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ETHIOPIA AFTER MELES: THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

OF THE

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ETHIOPIA AFTER MELES: THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 2013

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:28 a.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 and good morning, and I deeply apologize for the lateness in starting.

We never know, when we put together a hearing, what the voting situation will be like on the floor. We just had 14 votes and we have more, unfortunately, in the not too distant future. So I apologize in advance for the delay.

Today's hearing will examine the human rights and governance situation in Ethiopia and the status of U.S. relations with Ethiopia. Given Ethiopia's important cooperation in opposing Islamic militants in Somalia as well as its cooperation in other counterterrorism and peacekeeping efforts, the administration, has been reluctant, in my opinion to seriously hold the Ethiopian Government to account for persistent egregious human rights violations, including the inability of the opposition political parties to function, restrictions on civil society organizations, journalists that are prevented from operating freely, and forced removals of citizens from their lands. I know they're raised but my hope is that additional weight will be given.

According to USAID's Assistant Administrator for Africa, Earl Gast—and we're very delighted to have you here—USAID believes that open channels of communication with the Ethiopian Government create opportunities to influence democracy rights and governance issues and I know that is a very real and powerful belief and it may work.

But, unfortunately, we haven't seen the fruit. However, Amnesty International will testify today and I quote, "[s]ince 2005 the human rights situation in the country has deteriorated still further with significantly increased restrictions placed on freedom of expression, association and other rights. Sadly, the Ethiopian authorities have not acted in a vacuum during this period." According to Amnesty, the U.S. "and others in the international community have failed to raise concern over the government's systematic viola-

tion of human rights and flouting of its international obligations. The failure to speak out and press for change has emboldened the government and has allowed Ethiopia to set a dangerous example for other governments in the region to emulate. It is critical that the United States and other members of the international community," Amnesty goes on, "press the Ethiopian authorities to address human rights concerns and repeal and reform key legislation and policies."

Amnesty also notes that in its testimony that "[f]or Ethiopians held in detention, conditions continue to be extremely harsh. Torture is regularly reported to take place during interrogation in the initial stages of detention, often before the detainees have access to their families or to legal representatives. Prisoners have been slapped, suspended from the walls and ceilings by their wrists, beaten with various objects, denied sleep, electrocuted, and had weights suspended from their genitalia. Solitary confinement for extended periods is often reported. Within prison facilities, sanitation was often reported to be poor. Amnesty International has received reports of medical resources being withheld and reports of deaths in custody."

I would note parenthetically, and I'll never forget it, in the 1980s as a relatively new Member of Congress—I was elected in 1981—reading Amnesty's report called "Tortures in the 80s" and it talked about what was going on in certain African countries including Ethiopia and barbaric mistreatment of detainees and, sadly, as they will say today, it continues in Ethiopia today.

Ethiopia is Africa's second most populous country after Nigeria, as we all know, and the United States considers its government to be an important development and regional security partner, as it is.

Ethiopia plays a key leadership role in the region, hosts the African Union headquarters, and is a major troop contributor to U.N. peacekeeping operations.

According to the State Department, the three pillars of bilateral relationship with Ethiopia are economic growth and development; democracy, governance, and human rights; and regional peace and security.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in Human Rights and Labor, Karen Hanrahan, stated in October, in a speech that "advancing democracy and human rights is one of our highest priorities in our engagement with Ethiopia."

Nevertheless, it has been difficult to get cooperation from the current and previous administrations in confronting the Government of Ethiopia. As you know, Ambassador Yamamoto, under the Bush administration I actually introduced the Ethiopia Human Rights Act because of that lack of cooperation and that lack of progress.

In June 2005, following a contentious election in which Prime Minister Meles and his party seemed to suffer unexpected losses, demonstrators led by college students took to the streets to protest a delayed release of the election results.

The government's reaction was to deploy snipers who shot and killed protestors and to jail hundreds of others. An increasingly violent response to protests took place in November of that year. The

death toll resulting from both protests was put at 193, but the numbers arrested has never been confirmed.

In the summer of 2005, I travelled to Ethiopia, along with Greg Simpkins, to assess the situation and to meet with Prime Minister Meles, members of his government, political opposition leaders, including one of our witnesses today, Berhanu Nega, civil society representatives, the religious community, and the diplomatic community as well.

What I found was a government leader who was arrogant in his certainty that he could arrest his political opposition whenever and wherever he wanted.

I also found a political opposition convinced that they had won a majority in the legislative elections of that year. Unfortunately, the government's view won the day and I do say, Ambassador Yamamoto, I know you spoke out here as well as in Addis over and over again expressing the consternation and the opposition of the administration and, of course, of the State Department and I always will thank you for that.

Mr. Nega and other political leaders were arrested and held in jail for more than a year on charges that they had to continually be changed due to the repeated failure to convict them.

Some of them who managed to be released from jail found themselves forced to live outside the country, such as Mr. Nega. The political space for opposition parties, as you say in your testimony, is restricted.

The imprisonment and prosecutions of political prisoners has dissolved parties and caused reformulations that also weren't able to continue.

Mr. Nega founded Ginbot 7, a new political party in Ethiopia, but 2 years ago it was declared a terrorist organization by the Meles government and not only was it unable to operate openly but Ethiopian journalists were prevented from reporting on the party or on its statements.

Similarly, the Government of Ethiopia, according to the State Department's human rights report, continues to imprison more than 400 opposition leaders, activists, and local journalists by the end of 2012, many on vague national security-related charges.

As of 2011, the Ethiopian Government had completed long-term cheap land leases on more than 3.6 million hectares, equivalent to the size of the Netherlands, mainly to large-scale foreign agricultural investors. In addition, 2.1 million hectares of land have since been made available for such leases to foreigners.

An estimated 1.5 million Ethiopians in four regions have been displaced, many of them subject to a supposedly voluntary program known as "villagization."

Other displaced due to these land leases, or because of major dam projects, now reside in refugee camps in Kenya.

Despite an unacceptable political human rights environment in Ethiopia, we hold out some hope that the post-Meles government may yet change.

I remember when you testified, Ambassador Yamamoto, in 2006, you talked about being at a crossroads and the hopes for change. We're right back there with that hope for change.

Earlier this month, thousands of Ethiopians protested political repression in the capital city of Addis Ababa. Under the late Prime Minister Meles, such a show of defiance likely would have been met with official violence, snipers, and mass arrests.

But the government of the current Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, did not react that way and this is an encouraging sign.

Our witnesses today include the former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, the U.S. official in charge of our significant aid portfolio to Ethiopia, the former elected mayor of Addis Ababa, a member of the first U.S. delegation to meet with the current government, and a long-time Ethiopian activist on human rights. I look forward to your testimonies and yield to my friend and colleague, Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for having this meeting. I want to get quickly to the witnesses so I just want to make a brief statement.

One, I had the privilege and honor of being in Addis Ababa a few weeks ago at the 50th anniversary of the African Union along with Ambassador Yamamoto, and it was exciting to be there and I look forward to going back in August for a seminar with the Aspen Institute.

I think that there are a lot of exciting things happening in Ethiopia—the economy. I'm hoping that things will be worked out with Egypt over the development of the dam and as we think about the economic progress and I think, you know, most folks around the world do celebrate that, I do have to say that from the district that I represent in Los Angeles there's an area of my district that's called Little Ethiopia.

And I know we debate as to who has the largest Ethiopian population outside of the country but I know that L.A. is either number one or number two behind the District of Columbia.

And I will tell you that since I have represented the area—I've been in Congress 3 years but I was in the state legislature for 6 years before that and for all 6 years I heard from the Ethiopian residents who have consistently expressed their concerns about the human rights issue, especially after the '05 election.

I was actually preparing to go and then the election happened and it, clearly, became a situation where I couldn't travel there. But over the years, I have heard about a number of the human rights abuses that the chair described.

There have been people that have visited Los Angeles who have been persecuted in the country and came to, one, see if we would be able to support them in the United States, and I know many of my constituents feel that they can't even go home to visit.

And so I'm looking forward to the testimony. I want to get to that. As the chair said, we probably are going to be interrupted again. I'm hoping we'll be able to get through both panels before we have to go back for an even longer series of votes.

So I thank the witnesses for coming this morning. I look forward to hearing what you have to say, as I always do, especially from the two of you.

But, you know, I really would like to take the opportunity of this hearing to drill down and find out exactly what the situation is, what our Government is doing about it and what the future might hold.

So thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Meadows.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As you know, Ethiopia is a critical U.S. ally and they have helped us oppose, you know, Islamist militants in Somalia, they host the African Union headquarters and, as has been mentioned, the second most populous country in Africa.

So they're the key to the Horn of Africa and the—also the key to East Africa and to some extent the Arabian Peninsula, and even yesterday we heard about attacks at the UNDP office in Mogadishu. And this region as a whole is still very volatile and so the importance of an ongoing relationship with Ethiopia cannot be overstated.

And so that's why it's disheartening to see some of the problems that we still need to address there. One party, as has been mentioned, dominates Ethiopia's political system. The media is often harassed. Basic freedoms are still restricted.

So these are real concerns and as Ethiopia's Parliament passes new, regressive laws we need to see steps forward and I am hoping to hear today from you those steps that we can take that will move forward and that exist.

And as Ethiopia is one of the largest recipients of U.S. bilateral assistance in Fiscal Year 2012, as we continue to look to Ethiopia to be a good friend we want to make sure that those relationships are not only good for the United States but for the people of Ethiopia as a whole.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Meadows.

I'd like to now welcome our very distinguished witnesses, beginning with Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, who is no stranger to this subcommittee, having testified before us several times in the last session of Congress and again a few weeks ago.

He is now serving with distinction as the Acting Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs in the U.S. Department of State.

His prior assignments included serving as U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau for African Affairs and most recently as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in that bureau.

He also served in Djibouti, Eritrea, Japan, and China and, again, has had a long and distinguished career in the Foreign Service.

We'll then hear from Mr. Earl Gast, who is USAID's Assistant Administrator in the Bureau for Africa and his work at USAID is leading development programming, especially in post-conflict and transitioning societies.

He's also been a frequent witness before this subcommittee. We always benefit from his insights and counsel. Prior to his current position, Mr. Gast served in Afghanistan, Colombia, Eastern Europe, and Rome.

Mr. Gast was also one of the first USAID employees stationed in Iraq. He played an equally important role in developing the post-crisis strategy for Kosovo, overseeing all mission operations. Most prominently, he received the Agency's Award for Heroism and the Distinguished Unit Award.

Gentlemen, please proceed, beginning with Ambassador Yamamoto.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONALD Y. YAMAMOTO, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE, BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Thank you very much, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and the other honored members, and I ask for submission of my full statement for the record.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. On my oral presentation I want to add points that are kind of different from the statement that I've submitted.

Today's hearing raises issues that will advance the hope of Ethiopia's people for the future of their country yet the path that lays ahead will be marked on how the people, the government, the opposition, and civil society can work cooperatively and harmoniously together to come to terms not only with Meles' legacy but how they will work together to define or possibly redefine the future course for Ethiopia.

What Meles achieved when he was the Prime Minister for Ethiopia was economic growth, set political policies that have guided Ethiopia since the fall of the Derg, and the establishment of Ethiopia's regional and international importance.

The Prime Minister became the indispensable negotiator in Somalia, the critical mediator in Sudan, the eloquent spokesperson for all of Africa on climate and development challenges.

He proved to be an effective person whose persuasive and forceful negotiation style and intellectual depth of understanding of issues set the tone and course of discussions on important domestic and regional issues.

His articulate discussions of issues with crystal clear and insightful assessment distinguished him as a political leader and also brought Ethiopia and Africa heightened respect and authority.

However, the cost of his efforts also raised concerns. As Ambassador, I raised, on behalf of the United States, our voice on the narrowing of political space and we spoke clearly and decisively that the laws in—which were passed in and by themselves may appear logical and necessary but when taken together and implemented without judgement or judicious temperament could prove not only a severe obstacle to personal freedoms and economic independence but also, if pursued without wisdom, could significantly alter Ethiopia's image in a profoundly negative manner.

How Ethiopia's people, political rulers, opposition groups, and civil society work together to deal with not only the legacy of Meles but to define where the country moves—either forward in a hopeful direction or into gridlock of political partisanships dominated by uncompromising views where alternate views or voices are based on what is merely wrong rather than what needs to be done, what must be achieved to realize a more democratic and hopeful future for Ethiopia, remains a challenge.

Ethiopia, again, I believe, is at an important crossroads in which the country, mindful of its past, has the opportunity to move forward. As Congresswoman Bass said, she and Secretary Kerry were at the African Union Summit and there Prime Minister

Hailemariam as President of the African Union outlined a key direction not only for Ethiopia but for all of Africa.

That is to invest in the economy, to realize a transformation to a more technical world, investment in technology and vocational education, commitment to infrastructure development, overcoming bureaucratic red tape and unreasonable laws and, finally, to promote democratic values.

These are great challenges as well as great hopes. If not handled astutely and with great political skill as well as with courageous and decisive action, Ethiopia may also go down a very different path in which its future could be sacrificed to partisan politics.

It will take much understanding, compromise, tempered by deep commitment to achieve what is in the interests of the people of Ethiopia and not in deference to political positions or personal preferences.

And so the United States will forever remain dedicated to the core values and goals of democratic values and human rights policies as well as economic prosperity and security.

We stand firmly with Ethiopia, its people, its future generation to achieve together a better future for Ethiopia and for Africa, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yamamoto follows:]

Testimony
Acting Assistant Secretary Donald Yamamoto
Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Before the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations
June 20, 2013
Ethiopia after Meles Zenawi

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss the situation in Ethiopia since the death in August 2012 of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Post-Meles Ethiopia presents the United States with a significant opportunity to encourage Ethiopia to improve its human rights record, liberalize its economy, and provide increased space for opposition parties and civil society organizations. Post-Meles Ethiopia also presents a significant challenge since Ethiopia plays an important role in advancing regional integration and mitigating regional conflict in Somalia and Sudan. Our partnership with Ethiopia balances these interests by focusing on democracy, governance, and human rights; economic growth and development; and regional peace and security.

Ethiopia and the United States enjoy strong ties on several levels. More than one million people of Ethiopian origin live in the United States. Many of these individuals are returning to their homeland to expand the political and economic

ties between our two countries. A wide range of groups and individuals in the United States provide humanitarian support to Ethiopians. Ethiopia is also home to one of the oldest Peace Corps programs.

Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights

Ethiopia's weak human rights record creates tension in our relationship and we continue to push for press freedom, appropriate application of anti-terrorism legislation, a loosening of restrictions on civil society, greater tolerance for opposition views, and religious dialogue. The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) controls all aspects of government, including the legislative branch where the EPRDF and its allies hold 545 of 547 parliamentary seats. Political space in Ethiopia is limited and opposition viewpoints are generally not represented in government. In recent years, Ethiopia has passed legislation restricting press freedoms and NGO activities. On June 2, several thousand demonstrators calling for the release of political prisoners, an end to interference in religious affairs, action on unemployment and corruption, and an end to illegal evictions marched peacefully through the capital, without government interference. This was the first such political demonstration officially permitted by the Ethiopian government since 2005.

Economic Growth and Development

Ethiopia ranks among the ten fastest-growing economies in the world, averaging 10 percent GDP growth over the last five years. State-run infrastructure drives much of this growth. Our bilateral trade and investment relationship is limited by investment climate challenges and the lack of market liberalization. The main sectors of interest to U.S. companies are telecommunications, financial services, logistics, and wholesaling. U.S. firms have a significant competitive advantage in these areas. These sectors, however, are closed to foreign investors and U.S. firms are discouraged by Ethiopia's relatively weak private sector and state-dominated economy. These issues are compounded by macroeconomic challenges that include volatile inflation, a shortage of foreign exchange, lack of capital, financing, and logistical bottlenecks. Despite the challenges, however, there are clearly opportunities and U.S. business is taking advantage of them. Currently about 100 U.S. companies are represented in Ethiopia. Total U.S. exports to Ethiopia in 2012 were $1.29 billion; imports from Ethiopia totaled $183 million. Ethiopian Airlines is an important customer for Boeing, with over one billion dollars in recent purchases, supported in part by the Export-Import Bank. Ethiopian Airlines was the third airline to purchase the Boeing 787 Dreamliner and the first to get it back into service following the Federal Aviation Administration's temporary grounding. Ethiopia will also host the Africa Growth and Opportunity

Act Forum on August 12-13 this year, as we begin the dialogue on renewal of AGOA in 2015.

