addis, are still subject to harassment. Despite promises for several years, Ethiopia still does not allow private radio. Although a few years ago, Ethiopia had the highest number of journalists in prison of any country in Africa, today there are none in jail. It is clear that the Ethiopian authorities are ambivalent about change, but both domestic and international encouragement can produce results.

Although some election support groups such as NDI, IRI and IFES have been expelled, the Carter Center and EU have been given permission to monitor the elections. Likewise, although restrictions have been placed on many domestic electoral observation efforts, others should still be allowed, including that of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, which is receiving support from NED for electoral education and election monitoring. Yesterday the Ethiopian courts declared that all domestic groups should be allowed to observe the elections, and we are hopeful that NDI and IRI may still be able to carry out their programs to assist in party poll watching and civil society monitoring of the elections.

Most observers assume that the elections will be technically fine, and there will be little blatant fraud. The EPRDF government will easily hold on to power due to its strong control of rural areas. Nevertheless, if opposition parties succeed in capturing a significant number of seats in the new parliament, this would be a breakthrough. The introduction of alternative voices in the government could go a long way to defusing tensions among minority ethnic groups, addressing difficult policy issues, and opening up the political culture. In particular, the rights of the Oromo people, who make up nearly half the population, continue to be neglected, and could be an explosive problem if not addressed democratically.

If Ethiopia fails to conduct credible and fair elections, then it would represent another setback and a clear trend in the deterioration of African politics. The elections in Zimbabwe were manipulated beforehand by the government so that, although election day went smoothly, the results were almost certainly unfair. Likewise, the elections in Togo last week were held too quickly to allow the opposition parties to organize properly, and the disputed results have only increased that country's instability. Other forthcoming elections such as those in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Angola, Congo, and Burundi may be influenced by these developments. The AU and NEPAD's commitment to democracy and transparency will be sorely tested in the next year or so, and Ethiopia, as the seat of the AU, needs to set the right example.

But of course, democracy is more than elections. Ethiopia's progress will also depend on the steady expansion of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, free markets, the rule of law, and all the other components of democracy. Democracy will also depend on fundamental changes in behavior and attitudes; in other words, equal rights and opportunities granted to all ethnic groups, the end of corrupt practices, the end of human rights abuses, and a willingness to stand up for one's rights and to fulfill one's duties as a citizen. This takes education and role models, both from the elite, and from the grassroots, bottom-up.

If Ethiopia presents some major political challenges, Eritrea is in an entirely different league. While Freedom House gives Ethiopia a "partly free" rating, Eritrea is unequivocally "not free." It ranks right along with Equatorial Guinea at the bottom of the list. The State Department's Human Rights Report is equally damning. There is no free press, virtually no independent NGOs, no opposition parties, nothing resembling democracy. It is one of the very few African countries that has never had an election. While much of the world supported its claims to independence and the idealism of its leaders, Eritrea is now perhaps the closest thing Africa has to an old-fashioned Stalinist system of government. Its aggressive behavior in the region is undoubtedly linked to the lack of freedom of its citizens, despite their understandable patriotism. Although the irredentist claims of certain Ethiopian groups are dangerous and wrong, this does not justify the continuing militarization of Eritrean society.

In recent years NED has failed to identify credible groups in Eritrea with programs to promote democracy or human rights. We are nevertheless hopeful that within the next few months we will be able to begin modest support for such programs. As one of Africa's "surviving dictatorships," Eritrea is exactly the kind of situation the Endowment focuses on in search whatever opportunities for expanding political space can be found. It is difficult to predict the outcome of such efforts, but despite Africa's political difficulties, Eritrea is currently out of step with the rest of the continent. It cannot remain an island of dictatorship for too long.

Honorable chairman and congressmen, thanks again for this opportunity. I am happy to answer any questions.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Peterson. And thank you too, Dr. Clough.

Let me just ask first on the elections. Amnesty International in their report points out that—and a moment ago you talked about how some think that it is technically fine—opposition parties claim their members have encountered human-rights and politically motivated restrictions on their activities in recent months and during the election campaign. If you took a snapshot right now, could you maybe elaborate on how it is often not just election day, but it is everything that led up to it: Access to media, whether or not you could properly file your candidacies and whether or not people were enrolled to cast their ballots.