Ethiopia is a significant recipient of U.S. foreign aid, having benefited from over $740 million in FY 2012 assistance, primarily in health (under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Global Health Initiative, and the President's Malaria Initiative), agriculture and food and nutrition security (through Feed the Future and the G-8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition), basic education, and food aid. Other major donors include the United Kingdom, the World Bank, the European Union, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria. As a matter of policy, the Ethiopian government is focused on eventually eliminating the need for donor assistance. The Ethiopian government co-hosted the Child Survival Call to Action and has emerged as a leader on the push to end preventable maternal and child deaths.

Regional Peace and Security

As chair of the African Union, Ethiopia will play a key role in determining AU priorities on peace and security and development and governance. Ethiopia views Somali instability and al-Shabaab and other Islamic extremist groups as serious threats to its national security. Though not a troop contributing country for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Ethiopia expends significant resources to support the AMISOM-led campaign against al-Shabaab including

deploying its own forces to fight alongside the Somali National Army and AMISOM. Expansion of U.S. funding of Somali National Army forces in the Gedo region is appreciated by Ethiopia and helps keep Ethiopia active in the fight against al-Shabaab. Ethiopia maintains strong relations with both Sudan and South Sudan and is the sole troop-contributor (4,200 increasing to over 5,000 shortly) to the UN Interim Stabilization Force in Abyei (UNISFA), where an Ethiopian peacekeeper was killed and two others were seriously injured in an attack on May 4. Since he took office, Prime Minister Hailemariam has organized two summits of the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan to facilitate negotiations; pressed Sudan to negotiate with rebels from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North; and urged Sudan to allow humanitarian aid into Blue Nile and South Kordofan. The Government of Ethiopia has also contributed more than 2,000 personnel to the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). Ethiopia continues to receive and welcome a stream of refugees from Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan.

Advancing Our Relationship

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, Ethiopia is an important U.S. partner and we value continued cooperation on a range of mutually important objectives.

As Secretary Kerry noted when he met with Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn at the 60th anniversary of the Organization of African Unity summit on May 25, Ethiopia plays a crucial role in fostering peace and stability across the volatile Horn of Africa, particularly in weakening al-Shabaab in Somalia and helping mitigate conflict between Sudan and South Sudan. While the country boasts one of the fastest growing economies in the world, our evolving commercial and business relationship is limited due to restrictions on foreign investment, investment climate challenges, and the Ethiopian government's strict control of the economy. In advancing our policy objectives in Ethiopia, we focus simultaneously on improving cooperation in security and counterterrorism, strengthening economic growth and development, and pushing for greater respect for human rights, stronger governance, and democratic principles.

We appreciate Ethiopia's influential role in ensuring regional peace and security, and we will continue to work closely with Ethiopia to coordinate cooperation in Somalia, in the Sudans, and throughout the region.

We are also committed to expanding our bilateral trade and investment relationship, as a key driver for broad-based economic growth. To that end, we will encourage Ethiopia to work toward greater market liberalization, including progress towards World Trade Organization accession. Recent successes on the economic front include a May 13-15 trade mission sponsored by the State of

Illinois and a November 2012 agricultural investment conference sponsored by the Corporate Council on Africa. We are working closely with a major U.S. company to secure multi-million dollar deals in support of several key infrastructure development projects, and American companies have signed letters of intent and committed to investments in support of Ethiopia's country Cooperation Framework under the G8 New Alliance.

On democracy and human rights, we recently secured agreements to do media development training and open two community radio stations. Mechanisms such as our bilateral Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights Working Group, bilateral Economic Growth and Development Working Group, and Bilateral Defense Committee are useful tools for advancing our policy objectives in our three focus pillars. At the same time, we are public in our support for an improved environment for civil society, those we believe to have been subjected to politically-motivated arrests, inclusive democratic processes, and rule-of-law. Making progress on this area will continue to be challenging and will require a great deal of creativity.

Thank you very much. I will be pleased to take your questions.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. Gast.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE EARL W. GAST, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR AFRICA, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. GAST. Good morning, Chairman Smith, good morning, Ranking Member Bass and good morning to all other members of the subcommittee, and thank you very much for inviting me here to speak before you today on an important topic, and that is Ethiopia after Prime Minister Meles.

The death last year of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi marked the end of an era in Ethiopia. Fully half of the population had never known another leader or another style of leadership and his passing brought with it hope and trepidation for the country's future.

Ten months later, the ruling EPRDF remains firmly in control of all organs of government. In recent years, Ethiopia has experienced a period of relative stability, marked improvements in the well being of its people and an increasingly important position in the international community.

The government's productive safety net program, or PSNP, which provides food and cash in exchange for building community infrastructure, helped provide 7.2 million persons with income and sources and prevented them from slipping into crisis during the 2011 to 2012 drought.

The availability of education and health services has flourished. Even in remote communities, economic opportunities are expanding for youth and women. Ethiopia is also one of the United States' key African partners in fighting terrorism, promoting national and regional food security and providing peacekeepers in some of the most difficult locations in Africa.

But at the same time, the Ethiopian Government systematically limits space for political parties, independent media and civil society to operate, significantly constraining the ability of people to influence government decisions and hold their government accountable.

In USAID, we have a two-pronged approach to democracy, human rights and governance issues. The first integrates these issues into our core programs, in other sectors to support social and economic resilience and encourage communities to participate in decision making.

For example, by supporting the creation of decentralized financial systems at 76 government hospitals, USAID not only improved the quality of medical services but we also strengthened these institutions in financial management, accountability and transparency.

The second prong of our approach in Ethiopia capitalizes on opportunities as they rise to promote respect for human and civil rights. Toward this end, we support political dialogue, legal education and court reforms through a variety of organizations and through the government itself.

Although there are major impediments to working with Ethiopian civil society groups, we do support the organizations that ac-

countability—that accountably deliver services in a manner that is respectful to human rights.

Our strategy is capitalized on Ethiopia's commitment to poverty reduction by supporting sustainable development through community-based decision making and public involvement in every area of our work whether it's agriculture, economic growth, health, education.

We encourage social accountability mechanisms such as scorecards and participatory budgeting that helps citizens hold government accountable for service delivery and institute the practice of participation and dialogue.

And by working together with the Government of Ethiopia on our shared agendas to advance economic growth and development, we are fostering opportunities for dialogue about public participation and transparency while having real positive effects that will accumulate over time into significant change, change that will increasingly enable and encourage democratic governance.

Ongoing dialogue with the Ethiopian Government creates opportunities to advocate reforms that will hold government accountable and gradually expand political rights and civil liberties.

By integrating democracy and governance work into the significant investments that we're making, USAID is—we are gaining important opportunities to support social and economic resilience in Ethiopian society.

I very much welcome this opportunity to discuss our programs in greater detail.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gast follows:]

Testimony of U.S. Agency for International Development
Assistant Administrator for Africa Earl Gast

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health,
Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
June 20, 2013

"Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Democracy and Human Rights"

Good morning Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today. It is always an honor to have the opportunity to discuss USAID's work with you, and for me personally, it is a pleasure to appear before you again.

The death last year of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi marked the end of an era in Ethiopia. Fully half of the population has never known another leader or another style of governance, and his passing brought with it both hope and trepidation for the country's future. Ten months later, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) remains firmly in control of all organs of government. This includes the Parliament, which selected a new Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, and Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, during an extraordinary session on September 21, 2012, marking Ethiopia's first peaceful political transition in modern history. It is significant that neither Hailemariam nor Demeke is a member of the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front), which led Ethiopia since the 1991 overthrow of the Mengistu communist regime, nor are they members of the Orthodox Church, unlike all of their predecessors.

In recent years, Ethiopia has experienced a period of relative stability and marked improvements in the well-being of its people. For example, the Government of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), which has provided food and cash in exchange for building community infrastructure, helped prevent 7.2 million people from slipping into crisis during the historic 2011-12 drought. The availability of education and health services has flourished, even in remote communities. Ethiopia is one of the United States' key African partners in fighting terrorism, countering the effects of global climate change, promoting food security, and providing peacekeepers in some of the most difficult locations in Africa such as Darfur and Abyei. In fact, USAID's programs in Ethiopia have seen remarkable results. At the same time, the Ethiopian government has systematically limited space for political parties, independent media, and civil society to operate, significantly constraining the ability of the people to influence government decisions and hold their government accountable.

USAID believes that open channels of communication with the Ethiopian government create opportunities to influence democracy, rights, and governance issues. Bilateral engagement on development issues and donor forums are some of the avenues through which the United States brings concerns to Ethiopian officials. By working with the Ethiopian Government to meet its stated commitments to improve governance and ensure that the population transparently and accountably receives improved services, the U.S. Government safeguards its development investments and encourages democratic opening.

USAID uses a "two-pronged approach" to address democracy, human rights and governance issues in Ethiopia. The first prong integrates democracy, human rights and governance approaches and outcomes into the significant investments USAID is making in other sectors (such as health, agriculture, and climate change) to support social and economic resilience in Ethiopian society and to encourage communities to participate in decision-making. The second prong promotes respect for human and civil rights, capitalizing on opportunities that arise. In this vein, USAID supports political dialogue, legal education, and court reforms through a variety of groups, including with civil society organizations that have exemptions to the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP), universities that are not covered by the CSP, and the Government directly. Although there are major impediments to working with civil society organizations in Ethiopia, it is in the interest of the United States to fund these civil society organizations that deliver services in a manner that is accountable to the citizenry and respectful of human rights.

USAID has taken advantage of Ethiopia's commitment to poverty reduction to build a strategy that supports sustainable development through community-based decision-making and public involvement in every area of our work—from agriculture and economic growth to health and education. We encourage social accountability mechanisms such as scorecards and participatory budgeting to help citizens hold government accountable for service delivery and institute the practice of participation and dialogue.

The Ethiopian Government's comprehensive development plans focus on agriculture-led economic growth as a long-lasting solution to Ethiopia's chronic poverty and food insecurity. Ethiopia was one of the first African members of the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, a commitment by G8 members, African countries, and the private sector to reduce poverty through inclusive agricultural growth. Under the New Alliance, the Government of Ethiopia and G8 members have endorsed a country-specific cooperation framework, through which the Government of Ethiopia has committed to specific policy actions that will improve the environment for private investment that will help Ethiopian farmers increase their productivity.

The G8 New Alliance in Ethiopia is making progress in all commitment areas. An integral seed policy commitment has been completed and other commitments in private sector investment and land certification are underway. Select multinational and local companies are making progress on their investment commitments. For example, USAID, the Government of Ethiopia, and DuPont/Pioneer recently started an enterprise that will boost maize productivity among smallholder farmers and increase food production for local communities by building on DuPont/Pioneer seed and production technologies.

Through Feed the Future—the United States' initiative through which it carries out its New Alliance commitments—USAID supports Ethiopia's priorities for agriculture-based economic growth by improving crop and livestock production, promoting private sector engagement, supporting research and development, and improving market activity. Staff of the new Agriculture Transformation Agency, the Government's Central Statistics Agency, and the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute benefit from USAID training to assist them in becoming more effective and informed administrators who are accountable and more open to input from civil society. Our support also helps the Government survey its citizens on effectiveness of agriculture

development programs and policies. USAID works with hundreds of farmer cooperatives and business associations to improve transparency with improved internal auditing systems, the creation of bylaws for election and operations of governing boards, and increased female participation. We support dialogue between civil society and federal and local governments, assembling hundreds of stakeholder meetings involving government officials, cooperatives, agribusinesses, and farmers to discuss issues that inhibit the growth of the agriculture sector.

In response to the serious drought that affected Ethiopia in 2011-12, USAID expanded efforts to build resilience and reduce the impact of future droughts. Major investments are being made to assist the livestock sector to be more sustainable, to help former herders to transition to new livelihoods, and to tackle nutrition problems. This is part of a multi-donor effort, developed in cooperation with the Ethiopian government, which is investing over $1 billion on resilience in Ethiopia. The recent creation of a State Minister for Livestock in the Ministry of Agriculture demonstrates their increased commitment to tackling these issues.

The PSNP and emergency food assistance are also critical to continuing Ethiopia's improvements in food security and to protecting vulnerable households from shocks. The PSNP—which USAID helped design and is now its most significant donor—was one of the first major efforts to introduce local safeguards that allow beneficiaries to air their grievances through district and sub-district appeals committees. It also promotes civic participation by including communities in district and sub-district food security groups that select beneficiaries for the program, develop community plans, and choose public work projects.

USAID's larger effort to improve the health of Ethiopians will also help build resilience to shocks. Despite major strides over the last decade, the Ethiopian people still face high rates of death and disease. About 350,000 children die each year, and more than 90 percent of child deaths are due to preventable or treatable causes such as pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, malnutrition and HIV/AIDS. Ninety percent of births occur without the assistance of a skilled health professional, and as a result, 19,000 new mothers die each year.

At the African Leadership on Child Survival meeting hosted by the Government of Ethiopia earlier this year, the consensus reached by over 20 African countries present was both significant and historic. The participating countries declared that they are committed to developing and implementing country-led roadmaps that integrate ongoing efforts to accelerate progress to end preventable deaths among children by 2035, and reduce the mortality rate to below 20 per 1,000 live births in all African nations. With support from USAID, Ethiopia has been at the forefront in working toward the achievement of these goals.

USAID's integrated health care program focuses on improving maternal, neonatal, and child health; voluntary family planning and reproductive health; preventing, controlling, and treating infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria; increasing access to clean water and sanitation; and improving the nutritional status of women, infants and young children. USAID also supports the development of much needed human resources and health systems. USAID helped train and deploy over 32,000 health extension workers and 4,000 health officers, greatly increasing the reach of primary health services. USAID also supported the creation of decentralized financial systems at 76 government hospitals and 934 health centers, resulting in improved service quality and financial management.

These programs are implemented alongside complementary efforts to improve the governance of the health sector and citizen participation in decisions about their local health systems. USAID helped the Government of Ethiopia adopt legislation promoting workplace and community-level health insurance, the first of its kind in the country. We are strengthening social accountability by supporting civic participation in facility governance boards, which allow communities to take ownership of the facilities and demand better quality of services and more transparency in budget allocation. An improved health management information system that provides more accurate and timely information will improve evidence-based decision making, planning, budgeting, and transparency. At the same time, USAID grants strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of local nongovernmental organizations to more effectively deliver health services while also strengthening local civil society.

Similarly, USAID has worked closely with the Government of Ethiopia to improve its education system, with impressive results. Over the past 15 years, the Government of Ethiopia has achieved unprecedented growth in universal primary enrollment, which now averages around 95 percent. This effort included a massive initiative to build new schools and alternative basic education centers, decentralize the administration of sector, and conduct national campaigns on the importance of education. Today, Ethiopia has nearly achieved the second Millennium Development Goal, to achieve universal primary education.

However, three USAID national learning assessments revealed that the quality of that education remains well below standards. Rapid growth in enrollment, large classes, and a lack of teaching materials hampered efforts to improve educational quality. The number of years a child spends in school and the quality of that schooling have a direct impact on a country's future growth and stability, so education, especially high-quality education, will be a major factor in reaching Ethiopia's goal of achieving real and long-lasting development. Without an educated citizenry, Ethiopia cannot expect employees or entrepreneurs to perform at maximum capacity, or its public servants to deliver high-quality services.

Therefore, USAID is complementing efforts to get and keep millions of Ethiopian students in school with programs that build the capacity of teachers and institutions with the active involvement of communities. One USAID program to improve primary school management is also building accountable and participatory school leadership while emphasizing strong and continuous monitoring of student and school progress. Another program helps to build civic participation among Ethiopia's primary school children in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Regional Education Bureau, and the Ethiopian Scout Association. Through this effort, USAID helps youth understand social, economic, and political systems and have pride in their heritage. It also enables them to develop a keen respect for the basic human rights and prepares them to become leaders in their society. Dunia, the 14-year-old "Finance Minister" of one of the student councils benefiting from the support, said that "we collect money in a model banking system, where each pupil records their deposits in a banking book and at the same time providing services within the school to generate income. The saved money could be used to cover school expenses and assist the needy."