Could you elaborate on whether or not that is what you found as well? And, in terms of election observers, will there be a critical mass of observers from the EU and from the Carter Center so that when they fan out, if there is a rigged election they will be there to discover it? This is because it does take a blanket of people who know what they are looking for and are willing to be tough enough to ask the right questions to be there.

Also, and perhaps you may not want to touch on this one, but what is your view as to why did the Carter Center get the ability

or obtain the ability to stay in operation there? If you could answer those at the beginning.

Mr. PETERSON. Yes, sir. Well, you are exactly right. You know, in the case of both Zimbabwe and Togo, which I have mentioned, the international observers that were there both found that the elections were reasonably decent elections. And I think it is likely that the same thing will be found in the case of Ethiopia. In all of these cases I think the real problem was what was occurring many months beforehand and so the playing field is very unlevel. The reports that I have seen from our grantees and from other sources certainly suggest that, in the rural areas especially, that the opposition is harassed and that the government has maintained a very tight control over the political competition; so that you know, when it comes to the international observer missions that will be in Ethiopia, a few hundred observers, which I think is how many we will see there, are not really in a very good position to gauge the amount of manipulation that has gone on beforehand. You can observe the actual voting. You can talk to people. But I think in the case of Ethiopia in particular, it would be very difficult for the international observers, and it is unlikely that they will see anything that is really blatant.

Mr. CLOUGH. Can I say the one thing on that that I think is particularly important is the individual from Norway, Mr. Pauswang, who is probably the leading expert on elections in Ethiopia, was initially a member of the EU delegation, and shortly after he arrived in the country, the Ethiopian Government made it clear that they did not regard him as a fair observer and he was forced to withdraw from the EU, leaving the EU with, in our understanding, no one on their delegation who is actually an expert on Ethiopia.

Mr. PETERSON. I think that would support what I am trying to say here. In fact, that would probably be the reason why the Ethiopian Government found the Carter Center an acceptable organization to be involved in the elections; whereas NDI and IRI, which are both involved—in the case of IRI, providing training to political party poll watchers; in the case of NDI, I believe they were working with civil society organizations to conduct domestic election observation, you know—I think that was possibly more problematic for the authorities than an international delegation that would come in for a relatively short time, with a relatively small number of people, to look at the situation.

Mr. SMITH. Does the EU delegation or any of the delegations include parliamentarians, as far as you know?

Mr. CLOUGH. I am not actually sure.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. Let me just ask you, Dr. Clough, do you agree that Eritrea's repression of religious belief justifies its CPC designation?

Mr. CLOUGH. To be honest, I stayed away from the religious issue in my testimony, in part because when I was originally asked to testify, somebody was going to be here testifying to that specifically, and so I wouldn't want to get drawn into that. We have noted in our reporting, problems with repression of religion, but we don't really take a position on whether the State Department designation is correct or incorrect.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. My thought would be that based on the benchmarks in the law, whether or not you felt that it justifies it.

Mr. CLOUGH. Yeah. I am just saying those aren't our benchmarks. We would operate according to international law and international principles and try to stick very strictly to human rights that are guaranteed in conventions and in countries' own Constitutions.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. Let me ask you, and I asked this to Ambassador Shinn with the idea of either a sidebar or a concurrent effort with Foreign Minister Axworthy's efforts, whether or not you think we, as the United States, need to try to gear up our own effort, obviously, or to try to find some other more suitable person or persons to engage in the border issue?

And secondly, after hearing Ambassador Shinn say that he didn't think war was imminent, do either of you with your in-countries knowledge have a sense that war is imminent?

Mr. PETERSON. I couldn't say.

Mr. CLOUGH. Well, let me take off my Human Rights Watch hat and put back on my old policy hat. And I would say two things. One, obviously avoiding a war has to be a very critical priority. We have seen the consequences of the war, not just the most recent war. We have seen the consequences of the war going back before. In fact, in my written testimony, I describe my experience the month after Mengistu fell, driving north to Tigre and the Eritrean border and literally seeing thousands, and hundreds of thousands—I think the estimate was about a million Ethiopian soldiers walking south from the war. We don't want to see that again. So I think we, as an organization, don't take a position on that. I think it ought to be a high priority.