To close the education gap between boys and girls, USAID identifies gender-related obstacles and implements remedies to remove and overcome them. Better education, especially for girls, has been proven to result in better health and nutrition, higher infant birth weight, age-appropriate entry into school, lower risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, and lower infant mortality, due in part to delayed marriage and child bearing.

To fuel its development efforts in health, education, and economic growth, Ethiopia plans to increase its installed power production capacity from its current 2,000 MW to 10,000 MW by 2015—a goal that will require a $7 billion investment. To reduce the amount of government financing necessary to bridge this gap, the United States is working with Ethiopia to open up the power sector to private power providers. In early June, USAID signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Water and Energy that will serve as the foundation for a multi-year program to strengthen the ability and capacity of the Government to negotiate and close deals with private power developers.

Sustainable development requires good governance and accountability. By continuing to work together with the Government of Ethiopia on our shared agendas to advance economic growth and development, we are fostering opportunities for dialogue about public participation and transparency while having real, positive effects that will accumulate over time into significant change—change which will provide an enabling environment for democratic governance. Ongoing dialogue with the Ethiopian Government creates opportunities to advocate reforms that will hold government accountable, and gradually expand political rights and civil liberties. By integrating democracy and governance work into the significant investments USAID is making in other sectors, we are gaining important opportunities to support social and economic resilience in Ethiopian society.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me here today and for your continued support of USAID's work.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Gast, thank you so much.

Mr. GAST. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Out of deference to our second panel, I'll only ask one question because we have so little time because of about 2 hours of voting that's pending, I should say.

You mentioned that sustainable development requires good governance. We know that for the Fiscal Year 2013, the actual money, of the $351 million in total aid, $1 million has been reserved for democracy type programs and you emphasized the importance of balance.

Can that be beefed up or are there opportunities that are going awry? And as you know, when it comes to child survival and trying to mitigate the problems of HIV/AIDS and all the others, I take a back seat to no one, but it seems to me that helping get that good governance has to be an equal high priority with those other things.

Secondly, on torture, same question or if you could answer it at the same time. I've authored four torture victims relief bills to help people who have suffered PTSD and all of the physical and psychological deleterious effects from torture.

I have met with torture victims everywhere in the world. I've had hearings where we've heard from them and yet people today in Ethiopia are being tortured. What are we doing to stop that?

Mr. GAST. Thank you for your questions, Chairman.

Working in Ethiopia truly is a dilemma. We, as an agency, are elevating the importance of human rights in all of our programming. It's a key component of our democracy, human rights and governance strategy.

And the dilemma really is that we're seeing a government that is investing in its people. It is doing the right things in terms of social investment and social accountability.

Yet, on the other hand, when we look at specific instances that you mentioned—that I know Ambassador Yamamoto will talk about and then when we look at indices that measure human rights and governance and independent media, we see that space is closing and continues to close.

So it is a dilemma for us and it's a debate that we have internally and we also have with our State Department colleagues as well as people in the White House.

So our approach has been to support the good things that are happening to support people. That would be in education, and when you look, Chairman, at 5 years ago where enrollment rates were only at about 20 percent and you see that enrollment rates are now at 90 percent, when you see the significant rise not only in literacy in the country and among students but especially among girls and women, and we look at other health statistics including child survival and also maternal mortality, we know that the government is making investments.

Mr. SMITH. But on the education front, even in your testimony you say that Ethiopia has nearly achieved the second Millennium Development Goal to achieve universal primary education, but, then the big but, that it is inferior. The quality of education is well below standard.

So with every seemingly good thing, there's seemingly down side to it.

Mr. GAST. Sure, but literacy rates are high and so what we're doing as an agency is focusing on outcomes. The numbers are good.

Now we need to focus on the qualitative aspects and we're doing that in partnership with the government in training 20,000 teachers throughout the country and truly emphasizing learning outcomes.

Mr. SMITH. And are we visiting political prisoners, Ambassador? I'm sorry. There's so little time.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes, we are and, of course, when I was the Ambassador there we had many discussions and visits to the prisons to not only look at the conditions of the prisons but also to look at how we can stop any abusive behavior there and to investigate and that's what we've been doing quite——

Mr. SMITH. I have several questions that I will submit just because of time.

I yield to Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. I will try to be quick also. I wanted to know if you could say—and if you can't and we need to talk afterwards let me know—but what happens when we raise the issues of human rights? I mean, what's the basis of the contradiction?

You know, you describe and I'm, you know, aware too of Ethiopia's great progress. You mentioned several indices. So why is the government so fearful? What is—what's the basis of the problem and what happens when we—when we raise it with them?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. I'll give a couple of examples. During 2005 when probably about 30,000 people were detained after that election and the violence that subsequently followed, there were about 71 political prisoners and one of them is going to be on your second panel.

We worked very hard behind the scenes to work with them and the government to get them out and also to visit them in prison and we did that.

I think the issue is that the laws that were passed—the terrorist laws, the NGO laws, et cetera, had been very restrictive and it goes back to where is the comfort level for the government and how they can balance between what is security related and what really is openness.

I mean, when you have a country that doesn't even have Internet connection from Blackberry——

Ms. BASS. I was going to get to that.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yeah. So that comes to is why. I mean, why not have the openness, and those are things that we're working with the government behind the scenes and also in public and to show them how the benefits are for these issues.

Ms. BASS. So the basis of the fear? I mean, it seems to me that that's the reason for this.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. It is. It's——

Ms. BASS. You know, my constituents had asked me—when I was in the state legislature they had wanted me to do a resolution and then in thinking about it, it might have been a resolution in support of what you were doing with the human rights bill.

We weren't able to do that because it—you know, we just dealt with state issues. We didn't get into foreign policy.

But, you know, again, when I talk to constituents they just paint such a very different picture and so the basis of the fear is a fear, first of all, and the basis of it is——

Mr. YAMAMOTO. As I said, this is a crossroad. I mean, if Prime Minister Hailemariam said at the AU, in front of everyone, democratic values are important, unreasonable laws are not good, let's do it. Let's test it. Let's move forward. I think that is what we need to do.

Ms. BASS. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Meadows.

Ms. BASS. I think Mr.——

Mr. SMITH. Oh, I'm sorry.

Mr. GAST. We have also seen some recent openings and so, for example, the Ethiopian Government has invited some experts, foreign experts, to come in to look at registration of religious organizations in the country. So we see that as an opening.

A second one is that we are allowed to work with civil society organizations that are doing peace building—community peace building activities.

And then the third thing that's happening is a forum that will be taken around the country to review and discuss the Charities and Societies Proclamation and that's the one that severely limits the ability of development agencies of working with civil society organizations.

I can't say that it's a perfect picture. It's nowhere near a perfect picture. But there are some openings, as Ambassador Yamamoto cited.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Meadows.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Ambassador, I have one question that I'd like you to address today, if we can.

Ethiopia, as we've mentioned, is a de facto one-party country and you've noted in your—that the ruling party, you know, controls every aspect of government. I think it was 545 of 547 seats on their Parliament.

What can we do to help facilitate healthy opposition and if there is real—a real opposition party that emerges do you see that destabilizing the country or help push for human rights or both?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. And that's an excellent point and that's the dilemma that we face. After the elections we talked to the Prime Minister at that time and said we were very, very disappointed in that result because we made so many gains in 2005 though there were problems on violence.

Are we going backwards? We need to move forward and those are the areas that I think we're working with this new government and the Prime Minister, Hailemariam.

How do you develop the opposition to be a very forceful voice for the people and how can you allow them to be that forceful voice. Those are the areas that we've been trying to work very keenly on our democracy issues but also behind the scenes and with the government in private.

It's going to take time and but we are pushing very hard on various programs and opportunities. I'll give you a couple examples. One of the things in all of Africa, not just Ethiopia, is the violence

against women. We have started with USAID this hotline for battered women to call in and to get because that's an opening.

Another issue is to have the judiciary process to help with women and minority groups and others. That's another opening. So if we can push things to the—keep on pushing things maybe those will be areas for openings to help not only the government but also the general atmosphere.

Mr. MEADOWS. So do you see an opposition party helping with that, with the human rights?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes, but I think what the opposition—and I defer to Dr. Berhanu Nega, who has better views—is how can we help this, because one day the opposition will be the government party and vice versa.

We've told that to the Prime Minister. We've told that to the government. You've got to prepare. You cannot rule consistently forever. It's impossible, and that's an issue that they understand. But how they actually build that confidence and that's, I think, the challenges we face.

Mr. MEADOWS. So do you think they are fearful of an unstable environment? Is that the major opposition to having a viable two-party system?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. I think that's one part.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay. All right. Thank you both.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Meadows. In conclusion, I just want to thank you again. Ambassador Yamamoto, when you testified on March 28th, 2006, and I know you did this with the utmost sincerity, but you talked about hope for democracy, a new chapter, crossroads, and my hope is—hope that springs eternal—that we will be dogged in our efforts to ensure that this time that Ethiopia gets it right for the people's sake and for basic fundamental freedoms and basic human rights. So thank you.

Many questions will be posed. I wish we could do it today. Thank you so much for being here and for working so closely with us.

I'd like to now introduce our second panel beginning with Dr. Berhanu Nega, who is a Bucknell University associate professor of economics.

He is also the current chairman of Ginbot 7, the Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy, is one of the leaders of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy, and served as campaign manager for the party's successful effort during the 2005 elections.

He was the first freely elected mayor of Addis Ababa in the 2005 election and along with all the leadership of the CUD, he served 21 months in prison after winning the election.

I would note parenthetically that when Greg and I visited in 2005, Dr. Nega and Greg got in a car to go one place, I got in a car to go somewhere else and right behind them was a group of secret police who monitored every move that they made. It was telling. It was over the top.

Dr. Peter Pham, again, welcome back. Dr. Pham is the director of the Michael S. Ansari Africa Center at the Atlantic Council in Washington. He is the incumbent vice president of the Association for the Study of Middle East and Africa, an academic organization

that represents more than 1,000 scholars, and is editor in chief of the organization's Journal of the Middle East and Africa.

Dr. Pham was the winner of the 2008 Nelson Mandela International Prize for African Security and Development. He has authored half a dozen books and chapters, concerning Somali piracy, terrorism and stabilizing fragile states, as well as more than 80 articles in various journals.

We'll then hear from Mr. Obang Metho. Mr. Metho is the executive director of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, a social justice movement of diverse interests.

He has tirelessly advocated for human rights, justice, freedom, the environment, and enhanced accountability in politics and peace in Africa for over 10 years.

He has briefed and met with leaders and officials at the U.N., European Parliament, State Department, the U.S. Congress, the World Bank, and the Council for Foreign Relations, among others.

He defends the fundamental respect for human life and is committed to work for the reconciliation, forgiveness, and healings of affected people in order to create a positive future.

Then we'll hear from Mr. Adotei Akwei, who is the managing director for government relations for Amnesty International. He rejoined Amnesty in 2010 after serving as senior policy advisor for CARE.

In this capacity, Mr. Akwei helped develop and implement advocacy on CARE's priority issues toward the U.S. Government. Before joining CARE he worked with Amnesty International USA for 11 years.

He also served as the Africa director for the Lawyers Committee of Human Rights, now Human Rights First, and previously served as the research and human rights director for the American Committee on Africa and the Africa Fund.

So Dr. Nega, if you could begin.

STATEMENT OF BERHANU NEGA, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY

Mr. NEGA. Good morning, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, distinguished members of the House Subcommittee on Africa. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today.

It is indeed a great honor and privilege to have the opportunity to appear before you to discuss issues related to the future of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia.

Democracy and human rights have direct implications for Ethiopia's survival as a nation. The existence of a democratically elected and accountable government that strictly adheres to the rule of law and respects the basic rights of its citizens is the only arrangement that will assure Ethiopia's stability and prosperity in the long term.

A stable and prosperous Ethiopia contributes to the prosperity and stability of the region. An unstable Ethiopia has the potential to destabilize the whole Horn of Africa.

Issues ranging from religious extremism, potential conflict over fresh water usage, crippling poverty and looming environmental challenge could threaten the livelihood of the people in the region and such challenge requires the attention and resources of the

international community in partnership with responsible and accountable leaders in the region.

It is, therefore, in the economic and national security interest of the U.S. and its Western allies to ensure that Ethiopia achieves durable stability which can only come from genuine democratization rather than settle for a short-term tenuous peace that is falsely projected by dictatorships and that could collapse with the slightest challenge from a fed-up and angry populace.

Having said that as an introduction, let me quickly and directly address the topic at hand. There are three interrelated issues. The first deals with the government's observance of human rights and democratic principles after the days of Meles.

This is a topic that is least controversial and I have addressed it in detail in the written testimony that I have submitted for the record.

Suffice it to say that in every major category of human rights and democratization, things are as bad as they were during Meles' tenure or even worse in some cases.

Award-winning journalists are languishing in jail. Ethiopia is very close to Iran, Cuba, and Somalia in the number of journalists jailed or exiled.

As a cruel reminder of the elections in communist Soviet Union, the ruling party allegedly won 99.6 percent of the parliamentary seats under Meles in 2010. As if to outdo Meles, in the most recent local elections the ruling party and its allies won all of the 3.8 million seats.

The Independent Election Commission called it a manifestation of the maturity of Ethiopian democracy. The government is simply allergic to the presence of independent organizations.

It decides on who should be the leaders of religious institutions and has the audacity even to attempt to pressure Ethiopian Muslims to abandon their faith and convert to a new sect that it somehow favors.

It purposely fosters conflict among different cultural and religious communities. Ethnic cleansing of the Amhara from the south and Benishangul regions which started under Meles hasn't stopped. The forced eviction of indigenous people from the Omo Valley and Gambella regions has intensified.

The judiciary, like all state institutions, is completely captured to a point where the faith that people might have in finding justice through formal state institutions has been obliterated.

Mr. Chairman, the potential for reforms under the current government, which forms the second part of this discussion, is at once very critical as well as potentially controversial because a discussion about the future by its very nature is speculative. In my mind, this issue has two parts.

The first is my own assessment of the possibility of reform under the current regime. The second is a follow-up to the first. If there is no reforms, what is going to happen to Ethiopia in the future?

Let me address both of these issues candidly. Much as I wish it, I don't see the possibility of an internally driven reform leading to a genuine democratic dispensation in Ethiopia.

The ruling clique have committed too many human rights crimes, have accumulated too much wealth through rampant corruption

and have antagonized the population too much to feel that they can continue to enjoy a peaceful life after relinquishing power, which they know would happen if there was to be a truly free and fair election.

Instead, they believe that they can somehow survive through total repression insofar as they can get the foreign aid resources as well as the diplomatic support they need to help them keep the lead on any potential resistance to their power.

The only change that Meles' death has brought to the situation is that it has revealed the tenuous nature of this calculation as it has exposed the internal conflict and bickering within the ruling coalition.

This takes me to the second part of the issue. So what is going to happen if there is no possibility of reform coming from the government? Will Ethiopians simply accept tyranny and live this humiliating existence indefinitely? If I know anything about the Ethiopian character, that is one bet I'm not willing to take.

That is why, unfortunately, my assessment is rather pessimistic. I think the government's capacity for total repression is going to be challenged rather dramatically in the near future.

As the government simply refuses to reform, intensifies its repression, deliberately decimates the legal opposition and continues to antagonize people in all parts of the country, armed resistance has become an acceptable form of struggle.

The various armed groups have started to talk seriously about unifying their actions and their vision for a democratic future as the public's attention shifts from the peaceful opposition to the armed groups as their last best hope for ending their humiliation and freeing themselves from tyranny.

Mr. Chairman, it is painful to see my country go through such turmoil in order to achieve the most basic rights that all people in this day and age routinely expect and deserve.