As to whether or not war is imminent, once again, like Dave, I wouldn't claim any expertise on that. The one thing I would say, though, is that we have to be careful that the threat of war or the argument that war is imminent isn't used as an excuse for not moving on other fronts. So, for example, in the case of Eritrea not holding elections, not implementing the Constitutions, both of those actions were rationalized in terms of the war. We would think that the two are not at odds, that the government used that as an excuse and that it should have moved forward on that.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Clough, what is your overall assessment of United States policy toward Eritrea and Ethiopia, particularly in the last 5 years?

Mr. CLOUGH. I think it is very complicated. And once again, let me not speak for Human Rights Watch. Ethiopia is unquestionably one of the most important countries to the United States in Africa. In fact, the only two countries in Africa that rank up there with Ethiopia are Nigeria and South Africa. Ethiopia's future is going to have a tremendous impact not just on the region, but on Africa's whole—the relationship is complicated because there are a multiplicity of interests, including Ethiopia's role in the AU, in AU forces, obviously the war on terror, the issues of democratization.

My concern, Human Rights Watch's concern is that you are not going to see Ethiopia realize its potential unless these underlying human rights conditions are addressed. And here, let me just say, I became very involved in Africa in the early 1980s and was quite

involved with Zimbabwe. And one of the things that I am most concerned about now is that I see a pattern similar to what happened in Zimbabwe in the early 1980s. Many of us saw Zimbabwe as an important country. We saw many positive signs in terms of the developments there in terms of Mugabe's own role.

I wrote an article in 1981, praising Mugabe as a new hope in Africa. I don't think that was entirely wrong, in the same way that I think that many of the positive things that are said about Meles and Ethiopia aren't wrong either.

At the same time, the world looked the other way when there was a massacre in Matabeleland that has now been well documented. It was known at the time, but it wasn't convenient to focus on it.

I think the same problem now exists in Ethiopia. There are many reasons why we want a positive relationship and should have a positive relationship. There are many reasons why, as I said, a Constitution that is night-and-day compared to what the past was, but what I fear—and the reason, one of the reasons we focused on Oromia is because it is very difficult to see a positive future for Ethiopia without a fundamental change in the human rights situation in Oromia and in the rest of the country.

Mr. SMITH. I do have one final question. Obviously the relationship with both countries is very important, and very often the relationship with Ethiopia is cited as being close in many ways. I was in Geneva at the U.N. Human Rights Commission and lobbied both the Ambassador to Eritrea and the Ambassador to Ethiopia, who was head of the African group, on some of the resolutions that were pending, including the Cuba resolution. Both of those individuals and countries voted against the Cuba resolution. The Cuba resolution really was very mild. It continues the mandate of having a special representative and recalled all of the previously passed resolutions, vis-a-vis Cuba, a situation which has gotten worse, demonstrably worse, particularly with the crackdown 2 years ago. And yet they voted no. What do you think accounts for that?

One of the statements one of the Ambassadors made was that they provide some economic help. But that is what China does as well. They provide some very strategic economic help to a country and then expect their vote to give them a whitewash on human rights crimes that are being committed by that country. What is your sense of that?

Mr. CLOUGH. Well, as you may know, we have a major presence at the Human Rights Commission.

Mr. SMITH. I know.

Mr. CLOUGH. I think that the problem here, it would be a mistake to narrow it to Eritrea and Ethiopia. I think that there is a general development going on in which African countries have begun to push back, and the country that I have been the most involved and engaged with on this issue is actually South Africa.

In fact, our person in Geneva and I recently wrote an article about the debate over Darfur, where the Africa group basically resisted any strong measures on Darfur. And in our piece, which was published in South Africa, we were arguing that South Africa, given its own history and given its role in the past, needed to take more of a lead. I have had discussions with South African officials

about this question, and they have quite frankly said, "You know, we have to work within the African consensus on these issues." And so I think that is an issue that needs to be addressed in a larger context.