I wish there could be a peaceful way out of this quagmire but I feel that is unlikely. This has serious implications for U.S. foreign policy. The current policy of shoring up and bankrolling authoritarian rule with the hope that it could achieve a modicum of stability in the region is going to face a serious challenge.

Will the U.S. and its allies continue to support a brutal regime that is sure to be unstable as the armed resistance against it intensifies?

Will such support ensure the stability of the regime over the long run? If the opposition is committed to a pluralist democratically elected government in Ethiopia wouldn't it be a better and more durable ally than the current regime?

This takes me to my last point regarding what the U.S. can do to ensure reforms. If reform leading to genuine democratization is sought, clearly, the policy followed by the U.S. and its allies in the past 21 years has not worked.

The policy of constructive engagement which hopes to cajole the government to implement some reforms in exchange for financial and diplomatic support has simply failed to achieve its objectives.

Instead, the current policy might unwittingly increase instability in Ethiopia. On the other hand, there is a very strong argument

both on national security and humanitarian grounds to keep the situation from deteriorating even further.

Contrary to prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ethiopian Government is amenable to pressure, especially financial pressure. A coordinated no-nonsense financial pressure that conditions Western aid on clear verifiable measurable time bound political reforms that could lead to a democratic dispensation is, in my view, the only mechanism that could avert the potential crisis that is looming in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chairman, working toward such an outcome is not only the right thing to do but also the smart thing to do. The world community has enough experience by now to know that doing nothing at the early stage of a crisis would prove to be extremely costly later.

A crisis is looming in Ethiopia and if we act wisely now we can avoid a lot of pain and suffering later. I hope the United States will play its part to bring about a peaceful and sustainable solution.

Such an outcome is good for the international community, good for regional stability and certainly good for Ethiopia. I know, Mr. Chairman, under your leadership your committee in this House will do its part for the well being of the Ethiopian people.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nega follows:]

Testimony of Berhanu Nega, Ph.D

Associate Professor of Economics, Bucknell University

Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

June 20, 2013

"Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Democracy and Human Rights"

Good Morning Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, Distinguished Members of the House Africa Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today. It is indeed a great honor and privilege to have the opportunity to appear before you to discuss issues related to the future of Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia.

1. The State of Human Rights and Democratization in Ethiopia

As you are aware Mr. Chairman, Ethiopia's human rights record is abysmal by all accounts and continues to deteriorate. The current regime, which has been in power for the last 21 years, continues to engage in the systematic violation of international standards with regard to fundamental human rights. The most significant assault on human rights include restrictions on:

1) Freedom of expression;
2) Freedom of association and political rights;
3) Interference in religious affairs;
4) Ethnic cleansing against Amharas and the forced displacement of indigenous people from ancestral lands;
5) Manipulation of the justice system for politically motivated charges and trials

Following the death of Meles Zenawi, many hoped that there would be an opportunity for an opening in the political space. However the current regime continues to flout international standards. Indeed, the climate post the much-

anticipated National Elections of 2005, widely acknowledged as the most contested election in Ethiopian history, culminating in bloodshed and vote rigging, has produced severe government clampdown on basic freedoms, particularly freedom of expression and association, increased police monitoring of peaceful and lawful activities, arbitrary arrest of human rights defenders, opposition leaders and attacks on civil society.

With the passage of the draconian Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO law) and Anti-Terrorism law in 2009, independent civil society and non-governmental organizations NGOs (domestic and international) have been forced to cease their operation due to these very restrictive new laws, effectively criminalizing internationally recognized rights.[1]

The brazen and relentless assault on free expression and access to information, arbitrary detention of human rights activists, civil society and opposition leaders has severely compromised the electoral environment in Ethiopia. There is little independent criticism and virtually no political opposition in the country.

Freedom of Expression

The Ethiopian government censors free speech by routinely blocking websites, closing publishing houses, confiscating newspapers, imprisoning journalists and jamming international media such as the Voice of America (VOA) as well as diaspora based independent media such as Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT). Journalists, brave enough to practice their trade with integrity risk imprisonment.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Ethiopia is the leading jailer of journalists in Sub-Sahara Africa and ranks among the top ten in the World. Among the most noted journalists languishing in jail are award winning Columnist /blogger Eskinder Nega[2], the recipient of the 2012 PEN/Barbara

[1] http://www.boell.de/worldwide/africa/africa-closure-heinrich-boell-foundation-office-ethiopia-background-16060.html

[2] http://www.pen.org/press-release/2012/04/12/top-pen-prize-honor-eskinder-nega-jailed-ethiopian-journalist-and-blogger

Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award and Reyot Alemu[3], winner of the 2013 UNESCO-Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize. Last year, the International Women's Media Foundation bestowed Courage in Journalism Award on Ms. Alemu in absentia.

Two Swedish journalists (freed in 2012) who entered the country illegally to report on the ongoing conflict in the Ogaden were among the imprisoned journalists.[4]

Ethiopia also ranks 3rd in the world in terms of countries from which journalists have fled, with 49 journalists that have been exiled as a result of government persecution and iron fisted control of the independent media.[5]

The widespread international condemnations and repeated calls from various rights groups and influential Parliamentarians for the release of Ethiopian journalists have been completely ignored by the regime in power.[6]

Continued U.S. support of a regime that represses a free press is also in violation of its own constitutional guarantee of the right to free speech. It is clear that the Ethiopian people need information to make informed participatory decisions about their form of government, leaders and lives. Effectiveness of access to a free press cannot be evaluated until such time as the people have the right to free media.

Freedom of Association and Political Rights

Political space has been severely curtailed in Ethiopia. So much so, that in the Parliamentary Election of 2010, which was conducted in an environment that

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[3] http://www.thedailybeast.com/witw/articles/2013/04/18/reeyot-alemu-ethiopia-s-jailed-truth-teller.html

[4] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19960209

[5] http://www.cpj.org/2013/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2012-ethiopia.php

[6] http://www.freedom-now.org/news/for-immediate-release-16-members-of-the-european-parliament-call-for-the-release-of-imprisoned-ethiopian-journalist-eskinder-nega/

was not conducive to free and fair elections, the ruling party "won" by a jaw-dropping 99.6%. As a result, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) controls 545 of the 547 seat in Parliament to remain in power until 2015. The 2010 election gives ample evidence that Ethiopia is an authoritarian dictatorship that holds sham elections every 5 years and has failed to develop democratic institutions in the two decades that EPRDF has been in power.[7]

By all reasonable accounts, EPRDF has been rolling back the clock to the country's dictatorial Derg era. The regime remains extremely suspicious of popular participation and even more so of party politics. It has successfully excluded, imprisoned, or exiled many who could possibly challenge its authority. The ruling party continues to command an unchecked monopoly on the military and security forces. Under these stifling conditions and with very little chance for political reform, the prospects for genuine democracy in Ethiopia remains bleak.

The death of Meles, last year, has not changed the nature of the one party state that he carefully and brutally constructed. In the recent 2013 nationwide local election, the ruling party ran by itself to "win" almost all of the 3.8 million supposedly contested seats. 96% of the candidates were from the ruling party and the remaining 4% from its affiliated parties. The opposition didn't even compete in the election. The "independent" election board called it "a confirmation of the maturity of democratization in the country."

Interference in Religious Affairs

Article 27 of the Ethiopian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and delineates the strict separation of church and state. However, the Ethiopian regime in contravention to its own constitution has consistently interfered in the affairs of both the Christian and Muslim religions. The government has effectively used the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as a tool for political control by manipulating the leadership of the powerful church. This included election of the former Patriarch Abune Paulos and the new Patriarch Abune Mathias. This gross interference in the affairs of the Orthodox Church has resulted in an unfortunate split of the Holy

[7] http://www.eueom.eu/files/pressreleases/english/final-report-eueom-ethiopia-08112010_en.pdf

Synod into two competing power centers inside Ethiopia and in the diaspora with the influential Orthodox Church in Ethiopia aligning itself with the EPRDF regime.

Religious leaders (Orthodox, Muslim, Protestant, and others) are often pressured to issue broadcasted statements and messages of support for major EPRDF actions, with the government seeking support of their religious communities.[8]

In 2012, the regime put forth plans to build a sugar factory, sugar cane plantation and an irrigation dam on the property of the Waldeba Monastery in Gondar –Northern Ethiopia, one of the holiest sites in Orthodox Christendom. In order to make way for the construction, the regime brazenly desecrated grave sites and destroyed three historical churches on the grounds of the famous Monastery.

Monks who reside on the property were forcibly removed to make way for this massive project. The unprecedented assault on the monastic community's way of life and its religious learning centers is deeply disturbing and reprehensible. Even the communist Derg regime respected the sanctity of the Waldeba Monastery and in no way interfered in its internal affairs. Even when the monks were resisting this forced eviction and desecration, the church hierarchy was compelled to officially condone the actions of the government.

Ethiopian Muslims as well have been engaged in peaceful protest against government interference in their religious affairs since 2011. The leaders of the peaceful protests accuse the Ethiopian government of trying to impose the al-Ahbash Islamic sect on the country's Muslim community, which traditionally practices the Sufi form of Islam.

The opposition to Ahbash by Ethiopian Muslims is not particularly theological. The protesters oppose the blatant interference of the state in their religion by officially sponsoring the movement, providing finance, and forcing the Islamic Council to adopt this version of Islam, while attacking the more popular and local variant as tainted with "extremist" views with a political agenda.[9]

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[8] http://news.yahoo.com/ethiopia-elects-leader-orthodox-church-172547906.html
[9] http://www.irinnews.org/report/96787/

Instead of resolving the conflict peacefully, the regime resorted to a brutal crackdown against the peaceful protestors by arresting their leaders and closing their newspaper. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has strongly denounced the politically motivated detention and trial of the Muslim leaders.[10] Such brazen interference on religion is bound to have serious consequences to the stability of the country in the future.

Ethnic Cleansing of Amharas and Forced Displacement of Indigenous People From Ancestral Lands

Article 32 of the Ethiopian Constitution guarantees freedom of movement within the national territory. Ethiopia is also a signatory to several conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which, clearly state that a citizen has the right to work and live in any part of his or her country.

However, ethnic Amharas have been subjected to forcible eviction from Guraferda Bench-Maji in Southern Regional State as well as from Beni Shangul regions of Western Ethiopia since 2012. Targeting Amharas, one of the largest ethnic groups in Ethiopia, for illegal deportation, is a barbaric act that will have dire consequences for fostering ethnic harmony in Ethiopia. Stoking hatred will only serve to destabilize the country.

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[10] http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/04/02/ethiopia-muslim-protesters-face-unfair-trial;

http://www.voanews.com/content/muslim-protests-ethiopia-reveal-religious-fault-lines/1452546.html;

http://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/press-releases/3859-1182012-uscirf-statement-uscirf-deeply-concerned-by-emerging-religious-freedom-violations-in-ethiopia.html;

http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2013/0214/Ethiopia-airs-jihadi-film-amid-sensitive-Muslim-protest-trial

In interviews with ESAT, victims, mostly women and children, provided horrific details about being dragged from their homes with nothing else but the clothes on their back. Although the exact number of displaced families is hard to come by due to news black outs, the estimates are in the high thousands according to clandestine radio interviews with some victims.[11]

Displacement of indigenous people is rampant in Afar, Gambella and Omo regions as a result of ancestral lands being sold to investors by the government without compensation or even a modicum of consultation with the affected population. The unprecedented land giveaway is also taking place, at a massive scale, mainly in the lowlands of Ethiopia where the country's minority ethnic groups and pastoralists live. These forced displacements of indigenous people are in contravention of most recognized human rights standards.

Human Rights Watch has documented in its report that the land grabs are being carried out in contravention of domestic and international human rights standards and without meaningful consultation, consent, or compensation for loss of land, livelihoods, food security, and access to vital subsistence resources.[12]

The Oakland Institute, an influential and highly respected think tank, has issued a comprehensive report on the land grab issue and its consequences on vulnerable communities in Ethiopia.[13]

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[11] http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/04/11/ethiopia-accused-of-ethnic-cleansing-over-mass-amhara-evictions/;

http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2012/af/204120.htm

[12] http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/06/18/ethiopia-pastoralists-forced-their-land-sugar-plantations;

http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0112webwcover_0.pdf

[13] http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/land-deals-africa-ethiopia

Manipulation of the Justice System for Politically Motivated Charges and Trials

Article 78 of the Ethiopian constitution promulgates the establishment of an independent Judiciary. In reality, the judiciary is the most politicized branch of the government with loyal, hand-picked judges that serve as the hand maiden of the regime. The justice system has been used time and again as a tool of "persecution by prosecution" of real and perceived political enemies of the regime. Most Ethiopians have little confidence in the impartiality and neutrality of the judiciary and it is widely regarded as an institution that has become a mere extension of ruling party power.

2. The Possibility of Reforms after Meles

The potential for reforms under the current government, which forms the second part of this discussion, is at once very critical as well as potentially controversial because a discussion about the future by its very nature is speculative. In my mind, this issue has two parts. The first is my own assessment of the possibility of internally driven reform initiated by the current regime. As I will detail in a minute, I don't believe such reform is possible. So the second issue is a follow up to the first, in case my response is in the negative. If no reform, what is going to happen in the near future? Let me address both of these issues candidly.

Much as I wish, I don't see the possibility of an internally driven (by the ruling party) reform leading to a genuine democratic dispensation in Ethiopia. The regime has much to lose through such a reform. The ruling elite have committed too many human rights crimes (in the Ogaden, in Addis Ababa, Oromia…etc.) and have accumulated too much wealth through rampant corruption. Indeed, they have antagonized the population too much to feel that they can continue to enjoy a peaceful life after relinquishing power--which would be inevitable if there was to be a truly free and fair election. Instead, they believe that they can somehow survive through total repression, in so far as they can get the foreign aid resources as well as the diplomatic support that would help them keep the lid on any potential resistance to their power.

The only change that Meles' death has brought to this situation is that it has revealed the tenuous nature of this calculation as it has brought to the open the internal conflict and bickering within the ruling coalition. In the absence of Meles' clever manipulation of the international community, it is not entirely clear how

long the West will be willing to bankroll a regime as the instability starts to publicly manifest itself.

This takes me to the second part of this issue. So, what is going to happen if there is no possibility of reform coming from the government? Would Ethiopians simply accept tyranny and live this humiliating existence indefinitely? If I know anything about the Ethiopian character, that is one bet that I am not willing to take. That is why, unfortunately, my assessment is rather pessimistic. I think the government's capacity for total suppression is going to be challenged rather dramatically in the near future. Even if the government can put a lid on the urban based opposition to its rule (which could have led to a potentially peaceful transition), its only effect is going to be to further legitimize an armed resistance against its rule.

Of course, armed resistance against the regime is not new. From the Ogaden to Afar and Gambella there are all kinds of armed opposition groups that are waging low intensity armed struggle against the regime. All these, however, were more narrowly based and without a broad societal appeal to mobilize a unified opposition across the country. Most people opposed to the regime, until recently, believed that a peaceful resistance, led by the legal opposition, could lead towards peaceful change and that this is the preferred outcome as it avoids potential bloodshed.

But, as the government simply refuses to reform, intensifies its repression, deliberately decimates the legal opposition and continues to antagonize people in all parts of the country, armed resistance has become an acceptable form of struggle. In some parts of the country aggrieved people have started to simply go into the bushes, without even taking an organized form. Furthermore, the various armed groups have started to seriously talk about unifying their actions and their vision for a democratic future, as the public's attention shifts from the "peaceful opposition" to the armed groups as their last best hope for ending the humiliation and freeing themselves from tyranny

3. What Can the US and Its Allies Do to Engender Reform?

The Ethiopian regime has created a stifling environment wherein those within the prison walls and those outside of them are terrorized by the brutal acts of a regime that has continuously been censured by respected rights groups for its lack of adherence to international human rights standards.

Ethnicity permeates politics and the ruling party has been unable and unwilling to create a broader political base in this complex and diverse country. The leaders of the Tigrai People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the dominant force within the governing EPRDF coalition came to power by winning a civil war, therefore its leaders believe in the importance of force. They also believe in strong political control, limited popular participation, and crony capitalism that allows for a strong presence of the state in the economy to distribute rent among the political elite.

The regime uses this ill-gotten wealth to hire PR firms and Lobbyists in the West, particularly in the United States, to promote Ethiopia's image as a modern and modernizing country under TPLF/EPRDF tutelage. The message is repeated and consistent at various international forums where officials speak at great length of Ethiopia's virtues -- its steady economic growth, its supposed political stability and its bright future. However, none of these virtues is real.

Present day Ethiopia is not a confident, growing, dynamic, modern country. Rather, it's fast becoming a police state ruled by a regime that is weak, fearful, paranoid and intolerant of dissent. A democratic multi-party system, enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia adopted in 1994 remains an empty rhetoric as long as TPLF (with its affiliates) is determined to remain the "ruling party for life." The government is skilled at using the rhetoric of democracy and good governance in order to assure the continuation of support by the international donor community, but such statements rarely lead to tangible reform.

Even if we accept the Ethiopian government's dubious and controversial claims of rapid economic growth in the past decade[14] Ethiopia remains ranked among the poorest and least developed countries in the world. In the 2012 Human Development Index, Ethiopia ranked 173 out of 186 countries. The so-called economic growth has not filtered down to the poorest people in Ethiopia that are

[14] B.Nega "No Shortcut to Stability: Democratic Accountability and Sustainable Development in Ethiopia Social Research Vol.77, No.4:Winter 2010

mired in abject poverty. Corruption is rampant and the scope of Ethiopia's capital flight is frightening.

According to a recent report by Global Financial Integrity, Ethiopia lost $11.7 Billion to outflows of ill-gotten gains between 2000 and 2009.[15] One of the authors of the report, Sarah Freitas, wrote, *"The people of Ethiopia are being bled dry, no matter how hard they try to fight their way out of absolute destitution and poverty, they will be swimming upstream against the current of illicit capital leakage."* The level of illicit leakage out of the country reached a mind blowing $5.6 Billion in 2010 alone, a sum greater than the value of the country's total exports combined with the total foreign aid it received from abroad for that year.

As further testament to the unwillingness of the regime to democratize the country, the TPLF has engaged repeatedly in electoral corruption and brutal repression. It rules effectively by force and has consolidated its power at the expense of the overwhelming majority of Ethiopia's large and diverse population. The repressive stability that exists in Ethiopia today is detrimental to the long term internal as well as regional stability of the Horn of Africa.

Clearly, this state of affairs cannot continue. If it does, it can only end in a massive conflict with a potential to destabilize the whole region. Something must be done urgently to avoid a looming disaster. So, what can the US do to change this trajectory? In my view, the obvious starting point is to acknowledge the fact that the current policy of "constructive engagement" with this brutal regime has not worked to produce the desired results of stability in the country and the wider region. Instead, it has emboldened the regime to continue to do what it has been doing in the past. A reconstructed policy for Ethiopia, I believe, should be anchored in both the core values of the United States, as well as on the basis of strategic national security considerations. I submit that both of these considerations require that Ethiopia become an internally peaceful, stable and democratic country that contributes positively to the stability of the region. If this is a reasonable policy position consistent with US long term strategic interests, then there is a lot

[15] http://blogs.wsj.com/corruption-currents/2011/12/05/ethiopian-illicit-outflows-doubled-in-2009-new-report-says/?mod=google_news_blog

that the US and its allies can do to push the current regime to move in that direction.

Ethiopia suffers from an absence of democracy and the United States Government has received multiple reports of the dictatorial nature of the Ethiopian government. US-Ethiopia relationship should be based on democratic governance, respect for the rule of law and the promotion and protection of human rights. Support for democracy, respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of law are core American values. The US and its allies will do well to recognize more firmly that Ethiopian aspirations for democracy are genuine and legitimate.

The United States Government, along with its allies, consistently display a politically weak reaction to the profound abrogation of Ethiopia's obligations under international law, not to mention its own constitution by turning a blind eye to the very repressive environment that exists in Ethiopia today. The United States Government should use its foreign aid to reward countries that govern themselves well and not use its foreign aid to prop up regimes like the regime in Ethiopia that has become the poster child for repression and brutality throughout Africa.

Furthermore, the United States Government should review its development aid policy towards Ethiopia so that aid can be used more effectively to advance the cause of human rights and respect for the rule of law along with other humanitarian considerations. Lack of sanction for human rights abuses encourages tyranny and will not help economic wellbeing in the long run. Only severe rebuke from and withdrawal of financial support by the United States Government and its allies will deter the Ethiopian government from its current trajectory.

It is also advisable for the United States Government, to press persistently and publicly for good and sustainable governance reforms in Ethiopia and work from the principles of mutually beneficial cooperation in a spirit of critical partnership.

It's understandable that the United States Government recognizes and respects the sovereignty of nation-states and seeks not to intervene unless its national security is at stake. However, where one is a donor entity (in fact the largest donor) to a government that continues to flaunt not only internationally recognized rights but also American standards, the United States Government is

compromising its stated mission and core values by aligning itself with and funding a brutal regime. Not giving your money to support repression is no intervention. Equally importantly, at least in this case, there is a large national security stake in the stability of Ethiopia, which can only come from meaningful and inclusive democratization.

A government that subjects its citizenry to its own brand of terrorism cannot be entrusted to safeguard the interests of the United States Government. The status quo in Ethiopia is intolerable and unacceptable. In a de facto one-party state like Ethiopia, where opposition parties have been systematically decimated, there is no one to represent the dreams, expectations and criticisms of the public. Loss of hope towards a peaceful transition to democracy is rapidly influencing people to consider alternative means of struggle.

With patience running out and frustration taking hold among the population, more and more political organizations are considering armed struggle (Ogaden National Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front, Tigrai People's Democratic Movement, AFAR-Gadille, Gambella Nilotic Movement…etc.) as the only option to get rid of the brutal dictatorships. Recent disturbing reports from Agew Zone-Northern Ethiopia and from parts of Gambella and Afar indicate that ordinary peasants have started to arm themselves to challenge the government by force.

Ethiopia's heterogeneous society and the political elite are deeply divided. The inflexible political attitude and the monopolization of power in the hands of the current regime has left a majority of the population excluded from political participation or access to economic benefits. As a result, violent clashes are going to be more common in the near future leading to internal instability in the most populous country in East Africa. The Horn of Africa is of significant geostrategic value to U.S. interests and any type of instability in Ethiopia will have dire consequences for the entire region.

The current policy of cajoling the government to reform without in any way reducing the resources it receives from the West is not working. It is time for the United States Government and its allies to take a tough and principled stand against the excesses of the de facto one-party state in Ethiopia and use their financial leverage against the regime to persuade it to change before it is too late. I believe such a coordinated financial pressure by western allies will work to make the regime change its ways. Some of the needed reforms might take some time to implement, but the government's willingness to implement meaningful reforms

can be measured by a number of verifiable actions that it can take immediately. These include, for example:

- To rescind the repressive (CSO and Anti-Terrorism) laws, to stop the persecution of political dissidents subject to using trumped up terrorism charges to prevent the country from descending into political turmoil that will have dire consequences for the region and the Continent as a whole;
- To adhere to human rights principles in actions and not merely in words;
- To release all political prisoners, journalists and human rights defenders;
- To cease engaging in acts which violate internationally recognized human rights including: freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of assembly and political rights,
- To open up the political space as well as the government owned media so that Ethiopians will participate fully in the governance of their country; and
- To call for an open and constructive dialogue with all the opposition forces (both at home and abroad, armed and peaceful) in order to chart the country's future together.

I know, Mr. Chairman, under your leadership your committee and this House will do its part for the wellbeing of the people of Ethiopia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. I stand ready to answer any questions you might have.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Nega, thank you very much for testifying.

[Applause.]

Mr. SMITH. The committee will be in order. Thank you.

Dr. Pham.

STATEMENT OF J. PETER PHAM, PH.D., DIRECTOR, MICHAEL S. ANSARI AFRICA CENTER, ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Mr. PHAM. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the political developments in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, especially as they relate to democracy and human rights since the death last year of the last Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

With your permission, I'll present a summary of my analyses on these questions and ask that my prepared statement be entered into the record.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, your statement and all the other distinguished witnesses' statements and any attachments they would like to submit will be made part of the record.

Mr. PHAM. Thank you.

In addressing Ethiopia's political evolution, and there has indeed been a shift even if at times the changes have been rather subtle, it's incumbent upon us to recall the enormous importance of Ethiopia both in its own right and relative to the national interests of the United States and Africa in general and in the geopolitically sensitive Horn of Africa in particular.

That context is especially important if any of the resulting proposals are to be relevant, realistic and perhaps most importantly strategic in the fullest sense of the term.

Moreover, while it's perhaps too soon after the passing of the late Ethiopian Prime Minister to either have sufficient time or requisite historical perspective to render anything approaching a definitive judgment on the man and his legacy, it's worth the effort to at least establish some context by recalling just how far Ethiopia has come since the overthrow of Mengistu Haile Mariam's Soviet client regime in 1991.

One does not have to agree with all or even any of the specific policy choices made by the Ethiopian Government during the last two decades to nonetheless acknowledge the historic achievements, including the peaceful succession of Eritrea in 1993, the introduction of legally recognized linguistic pluralism and ethnic federalism in 1994 and the economic miracle one of the fastest growing economies in Africa and, indeed, the world in recent years which, notwithstanding the struggle that life remains for many Ethiopians, has nonetheless lifted millions of others out of abject misery in just a generation.

And if it's too soon to properly judge the legacy of the late Prime Minister Meles, it certainly is premature to attempt to render anything beyond a very initial assessment of his successor, Hailemariam Desalegn, who was only confirmed by Parliament in his ministerial tenure on a permanent basis on September 21, 2012, and subsequently elected as chairman of the EPRDF by the congress of the governing coalition in Bahir Dar in the last week of March of this year.

That being said, however, there are several positive and indeed tantalizing indications that while the new Prime Minister had promised to maintain his predecessor's policies, he is also slowly blazing his own trail.

These include a cabinet reshuffle that rebalance the representation within the governing coalition and offered recently reaffirmed to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to open a dialogue with Eritrea without preconditions, a crackdown on corruption that's included the arrest of the ministerial-ranked Director General of the Ethiopian Revenues and Customs Authority and the recent allowing, as other witnesses have indicated, of the largest anti-government demonstration since 2005, an event which I've been assured by senior officials can and will be allowed to reoccur as long as the organizers give local authorities sufficient notice in order to make necessary logistical accommodations.

To these modest points of data, I would add a brief personal observation from having had, even before he became Prime Minister, the privilege of discussing a broad range of issues with Hailemariam Desalegn.

He is a man of great intelligence and he's cognizant of the challenges before him. On the other hand, one should also recognize the political, institutional and other constraints which someone in his position faces, especially until such time as he's able to win an electoral mandate in his own right.

With all this in mind, permit me to conclude by commending to the subcommittee's consideration five principles to guide U.S. policy toward Ethiopia, which I offer in line with the prudent norm embraced by President Obama in last year's U.S strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa.

Addressing the opportunities and challenges in Africa, the President wrote, requires a comprehensive U.S. policy that is proactive, forward looking and that balances our long-term interests with near-term objectives.

So, first, understand that Ethiopia is an ancient country populated by proud peoples imbued with a deep sense of history and nationhood, all of which has a profound impact on the current political reality.

Secondly, recognize both the opportunities within the historic moment and the delicate balance that needs to be maintained. One should be leery of any actions which might upset the careful political balance being struck.

Thirdly, be realistic about what the United States can and cannot do with respect to the direction of social, economic, and political developments in Ethiopia.

It goes without saying that America has influence and where possible that influence should be brought to use judiciously for good. However, our room for maneuver is tighter than ever and America's overall leverage significantly diminished by the combination of our own general cutbacks in foreign assistance.

When one looks at the actual figures, there's virtually nothing that's discretionary that could be cut back in our aid to Ethiopia, and the emergence of other countries and actors able and willing to work with the Ethiopian Government, as witnessed by the Prime Minister's visit last week to China.

Fourth, take advantage of Ethiopia's application to join the World Trade Organization to constructively engage with the country's government not only about economic liberalization but other rule of law and governance concerns.

Even if the publicly-stated goal of completing accession by 2014 is unlikely to be achieved, the effort does present the United States and other international partners with a unique opportunity for a more intense dialogue with their Ethiopian counterparts, contributing to the enhancing of technical and administrative and regulatory capabilities and advance policy objectives ranging from liberalizing the banking and telecommunication sectors to securing private property and other legal rights.

And fifth, become more engaged in Ethiopia's rapidly transforming higher education sector. Ethiopia has gone from having three national universities in 2001 to 31 this year.

If the United States Government could encourage American colleges and universities to become more engaged with their Ethiopian counterparts, there's the prospect over the long term of considerable return both in terms of consolidating the cultural and political bonds between our countries and people as well as advancing democratic and human development.

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, it goes without saying that there are a number of things one might wish to see done differently, perhaps even better with respect to the ongoing social, economic and political development of Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, the context in which the post-Meles transition and other developments are occurring needs to be taking into account an objective progress both in absolute terms and relative to the rest of a very troubled but geopolitical strategic region.

In that perspective, it behooves us to keep in mind Voltaire's warning, le mieux est l'ennemi du bien—the best is the enemy of the good—and allowing a healthy dose of political realism about our own interests and those of the peoples of Ethiopia to temper judgmentalist impulse and direct our energies instead where they can be most effective in encouraging, facilitating, and sustaining continued stability and progress in Ethiopia and beyond.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pham follows:]

Prepared Statement of

Dr. J. Peter Pham
Director, Michael S. Ansari Africa Center
Atlantic Council

before the

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

on

"Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Democracy and Human Rights"

Thursday, June 20, 2013,
10:00 a.m.
Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2172
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the subject of political developments in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, especially as they relate to democracy and human rights, since the death last year of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Ethiopia's Importance

However, before addressing the country's political evolution—and there has indeed been a shift, even if, at times, the changes have been so subtle as to be imperceptible to those who do not track developments closely, to say nothing of those who view them through ideological blinders—I do think it is incumbent upon us to recall the enormous importance of Ethiopia,

both in its own right and relative to the national interests of the United States of America in Africa in general and in the geopolitically sensitive Horn of Africa in particular. That context is especially important if any resulting proposals are to be relevant, realistic, and, perhaps most importantly, strategic in the fullest sense of that term, rather than token, ineffectual, and, at worst, downright counterproductive to the achievement of overall objectives which I would like to believe are shared by everyone appearing before the Subcommittee today.

With an estimated 93 million people, Ethiopia is the second most populous country on the African continent. Its 5,328 kilometers of land borders put it adjacent to some of the most politically and economically challenged states on the continent, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

Ethiopia is the source of Blue Nile, which traces its remotest source to the Felege Ghion spring held sacred by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, as well as of the Nile River's other major tributary, the Atbara River, which likewise originates in the heart of the Ethiopian highlands near Lake Tana; together, the two streams account for nearly 90 percent of the water and over 95 percent of the sediment carried by the Nile proper. The ambitious hydropower construction program undertaken by the Ethiopian government to harness the potential of this flow bears the promise of clean, renewable energy not only for Ethiopia, but for many of its neighbors in a region where access to electricity remains an aspiration for hundreds of millions of people.