Might I also say here, just not to come back to Zimbabwe too much, but one of the arguments that African Governments make in response to United States pressures on human rights is, look at the hypocrisy. I agree with Congressman Payne entirely, that part of the problem we get into—and he was talking about other parts of the world and Africa—is the United States has to be consistent. We have to be consistent. And when African Governments see a situation where Secretary Rice declares Zimbabwe one of the outposts of tyranny and mentions no other country in Africa, where Prime Minister Blair goes after Mugabe in a very strong way—and obviously I am saying this as someone who believes they are justified in doing that—but at the same time, in a whole series of other countries where it isn't convenient for us to have that same kind of a position, doesn't say anything, they say, "You are not serious. You know, you are for human rights when it doesn't cost you anything, when it is not your friends. You are not for human rights when it really involves interests or sacrificing interests or putting relationships at stake that you care about."

Mr. SMITH. Well, I have to tell you, you just expressed my greatest frustration with all of the years I have spent in Congress—the Peoples Republic of China. I will never forget when Bill Clinton wisely said that MFN would be linked to whether or not certain benchmarks were reached with regard to human rights, and then 1 year later ripped it up and delinked MFN, and that regrettably has been carried forward right into this Administration.

Nobody was more—maybe shock is a little bit too strong of a word—dismayed and disappointed than I was, as was Nancy Pelosi and several other people. There was a bipartisan angst against that, because there is a hypocrisy there.

So I agree with you 1,000 percent. We should have had, and I had a resolution that I was hoping to bring to the Floor that would have said that our Nation should table the resolution in Geneva on China because of their ongoing egregious abuses in a large number of areas, from religious persecution to political repressions and a host of other terrible crimes that that government in Beijing commits.

So I would agree with you, it does send the wrong message. We need to be consistent. We need to be painstakingly consistent in making sure that friends don't let friends, if it is a trade friend of ours, commit human rights abuses, and we must speak to opponent regimes as well so that there is a consistent message.

So I have to agree with you 100 percent. I did hear that argument from some of the people, some of the Ambassadors when I was lobbying, and I had to agree every time. I agree with you, but that doesn't mean we should allow the African nations to get a pass either.

I remember during the Ethiopian famine, when food was being used as a weapon by Mengistu, going to New York and meeting with Ambassadors to say that we need a corridor of tranquility so that more people don't die. I was met with total indifference. It was

as if a verbal rebuke was more egregious than someone dying the terrible plight of starvation, which is a very horrible way to die.

So I do agree with you. But we need to get the African Union, the Organization of African Unity, the countries of Africa, to speak much more robustly cross-border to each other. And, like your point, we need to do it as well with China.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Chairman, yes, if I may just chime in, jump on the bandwagon of those beating up on China. In preparation for my remarks here this afternoon, discussing with one of my colleagues the situation, this may address your actual question, they suggested that—and I think it is not just the case of Ethiopia or Eritrea, but Zimbabwe, Sudan, and for those of us that are watching Africa very closely, the enormous increase in the investment of China in Africa is really remarkable. And African Governments, I think, are saying, “You know, we don’t care what the West thinks anymore, China is giving us all this investment. You know, they don’t ask any questions about our human rights record or democracy.”

And so I think that as a result, we are losing a lot of leverage, even in forums such as the AU because China has become a much bigger player, and they are not concerned about human rights or democracy.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. All right. Thank you very much. And I really appreciate the testimony of both of you.

Let me just ask, has NED attempted to get back into Eritrea? You said 10 years ago it was the last that you were sort of—they didn’t move on a program. Has there been any attempt since then to make overtures to get some kind of program back in Eritrea?

Mr. PETERSON. Yes, sir. We have long wanted to do more in Eritrea. We have found that there is a very stark absence of independent NGOs in the country that are the kind of groups that we are able to support. However, I think very recently we have identified some organizations, some young people that to some extent are working from the outside but still would be involved in, I think, some very useful programs to open up the political space in the country. So we don’t have anything currently, but I think by the end of the year we would like to have something.