In terms of regional security, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) has played key roles both in Somalia, where Ethiopian troops recently were able to turn over several towns in the Bay region to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeepers, and in the disputed Abyei region between Sudan and South Sudan, where the 3,860 ENDF as well as Ethiopian police and civilian personnel make up more than 95 percent of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Against predictions by skeptics that it would get mired down in an intractable conflict, UNISFA has for two years now managed to prevent the escalation of violence and keep open a fragile humanitarian space in the territory, albeit not without sacrifice—as we were reminded just last Friday, when one Ethiopian peacekeeper was killed and two others wounded in what was apparently a rebel mortar attack on a football stadium that hit their base instead. It should be noted that, overall, Ethiopia is the fourth-largest global and largest African contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

With the exception of the period when Mengistu Haile Mariam and his Marxist military junta, the Derg, aligned the country with the Soviet Bloc and welcomed tens of thousands of troops dispatched by Fidel Castro, Ethiopia has historically been a strong ally of the United States. Our countries fought on the same side during World War II and, during the Korean War, the Emperor Haile Selassie sent the famous "Kagnew Battalion" of the 1st Division of the Imperial Bodyguard to fight alongside America's 7th Infantry Division, most famously at Pork Chop Hill. In more recent times, the Ethiopian government worked with the United States in the 1990s to contain the threat posed by the National Islamic Front regime in Khartoum as well as embraced

the global effort against terrorism after the September 11, 2001, attacks by al-Qaeda on our homeland. And, in the last few years, Ethiopia has hosted a discrete US military presence in the southern part of the country where service personnel maintain several unmanned aerial vehicles assigned to counterterrorism missions in East Africa.

Nor is security the only area of strong bilateral cooperation between the United States and Ethiopia. In August, the Ethiopian government will host the 2013 US-Sub-Saharan African Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum, also known as the AGOA Forum, a ministerial-level event built around America's signature trade initiative with the continent that will include high-level dialogue on the future course of US-African economic and commercial relations as well as various civil society and private-sector events, including a meeting of the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) and a US-African trade exposition.

The Legacy of Meles Zenawi

While it is perhaps too soon after the passing of the late Ethiopian prime minister—today, perhaps not entirely coincidentally, is the tenth-month anniversary of his death—to have either sufficient time or the requisite historical perspective to render anything approaching a definitive judgment on the man and his political legacy, it is worth the effort to at least establish some context by recalling just how far Ethiopia has come since the overthrow of Mengistu Haile Mariam's Soviet client regime in 1991 by a coalition of oppositions groups led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), whose political wing today forms part of the governing Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

After overthrowing the Ethiopia's millennia-old monarchy in 1974, the Derg, backed by massive Soviet support and tens of thousands of Communist Cuban troops, had launched the "Red Terror" that saw thousands of Ethiopians killed outright and, following the Stalinist-style forced resettlement of peasants on collective farms, millions more reduced to mass starvation in the mid-1980s. Meanwhile, the Derg and its Cuban mercenaries fought a brutal counterinsurgency campaign that reduced whole provinces of the country to wasteland.

Today, barely two decades after the unlamented demise of what was a *real* totalitarian dictatorship, it is expected that the country will end its current 2012-2013 fiscal year on July 7 having seen its economic growth accelerate to 10 percent, thanks largely to improved agricultural output combined with heavy public investments in infrastructure. This comes on the heels of 8.5 percent growth in 2011-2012, which made it one of Africa's fastest growing economies last year. While life remains a struggle for many Ethiopians, millions of others have been lifted out of abject misery in just one generation. Anyone who has visited the country more than once notes the transformation taking place constantly as infrastructure is built out, and will remark on the dynamism of the people.

On the political front, Ethiopia under Meles likewise came a long way since 1995, when the country held the first-ever free and democratic elections in its millennial history. In the May 2005 elections, which I witnessed firsthand, over 90 percent of registered voters went to the

polls after a vigorous campaign. According to official returns, the ruling EPRDF coalition won 59 percent of the vote and 327 seats in the 547-seat House of Representatives, while the two largest opposition groups, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), together won 30 percent of the vote and 161 seats. Altogether, however, the gains made by opposition parties, which went from 12 members in the previous parliament to 174 members in the legislature elected in 2005, were significant and represented a clear step forward, although it was regrettable that a number of the opposition representatives ultimately refused to take up their seats.

While one might regret the way the late Prime Minister Meles responded to opposition provocations in the wake of the 2005 poll and even find discomfiting the lopsided results of the 2010 elections—the EPRDF won 499 seats, while seven other parties or coalitions and a lone independent picked up 48 seats—one ought to, in all fairness, compare Ethiopia's electoral record to that of its neighbors, in contrast to whom it appears in a far more favorable light. The northwestern region of Somaliland being the notable exception—and, even in this relative oasis, there has been a regrettable recent inability to hold legislative elections in a timely manner—and setting aside the capacity for self-delusion of certain aspiring statesmen looking for stories of "success" to spin, "Somalia" and "political process" are terms which probably should not be used simultaneously even if the current regime is, admittedly, an improvement over its thoroughly corrupt and utterly ineffective predecessor. In Eritrea, Isaias Afewerki's rather ironically-named People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) has been in power since independence in 1993 and has yet to hold national elections of any kind. The 2010 elections in Sudan (including South Sudan) just a month before the Ethiopian poll that same year were a farce that, if anything, speeded up the country's break up. South Sudan, which became independent in 2011, does not even have an elected legislature. Kenya's 2007 elections degenerated into an orgy of violence for which its current president and deputy president, among others, have been indicted by the International Criminal Court.

One does not have to agree with all or even any of the specific policy choices made by the Ethiopian government during his tenure to nonetheless acknowledge the historic achievements of Meles Zenawi. In the two decades since he led the coalition of forces that toppled the Derg, the late prime minister presided over the peaceful secession of Eritrea in 1993, the introduction of legally recognized linguistic pluralism and ethnic federalism in 1994,[1] and the first multiparty elections in the millennial history of the Ethiopian state in 1995. And while the timing and manner of his passing were, most certainly, *not* what any imagines the deceased leader had in mind when he repeatedly assured often skeptical interlocutors that he intended to step down, both as head of the EPRDF and prime minister before the next elections, his exit was, in some respects, a final legacy insofar as, having accomplished much of what he had set out to do in what President Obama has described as "his lifelong contribution to Ethiopia's development." and being perhaps unable because of his background and times to go any farther with respect

[1] See J. Peter Pham, "African Constitutionalism: Forging New Models for Multi-Ethnic Governance and Self-Determination," in *Africa: Mapping New Boundaries in International Law*, ed. Jeremy I. Levitt (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2008), 183-203.

to liberalization, he left the path open to his successors to take the country's development and political evolution to its next stages.

Hailemariam Desalegn: A Very Initial Assessment

If it is too soon to properly judge the legacy of the late Prime Minister Meles, it most certainly is premature to attempt to render anything beyond a very initial assessment of his successor, Hailemariam Desalegn, who was only confirmed by parliament in his prime ministerial tenure on a permanent basis on September 21, 2012, and subsequently elected as chairman of the EPRDF by the congress of the governing coalition which met in Bahir Dar during the last week of March 2013 (although he did assume the chairmanship of the African Union three months earlier on January 27).

That being said, however, there have been several positive and, indeed, tantalizing indications that while the new prime minister has promised to maintain his predecessor's policies, he is also slowly blazing out his own trail. These include:

On November 29, 2012, the Ethiopian parliament approved Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn's reshuffle of the Council of Ministers, which reaffirmed the EPRDF's multi-ethnic framework to give each of the parties in the coalition at least a deputy prime ministerial-ranked position. The prime minister himself hails from the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region and previously led the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM), while Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen is leader of the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM). Civil Service Minister Muktar Kedir of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and Minister of Communications and Information Technology Debretsion Gebremichael, deputy chairman of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), were confirmed as ministers with the rank of deputy prime minister. While seemingly cosmetic, the appointments potentially represent a balancing of governing coalition which has traditionally been dominated by the TPLF.

On April 29, 2013, during the course of his meeting with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus reiterated the offer made by Prime Minister Hailemariam in December to open a dialogue with Eritrea without preconditions "anytime, anywhere and at any level." While, regrettably, the Eritrean regime has not responded to the invitation to parley, the mere fact that an offer has been tabled represents a not insignificant improvement of the prospects for peace.

On May 10, just days after Prime Minister Hailemariam gave an address denouncing corruption in government, the ministerial-ranked director-general of the Ethiopian Revenues and Customs Authority (ERCA), Melaku Fenta, and two other ERCA officials, along with nine other people, were arrested on suspicion of corruption. Melaku, a senior EPRDF member, is the most high-profile official to be arrested since Siye Abraha, a former defense minister, was charged with abuse of office in 2002 (and, it should be noted that Siye, who was subsequently convicted and jailed for six years, had already left government at the time of his arrest). While Ethiopia's

ranking of 113th out of 176 states in Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index puts its above its immediate neighbors, the arrests of Melaku and his alleged cohorts as well as the subsequent arrests of more than fifty people by Ethiopia's Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission clearly signal a determination on the part of the new administration to tackle the problem.

On June 2, several thousand demonstrators led by the chairman of the Semayawi ("Blue") Party, Yilkal Getinet, peacefully marched down Addis Ababa's Churchill Avenue to demand the release of prisoners and to protest unemployment and alleged state meddling in religious affairs. While the number of those who turned out was relatively modest, the march was nonetheless the largest anti-government demonstration since 2005. Moreover, the protesters encountered no police interference—nor, as I have been assured by senior officials, will there be any should the Blues decide to hold more marches as long as organizers respect the requirement that local authorities be given sufficient notice in order to make necessary logistical accommodations. If this proves to be the case, it will certainly be indicative both of the confidence of the new prime minister and his government in the country's overall stability and of a new opening in its political space.

To these modest points of data, I would add a brief personal observation from having had, even before he became prime minister, the privilege of discussing a broad range of topics with Hailemariam Desalegn. It is well known that the prime minister comes from the Wolayta, an ethnic group that barely approaches 2 percent of the total Ethiopian population. Less well known is the fact that his family is affiliated with a "Oneness" Pentecostal denomination that is itself a small minority within the Protestant minority among Ethiopian Christians. Moreover, I have been rather impressed by not only how well informed Prime Minister Hailemariam is on a variety of issues, but also the methodological rigor of his thought process which allows for a dispassionate examination of problems—perhaps a legacy of his academic and professional background as a civil engineer specializing in water and sanitation projects.

While as a political analyst and not a psychological one, I try not to overemphasize factors like these, one likewise ought to not arbitrarily discount their influence on the perspective any person brings to bear on the questions he or she confronts. In particular, it should be noted that, by and large, those occupying almost all the leading positions in the current Ethiopian government are, unlike their predecessors, *not* former combatants from the long struggle to overthrow the Derg. On the other hand, one should also be cognizant of the political, institutional, and other constraints which someone in Hailemariam Desalegn's position faces, especially until such time as he or she is able to win a full electoral mandate in his or her own right.

Clarifying Some Contentious Issues

There are several contentious issues which are often either misunderstood or otherwise taken out of context for which some clarification may contribute to a more complete assessment of recent developments in Ethiopia as well as to the Subcommittee's deliberations as it carries out

its oversight responsibilities with respect to US policy towards the country in general and questions of democratization and human rights in particular.

"Land grabs." For several years now, there have been a steady stream of sensationalist reports in the media about so-called "land grabs" which are alleged to have forced tens—if not hundreds—of thousands of people off their land in order to lease it to foreign investors. Many of these reports originate in the press releases of self-appointed "watchdog" groups seeking publicity for the extended op-eds masquerading as scientific studies which are the stock in trade of a number of these organizations. For all the rhetorical bombast, the facts on the ground simply do not support the narrative. Ethiopia has exactly 100 million hectares of land, of which it is estimated that more than 70 million hectares are arable, although not all of it is currently under permanent cultivation. Following an exhaustive assessment process by the federal government with the regional governments, some 3.67 million hectares of arable land[2]—less than 4 percent of the country's total land mass—was identified as underutilized and uninhabited and, consequently, designated as available for large-scale agriculture investment which would, moreover, help assure Ethiopia's food security. In the several years that this program has been in place, the total amount of land which has been leased to the grand total of 234 foreign investors, including members of the Ethiopian diaspora, is 395,000 hectares[3]—just over 10 percent of land eligible for such leases under the government's program and barely half of 1 percent of the total arable land in the country. Thus if this issue is even relatively significant enough to raise among the other pressing concerns in our bilateral relationship with Ethiopia, we ought to at the very least ensure that the discussion is grounded in empirical facts—not alarmist headlines and emotional hype—and the amount of time, energy, and political capital dedicated to it commensurate with that reality.

Agricultural policy. Ethiopia's robust economic growth owes a great deal to the strong performance of its agricultural sector, which is another reason it is rather unlikely that the country's government has it "in" for the estimated 13 to 15 million smallholders who produce more than 95 percent of agricultural output, which in turn contributes nearly half of national GDP and even larger proportions of employment and export earnings. If anything, facilitating the transition of subsistence farmers into the commercial economy would pay rich cross-sector dividends—to say nothing of the political advantage to be gained by whatever administration presides over the shift. In many respects, the government's infrastructure program with its expansion of roads as well as the power grid and market networks is already benefiting farmers. In addition, the country's current Five-Year Growth and Transformation Plan aims to

[2] The land identified as underutilized and uninhabited and, consequently, available for lease to large-scale agricultural projects is found in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region (1,148,852 hectares), Gambella Regional State (1,226,893 hectares), Oromia (1,069,967 hectares), Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (209,725 hectares), and the Amhara Region (6,183 hectares).

[3] Overall, some 470,000 hectares were leased to foreign and diaspora investors, but 75,000 hectares was repossessed because the leaseholders either failed to develop the land as agreed upon or violated environmental regulations. These 75,000 hectares have been returned to the pool of land that is potentially available for large-scale agricultural development.

double the national economy by doubling agricultural output and, simultaneously, to sustainably increase both rural incomes and national food security.

The Nile. It is beyond the scope of this hearing to go into the complex issues relating to the use of waters of the Nile River, questions concerning which have been unhelpfully muddied by the overheated rhetoric—and, indeed, threats of violence—pouring forth from Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and other politicians in Cairo.

At a certain level, the bombast is not surprising since it may be all they have. First, insofar as it has a legal case at all, Egypt's claims rests on rather weak foundations. During the colonial era, a May 1929 exchange of notes between Egyptian Prime Minister Muhammad Mahmoud Pasha and the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Lord Lloyd of Dolobran, stipulated that no projects affecting the Nile flow would be undertaken in Sudan, then under the Anglo-Egyptian "condominium," or any other territory then under British rule without the agreement of the Egyptian government which asserted its "natural and historical rights" over the river. Following Sudan's independence, that country signed the Nile Waters Agreement with Egypt in 1959, which allocated 55.5 billion cubic meters (bcm) of water annually to the Egyptians and 18.5 bcm to the Sudanese. Second, *nemo dat quod non habet* ("you cannot give what you do not have [or own]") is a bedrock principle of classical international jurisprudence. The lack of reference to other riparian countries and their interests leaves open the question of the Nile Agreement's legal validity to bind any parties other than Egypt and Sudan which, moreover, contribute virtually nothing to the river's flow. Ethiopia, the source of an overwhelming part of the Nile's water, was never a party to either of the agreements, although it was an independent state at the time of both—in fact, at the time of the 1929 accord, Ethiopia had been a full member of the League of Nations for some six years, while Egypt, then under a quasi-protectorate, was not accepted into the organization as a full-fledge sovereign member of the international community until 1937. Moreover, Burundi, the Congo, Eritrea, and Rwanda, are likewise not parties to the accords, having been ruled by other colonial regimes—thus the British did not have any pretext by which to sign away the water rights of those territories. Third, for the talk in Cairo about keeping "all options open" and the armchair speculation about possible attacks against the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the Morsi regime's threats are as empty as its treasury: quite simply, the Egyptian military does not have the aerial refueling capability for its aircraft to even make it into Ethiopian airspace, much less bomb the project and return home.[4]

However, the issue of the GERD—which, when completed in 2017, will be Africa's largest

[4] It is another matter entirely whether the Egyptian regime, unable to achieve its goals any other way, might resort to covert action, such as supporting and even arming dissident groups seeking the overthrow of the Ethiopian state, irrespective of their prospects for success. It is possible to interpret along similar lines the visit two weeks ago of a high-level Egyptian military delegation to Mogadishu where its members were reported to have expressed interest in equipping and training the Somali regime's forces for possible action against the unrecognized, but *de facto* independent Republic of Somaliland—which, coincidentally, is one of landlocked Ethiopia's vital accesses to the sea.

hydropower plant—and the rest of Ethiopia's ambitious plans for the use of its natural resources also serve to highlight two positive policy developments. First, last week the Ethiopian parliament unanimously ratified the Nile River Cooperative Framework Agreement, which has also been signed by Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda (the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan have also announced their intention of joining the pact), thus opening the way for what could prove to be a new era of broad cooperation across the region. Second, even as it was ratifying the deal with its upper riparian partners, the Ethiopian government went out of its way to reach out to downstream countries, including representatives from Sudan and Egypt as well as international members in the International Panel of Experts that recently reported on the impact of the GERD. This unprecedented openness on a question of core national interest is a most welcome development, as is the new agreement, reached on Tuesday following the Egyptian foreign minister's visit to Addis Ababa, for the three countries to conduct further impact studies.

Muslim protests. To do justice to the Ethiopian government's decision to take a more proactive stance to counter radicalization among the country's Muslims beginning about two years ago and the protests last year over the elections to the country's Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, or *Majlis*, would perhaps require the Subcommittee to schedule a separate hearing. It is, however, worth noting that worry over the threat posed by well-resourced extremists to which has been Ethiopia's hitherto laudable tradition of peaceful coexistence and, indeed, respect between the three Abrahamic religions is a concern among both scholars and policymakers, predating the more recent controversies. I treated it at some length in the entry on "Ethiopia" in the 2011 edition of the *World Almanac of Islamism*[5] and I would add that Ambassador Donald Yamamoto had the occasion to engage this issue during his tenure as the United States ambassador in Addis Ababa in a series of three cables which were subsequently published by WikiLeaks. Without justifying the unauthorized release of classified US diplomatic reports, since the documents have now been widely disseminated, I would respectfully call the Subcommittee's attention to two passages, one descriptive and the other diagnostic:

> Conflicts within the Muslim community have also arisen over control of mosques, which imams should be allowed to preach, and over control of Islamic education. The [Majlis] wants to build an Ethiopian Muslim theological school so that young Ethiopian men will not have to go to the Middle East to study in preparation for becoming Imams, as they must now. These young men are increasingly studying in Saudi Arabia due to the generous scholarships and subsidies available there and when they return to Ethiopia to take up their posts in new Saudi-funded mosques, they continue to receive subsidies from Saudi Arabia or Islamic NGOs. Unfortunately, the Sufi-dominated Muslim community in Ethiopia does not have sufficient funds to start their own theological school, nor can they counter the financial advantage Wahhabis have in Ethiopia.
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> Ethiopia's delicate Muslim/Christian balance and historic attitudes between the faith

[5] See J. Peter Pham, "Ethiopia," in *World Almanac of Islamism 2011*, ed. Ilan Berman and Jeff M. Smith (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), 261-370.

> communities regarding tolerance and mutual respect are being challenged, thereby undermining US interests in the region.

Consequently, it would behoove us to keep this larger strategic context in mind in evaluating some of the issues which have arisen *à propos*.

Recommendations for US Policy

With all this in mind, permit me to conclude by commending to the Subcommittee's consideration five principles to guide US policy toward Ethiopia, which I offer in line with the prudent norm embraced by President Obama in last year's *U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa*: "Addressing the opportunities and challenges in Africa requires a comprehensive U.S. policy that is proactive, forward-looking, and that balances our long-term interests with near-term imperatives."

First, understand that Ethiopia is an ancient country populated by proud peoples imbued with a deep sense of history and nationhood, all of which has a profound impact on current political reality. This statement is not just trope, but rather key to even beginning to grasp what is arguably the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa that is the product of history and geography, rather than being "*l'état importé*" willed into existence and preserved because some colonizer drew an imaginary line on a near-empty map. While the Ethiopian central state's internal unity and its control of peripheral regions has waxed and waned in the many centuries since the glory days of the kingdom of Axum, "the core fact of regional politics is the Ethiopian state, lineally descended from the empires that have controlled the northern highlands over some two thousand years, and in the process extended their dominion, to the extent that they were able to do so, over their less densely populated peripheries."[6] In short, unlike some of its neighbors and notwithstanding the fevered delusions of some who do not wish it well, Ethiopia is a viable state inhabited by people with a vibrant underlying sense of nationhood and identity who can be expected to overcome divisions and other challenges.

Second, recognize both the opportunities within the historic moment and the delicate balance that needs to be maintained. There is no denying that, whatever one's view of the late Prime Minister Meles, his passing after more than two decades at the helm is a historic turning point for Ethiopia. However, like all transitions, it is fraught with both opportunities and challenges. While one can have confidence in Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, his abilities, and his vision, one should not ignore the fact that, at least through the national elections due in two years' time, he has his work cut out for him, both internally and externally. One should be leery of any actions which might upset the careful political balance being struck. Rather, what needs to be appreciated is that Ethiopia is at a crossroad and how its partners manage their relations with the country may well influence which direction it takes. Nagging, hectoring, and threat making will likely result in the opposite of the outcome sought, while patient and supportive diplomacy may reap considerable fruit.

[6] Christopher Clapham, "Ethiopia: The Perils of Reform," in *On the Fault Line: Managing Tensions and Divisions within Societies*, ed. Jeffrey Herbst, Terence McNamee, and Greg Mills (London: Profile, 2012), 138.

Third, be realistic about what the United States can and cannot do with respect to the direction of social, economic, and political developments in Ethiopia. It goes without saying that America has influence and, where possible, it ought to be used judiciously for good—as long as it does not imperil what Hans Morgenthau characterized as the "moral duty for a nation to always follow in its dealings with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action, THE NATIONAL INTEREST."[7] However—and perhaps these are notions somewhat foreign to us as modern Americans both used to instant gratification and unaccustomed to limits, political as well as fiscal—we need a healthy sense of humility about what we can hope to accomplish. A few years ago, Ambassador David Shinn published a short commentary, the salient points of which it would be useful to recall:

> Those in the Ethiopian diaspora who oppose the Ethiopian government usually suggest that American assistance to Ethiopia can and should serve as the leverage for forcing change in the country. The level of U.S. assistance in recent years has been impressive. In fiscal year 2007, it was about $474 million and in fiscal year 2008 about $456 million. It is important, however, to look more closely at this assistance...
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> In fiscal year 2008, by my calculations, 73 percent of USAID's budget for Ethiopia went to HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, 12 percent to child survival and health, 9 percent to development assistance, 5 percent for food aid and less than 1 percent for a combination of foreign military financing (FMF) and international military education and training (IMET). The amount for FMF was $843,000 and for IMET $620,000.
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> This is not an assistance program that has significant political leverage. In 2007, almost 95 percent of the assistance program went to HIV/AIDS, emergency food aid and child survival. In 2008, the figure was about 90 percent for these programs. There are very few members of Congress and even fewer in the Executive Branch who are interested in cutting funding for HIV/AIDS, child survival and emergency food aid in an effort to change governmental policies in Ethiopia.[8]

The thrust of Ambassador Shinn's argument is as valid today as when he made them. If anything, room for maneuver is even tighter and America's overall leverage significantly diminished by the combination of our own general cutbacks in foreign assistance—in the current fiscal year, total US assistance to Ethiopia amounted to some $351 million before sequestration, down approximately one-fourth from the levels just five years ago[9]—and the emergence of other countries and international actors able and willing to work with the

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[7] Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 241-242

[8] David H. Shinn, "U.S. Aid Has Its Limits," *The Official Blog of Amb. David H. Shinn*, November 2, 2009, http://davidshinn.blogspot.com/2009/11/us-aid-has-limits-too.html.

[9] Of this total, 26.1 percent went to development assistance in governance, education, and economic growth and agriculture; 15.4 percent went to HIV/AIDS programs; 30.4 percent went to global health programs; and 27.9 percent went to emergency food relief—and one-tenth of 1 percent, some $500,000, went to military training and education—mostly to areas like border security in which the United States has an interest and which were exempted by Congress from restrictions.

Ethiopian government—as underscored by Prime Minister Hailemariam's visit to Beijing last week and the high-level meetings he had there with Chinese political leaders as well as bankers and other investors.

Fourth, take advantage of Ethiopia's application to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) to constructively engage with the country's government not only about economic liberalization, but other rule of law and governance concerns. While Ethiopia applied to join the bloc a decade ago, the application has acquired greater momentum in recent months with the government pulling out all stops to be in a position to present its initial offer on trade in services in the coming months as a basis for bringing forward its negotiations with WTO member states. In Addis Ababa last month, Secretary of State John Kerry stated, "We also support Ethiopia's accession to the WTO, and we are going to work with Ethiopia in an effort to try to help that transition." This is the correct position, not only in its own right with respect to promoting business and investment—as Secretary Kerry noted, "our private sector businesses need to focus on Ethiopia and recognize the opportunities that are here and hopefully we can encourage more companies to come here and be engaged and help take part in this"—but for the "knock-on" effects of integrating the country into the global trade framework. Even if the publicly stated goal of completing accession in 2014 is unlikely to be achieved, the effort does present the United States and other international partners with a unique opportunity for more intense dialogue with their Ethiopian counterparts, contribute to enhancing the latter's technical administrative and regulatory capabilities, and advance policy objectives ranging from liberalizing the banking and telecommunications sectors to securing private property and other legal rights.

Fifth, become more engaged in Ethiopia's rapidly transforming higher education sector. Ethiopia has gone from three national universities in 2001 to thirty-one this year—a rapid expansion that is perhaps unique in the world and certainly among developing countries. Some 20 percent of Ethiopia's national budget is spent on education, a commendable investment in the country's future. Both Prime Minister Hailemariam, who spent most of his early career in different academic and administrative posts at what has become Arba Minch University, and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke, a onetime high school biology teacher and former minister of education, have backgrounds in the classroom. If the US government could encourage American colleges and universities to become more engaged with their Ethiopian counterparts, there is the prospect over the long term of considerable return, both in terms of consolidating the cultural and political bonds between our countries and people as well as advancing democratic and human development.

Conclusion

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

In the *U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, the President acknowledged that "it is clear that Africa is more important than ever to the security and prosperity of the international community, and to the United States in particular." What is true of the continent is, if anything,

even more the case with the country that hosts the seat of the African Union.

It goes without saying that there are a number of things that one might wish to see done differently, perhaps even better, with respect to the ongoing social, economic, and political development of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the context in which the post-Meles transition and other developments are occurring needs to be taken into account and objective progress, both in absolute terms and relative to the rest of a very troubled, but geopolitically strategic, region. In that perspective, it would behoove policymakers and analysts in the United States and Ethiopia's other international partners to keep in mind Voltaire's warning that "*le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*" and, allowing a healthy dose of political realism about their own interests and those of the peoples of Ethiopia to temper judgmentalist impulses, devote their energies instead to where they can be most effective in encouraging, facilitating, and sustaining continued stability and progress in Ethiopia and, beyond it, in the Greater Horn of Africa.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Pham, thank you very much.
Mr. Metho.

STATEMENT OF MR. OBANG METHO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT FOR A NEW ETHIOPIA

Mr. METHO. Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting us to come here about the—talking about Ethiopia. I would like my statement to be submitted in the record and I think that the speakers before me have already said a lot and I will try to summarize.

From what we heard going back to the subject of Ethiopia after Meles, I think we need to go back what happened when Meles was here and I think that this is something that most of us need to be aware of.

When Meles was alive or when he went to the bush he went with an organization called Tigrayan Liberation Front to liberate a section of a country, not to liberate Ethiopia. And when they took over they did not change it.

They have created what they call EPRDF, to fool the outsider that Ethiopians are united while they're still running the ethnic base.

I think this is something that we need to not dismiss. In Ethiopia today, for the last 20 years, is being led by an ethnic base and this is something that we should not miss.

So when Meles was alive, he was being known and I think Yamamoto put it very well—charming to the West, brutal to Ethiopia.

Saying that lie, a war on terror, he's terrorized his own peoples. Saying that the economy grew, it's booming——

[Applause.]

Mr. METHO [continuing]. Saying that economy grew, booming, just ask other Ethiopians that were being displaced from their land. Food aid that's been given has been used as a tool.

The list can go on, when Meles was alive. Now, let me come back what has changed. Last time—and, again, I thank you, Mr. Smith, for your extraordinary leadership—8 years ago when there was a briefing here I came and testified for 424 people from my own ethnic group and from Gambella where 193 Ethiopians were killed, for the Ethiopian political prisoners including Dr. Berhanu Nega, who is beside me.

That was 8 years ago. Yamamoto was with me. He said there was a crossroads. Eight years—can you not cross this road?

[Applause.]

Mr. METHO. Yamamoto claimed that by that time Ethiopia at the beginning of a new chapter. This book—there have never—any other chapters since then.

The point I want to make is this. I agree with some of the peoples. I disagree with some. The USAID talked about progress in Ethiopia. Peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia there's antiterror laws.

It is against the law for reconciliation, child rights, woman rights, disabled—the value that which really the Americans depend on and we call that there's progress in the country.

These are some of the issues that I want to mention. In my point I am speaking as human rights and I am speaking as an Ethiopian

because if something is happening in Ethiopia to the outside it's happened to Ethiopia and to me, it's happened to my family members and this one point that I need to mention.

One point that I need to not miss in Ethiopia the journalists are locked up in jail. In Ethiopia, what we need, the Ethiopian people, are simple things. We need to be given a choice.

All of you who are sitting, Mr. Smith, some people—you are representing people. In Ethiopia we are denied to have our own submit that we choice and that what we are asking for, nothing less.

In that matter, right now Meles is gone, the regime is in place but at the end of the day the Ethiopian problem will not be solved by the outsiders but the Ethiopian.

We had many chances. When the king, Haile Selassie, collapsed we missed that opportunity. When the Derg collapsed we missed that opportunity. At that time there were a gentleman in this House. The thing he predicted is what's going on today.

Right now, Yamamoto may say that Ethiopia is a cause lost but Ethiopian is different and I will like to now read a statement that I would like for all of us to know.

The reason why I say that it's not an American—the simple things that we are asking we are not asking Americans or the Western to free us. We are asking them not to be a roadblock to our freedom. We can free ourselves.

And how do we do that? It's simple. For the last 12 months, the Ethiopian Muslim Brothers were protesting just to choose the leaders who can preach them.

Ethiopia denied them their free protesting peacefully. The government want to divide them and say that the Ethiopian Muslim are radical extremists and I say that they are not.

The Muslim and as a Christian and Ethiopian we don't share faith. We don't share land. We share blood and the blood cannot be taken away from us. We are one people.

[Applause.]

Mr. METHO. The hope and the change I'm seeing—just a few weeks ago the Blue Party have took the leadership to bring Ethiopia out. They call the people and Ethiopians show up. And before they show up let me read a statement I got from one young man:

> "Dear Obang, it is now just 4 hours before we go out to rallies. I don't know what will happen. This may be my last message. The last time I went out, 2005, with three of my friends I was the only one that came back. This time I may not come back. I'm looking forward to this. It seems like going to a war zone. The only difference is the other side have guns. I have nothing.
>
> "If they shoot I have nothing else to deliver. This is the kind of country that we are living in, Obang, but higher moral ground and that's why I'm going out and I'm not afraid and I want somebody to know."

This is the kind of government that the U.S. is funding. And this is the point that I just want to conclude, Mr. Smith.

The Ethiopian we have enough opportunity. We have enough, many Ethiopians. What we need is to work together, people to people, and those peoples they're not the one in Addis Ababa. The

Ethiopian taxi driver who will pick you up, the Ethiopian who are working at Starbucks serving you coffee, the Ethiopian that are working at a parking lot, the Ethiopian in DC, they want freedom like everybody else. We are not begging. When Obama run for President he said that we need change.

Some Ethiopians who were working minimum wage pay and hoping that they will hear from Obama. We never heard that. We are not disappointed. We will free ourself. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Metho follows:]

Testimony before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

Date:

June 20, 2013

Given by:

Mr. Obang O. Metho, Executive Director

Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia

S.M.N.E

Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia

"Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Democracy and Human Rights"

I would like to thank the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Congressman Edward Royce, and all ranking members of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations for this important opportunity to examine the Ethiopian Government's observance of democratic and human rights principles in post-Meles Ethiopia.