Mr. PAYNE. Sort of not in your area, but with AGOA, as it has been indicated, Eritrea is about the only country in Africa restricted, other than I guess Sudan, but that was interested. And I think that sometimes we could use things like AGOA to try to get back in, and once we start some discussion and working with the country on the AGOA, then perhaps we could see other positive things come from that initiative.

And I am disappointed that the Department of State did not perhaps use AGOA as a possibility to try to not reward Eritrea but to try to get some relationship going where then we could expand, as I indicated, the tremendous trade—as you know—trade deficit we have with China. There would never be any consideration, as the Chairman has also mentioned. I mean, the general that led Tiananmen Square a year or 2 later was welcomed in the State Department and might have even gotten to the White House.

So when we take the poorest country in the world and have very harsh, unflexible procedures with them, I think that we are not trying hard enough. I mean things that happen in Eritrea, there is no question about it, should not happen. However, I have been to places that are much worse that we are cozy with, like—as I indicated earlier, and don't want to start again because evidently I get a little out of control when I talk about Sudan, so I don't want to get back into that, but that is another example of how inconsistent we are.

The Human Rights, Dr. Clough, how do you explain Ethiopia allowing you to come in, when other countries don't, when there are, you know, these alleged—or these atrocities, wrongdoings, that you have reported? And is, in the overall totality of the 60 million, I mean, any injustice is wrong, but in the total scope, is the three or four incidents that you cited, does it rise to a level of a country that would be considered very repressive or moderately repressive or, you know—in other words, certain countries don't allow you to come in? They allow you to come in, allow you to talk to people, allow you to give reports. Do you discuss the reports with the authorities of the country and verify or have a discussion? And why do you think they allow you to come in when they know some things are not right?

MR. CLOUGH. Well, in terms of our reporting, our reporting is done under different conditions. For instance, you know, we have done substantial reporting on Darfur where we haven't necessarily been allowed to go in. We were allowed to go in once. I doubt that if we had asked specifically to do the kind of reporting that we did in Gambella, that we would have been allowed to go to Gambella. In fact, I think most groups found it very difficult to go to Gambella. So I don't want to go into any more detail there. But I think that most countries in Africa allow us in, but I think there are questions about why they would allow us in and what kinds of questions we ask.

Now, to the other question you asked, which I think is a very very important question, and one of the reasons that we have focused on Gambella and Oromia is because, in a sense, they represent two very, very different types of problems. We began to work on Gambella not because we decided that we wanted to focus on the Gambella human rights situation, but because there was a growing concern, actually here in Congress and other places, about reports that were coming out of Gambella about a possible genocide, which were driven in part by the Congress' concern about what was going on in Sudan. And we were asked to go into Gambella by people not in order to document the atrocities, but in order to help provide a more objective assessment of what the extent of the abuses were.

And I think that if anyone reads our report on Gambella, they will notice a couple of things. One, we don't call it a genocide. We are very harshly critical of what the military did. We are very specific in identifying who we think was involved, at what levels they were involved; we are very specific in documenting the number of incidents and in the scope of other massacres. We estimate roughly 450 people in Gambella. That is not a—it pales in comparison, obviously, to some of the other places. That doesn't mean it is not im-

portant. And, in fact, our concern about Gambella and what has struck us the most is that Gambella is a situation where we think the Ethiopian Government ought to be able to do something. Our report does not accuse the Ethiopian Government of direct responsibility.

Now, in Oromia you have a fundamentally different situation. Oromia matters. Oromia is the largest region. It is the single largest group. It is the population group which has the most historical right or most historical—has been—had its rights denied, over time, more than any other group.

The situation that exists now, the OPDO, which is the EPRDF party, was actually created by the TPLF in the run-up to the EPRDF. It was a party that was created with no—at the time—I am not saying that it doesn't have them now—but at the time, with no real indigenous roots. It was not linked to Oromo civil society. It was an artificial construct. We don't see a hopeful future for Ethiopia until something is done to address the problem of human rights abuses in Oromia. It matters.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much. Let me just—my last remark or two. The whole question of Eritrea and the registration of religious groups.

Secondly, about the probable victory that the ruling party would have in Ethiopia. I would be very surprised if they did not win either, and I think the elections will be fair and free. It is just that parties in power tend to have the inertia of being in power, and that is very difficult anywhere, as we see as Democrat Minorities to overcome a strong Majority. I mean, that is natural anywhere. It doesn't mean that Republicans are doing anything illegal. They are just using the power that comes with sitting in the White House and control of Congress and all of that. It is legitimate, it is honest. It is democracy.

And so, not saying that we can compare the elections in Eritrea or Zimbabwe to what is happening here, but the ruling party in many instances, it is very difficult to disrupt them and they tend to move forward. I would hope that there would be some minority parties winning.

Secondly, though, on the whole question of religion, as we are talking about, my feeling is that Eritrea is not in the same category with Sudan and China. Even in New Jersey, we have had mosques who tried to locate in a community, had to register, had to say whether they filed the 1C3, had to list their imam, and were rejected because they—well, we don't have enough land or we are not—we have got too many religious places.

And so it is wrong anywhere to reject a group. And these new groups that are in Eritrea should certainly have the right to exist. But I have seen things right in my own State, the next county, where the same thing is going on. And there needs to be outrage in our country to this kind of discrimination of religion. It is not government-run, but in local communities, the local government looks the other way when they could say this is a violation of religious freedom. But they don't. It is unpopular. Who is going to champion a mosque in the town of some upper-income town? Some have come in, but there has been more rejections quietly than there has been approvals.

And so I look at this whole question where we do have a lack of consistency. I think we all agree with that. I think that the Africa Union needs to step up to the plate, too, and be more forceful. However, it is understandable why many African countries do not reject Cuba, you know. Or, as you know, during the fight for decolonization, the United States created NATO, and many of the European countries, although in the NATO document, said that USM1s and U.S. military weaponry and so forth that we supported to NATO—as you remember Western Europe was devastated—should not be used in colonies that were still colonialized, you know, they were still—decolonization did not happen until the middle 1950s and on through the 1960s.

And when I was a young advocate I used to see pictures from freedom fighters in Africa that would hold up U.S.-made M1s that were being used by the Portuguese, for example, in Angola, used in Kenya—well, Britain had their own weapons—but many of the weapons that were used to suppress the independence movement of African countries came from the Western Europeans, supplied by the Americans.

And so it takes a while. That was, you know, a few years ago, but we used to appeal to the U.S. to get on the side of the freedom fighters and said that they do deserve independence. However, we were loyal to Western Europe. They were our allies, and therefore we did not disassociate ourselves with the brutal behavior of the colonial powers, the French killing Algerians, shooting them in the back, murdering them when they left; the terrible South African forces that were in Angola that the Cuban troops went and pushed them back out. Once again, the United States not opposing the apartheid Government of South Africa.

As a matter of fact, Vice President Cheney voted, after 23 years of Mandela being in prison, that he should stay in prison; the only Member of the Congress, thank God, that voted after 23 years of Nelson Mandela being in prison should stay in prison. And so it is very difficult for old wounds to be healed, because they were wrong. And you do have to remember history so that you don't repeat the mistakes.

Organizations like ANC and CANU and SANU and ZOPRO—and you can go on and on—were supported, not by the U.S., but were supported by other people who took advantage of the situation, knowing that they were wrong in their policies. USSR, Cuba, however, we were wrong by suppressing these groups. We should have supported them, too, really. So then it would have been a neutral thing and the United States could have helped in the liberation of Africa by saying it is fair for countries to be independent; in the 1950s and the 1960s, should not still be tied to the Berlin Treaty of 1880, you see.

So I think as we move forward, it is not surprising to me that, you know, some of these longtime—the Lancaster House Accord, which Britain and the United States said, “We will buy the land from the White settlers because we know they have 70 percent of the land,” and the only thing to do was to get the Governor of Zimbabwe to purchase it. That was agreed to. Well, they never did it. Did a little bit, didn't, stopped it. Now Blair says, “I can't—you know, that was back in 1980. I don't have anything to do with

that.” So another promise broken to where Mugabe, who finally found he was losing popularity, decided to say, “Oh, you know, how about that Lancaster House thing,” you know, and brings it up and rightfully so. The West turned their back on an agreement, allowed him then to demagogue it. But he was right in the fact that an agreement was made and not followed through, and giving him, then, a platform to say, is that fair? Is it right? Didn’t they turn their back?

And even though two wrongs don’t make a right, a lot of times, once again, it is very difficult to undo these things. We have to continue to work at it. We have got to continue to push democracy. We have got to continue to chastise the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea when they are doing wrong things, imprisoning people.

As you can see, I have been an equal opportunity basher for both. But I think, too, that both of them are doing things in the right direction and my hope is that we can somehow engage them to try to see the light, because, as I mentioned, neither one wants to go to war. That is a fact. And I kind of agree.

However, the absence of war, Meles said he will never shoot the first bullet. However, Isaias said avoidance of war forever is no answer either. So there is something that has got to happen.

And I appreciate both of you and Ambassador Shinn and, of course, once again the Chairman for calling this very important meeting. And I have missed my plane, too, so—

Mr. SMITH. You don’t want to miss yours. Before going to Dr. Boozman just to say very briefly, my point in bringing up Cuba is that there are current-day modern, as we speak, political prisoners, including a number of Afro-Cubans. One of them that I have adopted is Dr. Bissette who received a sentence of more than 25 years, most recently because of his human rights advocacy. He is an OB-GYN. He is a very learned man and would be a great leader someday if given the opportunity in Cuba.

It has always been appalling to me, and I was one of those on this Committee, in this room in the early 1980s when the Reagan Administration wanted to use quiet diplomacy vis-a-vis South Africa and apartheid, who voted for full sanctions. I broke with my party on that one, believing that was the best means to that end. I didn’t question the motives of those who took the other view.

But my point is that Cuba right now shouldn’t get a pass, or any country, when they are torturing people; and China certainly tortures with impunity.

In 2 weeks we will be holding a hearing on the very issue you raised, Mr. Peterson, on the growing influence of the PRC in Africa, because they are enabling human rights abuse through complicity and nonchalance. When it comes to whether it is a leftist, rightist, or somewhere-in-the-middle regime, if you are getting tortured you don’t say something like, “Oh, they are the Communists, it hurts more.” It hurts just as much from a rightist regime as well as a leftist.

Mr. Boozman. And I know, Dr. Clough, you might have to go.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Yes. Go ahead and leave. Yes, sir, go ahead.

Mr. CLOUGH. Dave will amply represent us all.

Mr. BOOZMAN. The only thing I would say is, again, it is late and I really have enjoyed the testimony today. I want to thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for having this hearing.

Now, when I was in Djibouti, it seemed like most of the population—I don't want to characterize this badly—but a great deal of the population was either sitting around chewing on khat or waiting for the plane to arrive.

One of my concerns, I have as much concern as anybody about the two, you know, individuals in Eritrea that are in prison and things. And yet, with the khat production and this and that, potentially you have, you know, hundreds, thousands, of people enslaved every day by their dependency on that.

Do you see—and this is a little bit off of what we have been talking about, but I know in reading the materials that were handed out, it mentioned that Ethiopia was—more and more farmers were going to that, as far as production, versus the coffee, because of the price and stuff.

Is that something that our State Department needs to get more aggressive on as far as dealing with, or are we dealing with it? Do you have any idea as to what is going on in that relation?

Mr. PETERSON. Well, I wouldn't know what the State Department is doing about the problem really. I can say that with the Endowment we do have a lot of programs in Somaliland and Somalia, where khat is a major problem, as you have described. And I know that the governments there—well, there have been some attempts to do something about it, but really the male population is so almost totally devoted to the drug that it is really very difficult for them to stop it.

Of course Ethiopia is where much of the khat is coming from, and this is a problem there, and Yemen as well. I know we are supporting many women's organizations that are promoting democracy; Somaliland, for example. And there was an article, I believe in the *Washington Post* or *New York Times*, a week or 2 ago that was talking about women's organizations and how they have really emerged and become much more active politically and much more influential, because the men tend to spend a lot more time chewing their khat than, you know, dealing with even running the government.

It is a problem. People are trying to address it. But I couldn't really say what the United States could do about it. As I understand, it is legal here in the United States still. So the trade is allowed all over the world as far as I know, and if it could be restricted perhaps that would help. But right now there is not much being done about it.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Boozman, thank you very much. And Mr. Peterson, thank you very much. Is there anything else you would like to add before we adjourn?

Mr. PETERSON. Thank you very much for having me here today.

Mr. SMITH. We really appreciate it. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:51 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Donald Yamamoto by
Representative Betty McCollum (#1)
House International Relations Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights
And International Operations
May 5, 2005**

Question:

I am concerned that the mobilization of Ethiopia's military to the disputed border area has resulted in extraordinary military expenditures by two nations with extremely impoverished populations. At the same time, the U.S. government is expending hundreds of millions of dollars in development and emergency humanitarian assistance to meet the basic food and medical needs of the Ethiopian people and significantly less to Eritrea. It appears that the State Department's failure to directly engage the two parties in solving the border dispute, while funding the growing humanitarian needs of these two countries, is not advancing U.S. interests and in fact is contributing to greater instability.

Is the U.S. willing to become directly engaged in resolving the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea? And, is our government considering using humanitarian and development assistance as a diplomatic tool to leverage a permanent border demarcation and a demilitarization of the border area?

Answer:

As I stated in my testimony on May 5, the United States, along with the international community, has sought to move both governments over the past two years toward implementing the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission decision. The United States is still willing to facilitate communication between Ethiopia and Eritrea to achieve a stable, lasting

peace on the border. Peace is not sustainable so long as the border is not resolved. The United States remains concerned about the possibility of renewed hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea even as both countries' leaders deny wanting armed conflict.

Humanitarian assistance is provided on the basis of urgent need and is not used as a punitive diplomatic tool. Development assistance is allocated taking into account need, commitment and performance. The USG, working closely with the international community, has been actively engaged in trying to resolve the stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea so that both countries can focus on the economic and political development that will benefit their people.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Donald Yamamoto by
Representative Betty McCollum (#2)
House International Relations Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights
And International Operations
May 5, 2005**

Question:

Confronting the root causes of food security and extreme poverty in Ethiopia cannot be achieved unless rapid population growth is addressed. In Ethiopia, the population has doubled in the last 25 years and nearly 50% of the population is under age 15. Estimates project Ethiopia's population could reach 150 million by the year 2050. This rate of population growth is economically and environmentally unsustainable. Furthermore, the inevitable competition for water, land and natural resources will contribute to political instability as a national and regional level.

What is the U.S. government doing to expand access to contraceptives and voluntary family planning, especially for couples living in the heavily populated rural areas where most families have no access to modern health care and food insecurity is already a chronic problem?

Answer:

Poor access to family planning and reproductive health services increases both Ethiopia's population growth rate and the incidence of pregnancy-related deaths. USAID's strategic approach is to help Ethiopia improve the health of its citizens so that households and communities are able to withstand future shocks such as drought and food insecurity. Family planning, reproductive health and contraception are often integrated with HIV/AIDS and child survival services to increase access since the national

health delivery sector is limited. Funding has increased from \$8.2 million in FY 2004 to \$20 million in FY 2005.

USAID supports national level advocacy and policy planning in contraceptive security. In FY 2003, a contraceptive prevalence study conducted in Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and SNNP regions, where some 85% of Ethiopians live, showed a prevalence rate of 21% for all methods and 18.3% for modern methods. The study showed that 47% were new users, evidence of success due to the work conducted by community based reproductive health (CBRH) agents. Twenty-one partner organization NGOs implement family planning and reproductive health programs in over 450 urban and rural districts. To improve national contraceptive availability, USAID-funded training for over 1,200 frontline health workers in contraceptive logistics management and linked 144 CBRH agents to contraceptive social marketing, all of whom are now selling their products in marketplaces. Family planning and reproductive health training was also provided to 362 traditional birth attendants and former female circumcisers, who work at the grass roots level and are often the only contact a woman has with the health system and who help strengthen the decision making ability of women over their health and the health of their families.