I want to especially thank Congressman Christopher Smith, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa for his extraordinary leadership in bringing the case of Ethiopia to the attention of this subcommittee once again; particularly in light of the many pressing global issues. In 2006, Congressman Smith worked hard to bring this issue all the way from subcommittee to the House, where it faced obstacles and died. I hope this time, something more concrete and productive can be accomplished for the betterment of both our countries.

In 2006, I gave testimony at that previous hearing in regards to the massacre of 424 members of my own ethnic group, the Anuak, in 2003, perpetrated by members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces. I also testified regarding the ongoing crimes against humanity and destruction of property and infrastructure in the Gambella region of Ethiopia; however, because similar abuses were being perpetrated in other places in the country, I also spoke of the 193 peaceful protestors who were shot and killed as they peacefully protested the results of the flawed 2005 national election and the repression in Oromia. This also included testimony regarding the imprisonment of opposition leaders, including Dr. Berhana Nega, who is sitting next to me today.

Now I am here once again to testify about these same kinds of issues because Ethiopians have only seen increasing restrictions to their freedom and a continuation of government-sponsored human rights violations in every region of the country. This includes the illegal eviction of great numbers of Ethiopians from their ancestral homes and land, causing great hardship to the people. It also includes egregious human rights atrocities in places like the Ogaden [Somali] region, which is blocked from the outside world by the regime. It has obstructed the media from reporting on the great suffering of the people being perpetrated by government forces, which has been described as a silent genocide. Two Swedish journalists were arrested, detained and charged as terrorists before being released last year. However, the Ogaden is not alone for every region of the country has become a victim to this regime.

Sadly, little, in terms of rights, has changed post-Meles. The only change is that he is no longer here. Although the rapid decline in freedom and rights was led by Meles, ***he and his cabinet and ministers established an apparatus of strong-armed control that continues to reach from the top offices of the federal government to rural villages throughout Ethiopia. That infrastructure of repression, which carries out much of the day-to-day enforcement of EPRDF control and the perpetration of human rights violations, is still in place and marks the near achievement of a secretive and chilling plan put into motion in June 1993 under the name:*** *TPLF/EPRDF's Strategies for Establishing its Hegemony & Perpetuating its Rule*[1], which was said to have been given to all their cadres for its execution. An abridged translation of the 68-page Amharic document is now available online.

This plan, based on Marxist ideology, was brought to our attention by one of the members of the TPLF who reported to us strict adherence to this plan by its cadres. The plan aligns closely with the nature of the TPLF when they were still fighting in the bush as well as the Ethiopia of today.

Prior to defeating the brutal Derg regime in 1991, Meles led the Marxist-Leninist based rebel group, the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), also so known for its brutality in the bush that the U.S. State Department had classified them as a terrorist group at the time. When they took over power, they formed a new coalition party made up of separate ethnic-based parties. It was called the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and was meant to appear to be a multi-ethnic government but in fact, it has been controlled from the beginning by the TPLF who have never abandoned the goal of perpetual hegemony.

The EPRDF's structure was based around ethnically defined regions and political parties, but at the grassroots level, all regions and parties, though appearing to be led by leaders of the same ethnicity as the region, were instead pro-TPLF/ERPDF puppets, who implemented their policies. By its nature, this division of Ethiopia by ethnicity was a guise meant to dupe the public and the west by its appearance of being democratic; however, in practice, it has contributed to the prolongation of ethnic-based divisions while strengthening the power of the TPLF, assuring its control of the EPRDF even though Tigrayans are a minority, making up only 6% of the total population. However, this does not mean the TPLF speaks for many Tigrayans who have become disillusioned with the TPLF/EPRDF.

In short, the TPLF's plan of revolutionary democracy, which is more closely aligned with the Chinese model than the liberalism of the west, was clearly designed to achieve perpetual hegemony over every aspect of Ethiopian life. In the above-stated plan, they warn that they can achieve their goals "*only by winning the elections successively and holding power without let up.*" They warn, "*If we lose in the elections even once, we will encounter a great danger... [so] we should win in the initial elections and then create a conducive situation that will ensure the establishment of this hegemony.*" In 2010, the TPLF/ERPDF successfully accomplished this goal and won their fourth election with an alleged 99.6% of the votes and all but one of the 547 seats in the Ethiopian Parliament.

This also was accomplished through gaining control every sector of society: the media, all aspects of government and civil service, all political space, elections, the judiciary, the passing and interpretation of laws to suit their goals, the financial sector, education, the military, the economic sector, religious groups, civic society, government ownership of all land and government control in the extraction of natural resources. The principles upon which America was founded are absent in Ethiopia despite all the democratic rhetoric.

The TPLF/EPRDF is more in control today than it was in 2006 and continues to hold that power despite the death of their central figure. ***It has become near to impossible to find any political space for the development of a viable alternative to the TPLF/EPRDF because dissenters, activists or anyone speaking for change will be put in jail. It has become a full-blown autocracy. Anyone who attempts to speak up is silenced. All has been justified by saying that Ethiopia has double digit economic growth and that they have met their millennium goals and that the people are too ignorant to understand how they will eventually benefit; however, the people know that this is not balanced growth but instead has "filled the pockets and bellies" of government supporters as laid out in the 1993 plan.*** Claims of economic gains also serve to minimize or cover up the reality on the ground of the increased poverty of

the majority. Supporters of the TPLF/EPRDF policies and tactics are rewarded while non-supporters are penalized in a variety of ways. The most marginalized masses are ignored unless they become an impediment to the TPLF/ERPDF plan of exploitation of land or natural resources. Here is an explanation of that strategy from the original TPLF/ERPDF plan:

> *The combined strength of the State and Revolutionary Democracy's economic institutions should be used either to attract the support or to neutralize the opposition of the intelligentsia. We should demonstrate to it that our economic strength could serve its interests, and, in the event of its opposition to us, its belly and pocket could be made empty.*

Examples of the practice of the above strategy are rampant. According to a Human Rights Watch[ii] report, following the 2010 election, even humanitarian aid was linked to party membership.

Record numbers of refugees are leaving the country, regardless of the risks, because so little opportunity exists for the average person, let alone for more outspoken dissenters. Laws such as the Charities and Societies Proclamation[iii] have literally closed down civil society, replacing institutions with TPLF/ERPDF controlled look-alike organizations. A vague anti-terrorism law[iv] has been used to silence journalists, editors, democracy activists, religious leaders and opposition members by intimidating them, arresting them or charging and imprisoning them as terrorists. Examples are our heroes of freedom such as Eskinder Nega, Reeyot Alemu and Andualem Arage.

Into this highly controlled milieu, the new Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, has emerged. He is neither Tigrayan nor is he part of the old guard of TPLF loyalists but instead comes from the South, helping to counter accusations of TPLF domination of the EPRDF. Reportedly, his appointment was hotly contested; however, because he had held the position of Deputy Prime Minister it may have provided the least controversial transition. Insider information reports he has little power and that his actions are all closely monitored by the TPLF central committee. ***As another means of control, three deputy prime ministers of different ethnicity were appointed and are said to hold more power than the prime minister. Reports have also surfaced that power struggles within the party leadership have split the top power holders and remain unresolved. These intraparty conflicts could deepen as the next election comes closer, with unpredictable, but possibly dangerous results. Hoping that this problem will resolve on its own is unrealistic and a recipe for disaster.***

The TPLF/ERPDF has so effectively constructed a system of repression in Ethiopia that it will likely carry on for awhile; however Meles, the driving force who charmed the west while terrorizing the people, remains their main visionary leader. Billboards around Addis Ababa show his picture and the TPLF/ERPDF continues to elevate his legacy, possibly because no one else within the party has been able to articulate another, more timely or urgently-needed vision. ***This opens them up to new challenges from the dissatisfied majority that they may not be able to dodge. Intraparty conflicts may also further exacerbate the situation.*** Add to that pressure from the outside, like from Egypt, neighboring countries or others and the situation may either explode or implode without reforms. ***Although the TPLF/EPRDF has shown little openness to reforms, with enough pressure from the people and donors like the U.S., it might create a win-win situation to bring about such reforms without violence, chaos and a spillover effect in the Horn of Africa.***

The road to democracy and respect for human rights in Ethiopia must be solved by Ethiopians, but the U.S. has a role to play as well. I believe the current U.S. policy of quiet diplomacy will actually contribute to a worse outcome. We should learn from what happened in the Arab Spring, when forces of a frustrated public joined together to oust Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. It took many by surprise, especially those who had sided with an authoritarian regime rather than the people, thinking Mubarak was so powerful that he could not be brought down. This alliance with an authoritarian regime makes it much more difficult in the aftermath to reestablish a meaningful partnership with Egyptians that goes beyond giving large amounts of foreign aid.

Undoubtedly, many Ethiopians attribute U.S. support to Ethiopia, including partnership in the War on Terror, as a means that has prolonged the life of a repressive, undemocratic regime. Will the U.S. be pro-active in aligning with the people; something that will help sustain a long-term relationship with Ethiopians? Unfortunately, ***the tendency of most entrenched groups and their supporters, foreign or native, is to continue the status quo without any change; however, in Ethiopia, there is a window of opportunity before the next election in 2015 to set the stage for meaningful reforms. The U.S. and other donor countries should not simply stand by, using the rationale that there is no viable alternative to work with because the TPLF/ERPDF has been so effective in blocking access to political space and will not easily give up on this. This must be taken into consideration for how can you build an alternative in this kind of repressive environment?*** You cannot put someone out in the middle of nowhere with no material and tell them to build something. It will not work.

With these limitations in mind, the Ethiopian public, both at home and in the Diaspora, are now working to bring the change. ***Some of that change can be seen from what happened last week in Addis Ababa when Ethiopians came out in mass numbers to peacefully rally for freedom and justice in Ethiopia based on a call from the newly emerging Blue party. With minimal resources, the Blue party reached out to the public in an inclusive way and the groundswell of response from ethnically, politically and religiously diverse Ethiopians surprised even them.*** They called on the people and the people answered. Yet, the TPLF/ERPDF warned that Muslims who joined together with Christians and others in the rally were extremists. This defies the reality on the ground.

For the last year, Ethiopian Muslims have been peacefully rallying in their compound, asking for freedom to practice religion without government interference into their internal affairs. In violation of the Ethiopian Constitution, the TPLF/ERPDF has been choosing their religious leaders, ensuring those leaders were pro-government. The TPLF/ERPDF has done the same within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church leading to the church breaking into two divisions—the government approved church in Ethiopia and the other in exile here in the U.S. – a divide and conquer strategy of gaining hegemony of religious groups addressed in the TPLF/EPRDF master plan of 1993. Within that plan, religious groups were to be *"used to disseminate the views of Revolutionary Democracy...and if that is not possible we should try to curtail their obstructionist activities... Without denying them due respect, we should mold their views, curtail their propaganda against Revolutionary Democracy, and even use them to serve our end."*

The TPLF/ERPDF government will do anything to label the Muslims as extremists and radicals to be feared by the west; however, Ethiopian Muslims, Christians and Jews have lived together for thousands of years in harmony. We do not only share the land but we share blood. We are a family. We are brothers and sisters.

In twelve months of rallying, these peaceful Muslim protestors have never destroyed anything or hurt another person. They are not making a stand for Sharia law but instead for a secular state where all people will be free and where there is no government interference in the practice of any religion. Yet, the TPLF/EPRDF fears unity between diverse religious groups.

Reports have emerged of the TPLF/ERPDF's intentions to divide people of different religious faith and to alarm the west by staging events themselves while blaming others. For example, inside reports allege that when Ethiopian Muslims were going to rally in front of the U.S. Embassy, they found out that pro-government forces were going to burn the American flag so they called off the entire rally. An eyewitness to the killing of Christians in 2007, reported to be by Muslims in the Oromo region of the country, were recognized by a relative to not be Muslims at all but government supporters.

I personally spoke to that survivor. It preceded the invasion into Somalia and is seen as an attempt to dupe the west. It must be understood that it profits this regime to do violence in the name of their opponents. ***Here is another example reported in Wikileaks where the U.S. had knowledge that the TPLF/ERPDF government had set the bombs in Addis Ababa several years ago so as scapegoat government opponents. They used it to justify the arrest of Oromo leaders as terrorists and to show a rising incidence of terrorist acts in Ethiopia, even though it was phony. Duping the west into supporting the TPLF/ERPDF was part of their original strategy laid out in the 1993 plan and is part of the reason for becoming a pseudo-democracy.***

Division between ethnicities, regions, political parties and religious groups is the lifeblood of the TPLF/ERPDF. ***For the government to gain power and control, they are trying to alienate the people from each other and spread rumors regarding the makeup of those who are protesting. Just as they are calling Muslims extremists and terrorists, they are now trying to label the Blue party, to separate them from others, by accusing them of being funded by foreigners like Egypt. The fact that Christians and Muslims are rallying together for freedom and justice for all Ethiopians is a real threat to their existence.*** These kinds of tactics by the government are a sign that the status quo cannot continue and will be challenged in increasing unity among Ethiopians. ***The donor countries, including the US, should align with the people.*** This means supporting the people who are working from within and those who are trying to resolve the problem peacefully, without violence.

The proper sequence of reforms is critical to the success of the outcome.

1. Intellectual reform must come first, which means the people must have access to information and have the freedom to express it—the first freedom to be attacked by dictatorships and the first that needs to be restored to bring about change.
2. The second must be political reform; opening up political space so the choice of the people is reinstated. Then they are free to choose political leaders and groups who represent their interests and the interests of the country.
3. The third is constitutional reform which must rewrite, redefine or reinstate the most inclusive and beneficial relationship between the people and the state in the form of this "constitutional contract"; a contract which upholds the rights of the people and protects the people from the state, similar to African models where it is assumed anyone can become tyrannical so checks and balances must be established to control the power of the government, ensuring participatory democracy.

4. The fourth is institutional reform; meaning reforms of the judiciary, the parliament, the military, civil services, and other institutions where regime cronies are now in control. Institutions must be independent of the state or party for change to be accomplished and made sustainable.
5. Lastly, economic reforms are necessary but will not be inclusive until the other reforms are implemented, making the system more transparent, accountable, and just; unlike in places like Russia, Ivory Coast, Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Cameroon, Rwanda and the Philippines where economic advances were made; yet, regime cronies still controlled the institutions, the political system and the justice system, staging the conditions for a reversal of power and the re-emergence of repression and cronyism.

Poverty and corruption in Ethiopia will also increase the pressure for explosion. Recently, Kofi Annan spoke about the cost of corruption to the African people. Ethiopia is a primary example. Although many quote statistics of economic growth in Ethiopia, most of it is in the hands of a few. Prior to the release of the report by the Global Financial Task Force in their report titled: *Illicit Financial Outflows from Developing Countries Over the Decade Ending in 2009*, they stated on December 5, 2011 the following in regards to Ethiopia:

> *"The people of Ethiopia are being bled dry. No matter how hard they try to fight their way out of absolute destitution and poverty, they will be swimming upstream against the current of illicit capital leakage."*

Their report reveals that Ethiopia lost US11.7 billion in illegal capital flight from 2000-2009 and illicit financial outflows from Ethiopia nearly doubled in 2009 to US$3.26 billion—double the amount in the two preceding years—with the vast majority of that increase coming from corruption, kickbacks and bribery. When it comes to transparency, it does not exist in Ethiopia.

Here is another example. Human Rights Watch found evidence that World Bank money, which was to be used for services, was instead used by the government to displace the people from their land, later given to foreign and crony investors. Five villages in the Gambella region, hard hit with land grabs, accompanied by human rights violations, made an appeal to the World Bank regarding the improper use of its funds. ***An independent inspection panel investigated the grounds for the appeal for the World Bank. After meeting with the local people who had been displaced to refugee camps in Kenya and South Sudan, they recommended a full investigation after finding substantial evidence of the misuse of World Bank funds. Now the Ethiopian government has refused to cooperate. All donors to the World Bank should look into this because this is your money. If they have nothing to hide, why would they not allow an investigation?***

People on the ground in Ethiopia live in fear of this regime, but many are coming to the point that they can no longer endure life without change and are willing to take a stand. Prior to the Blue party's recent rally, a 26-year-old recent graduate sent me his thoughts. He said:

> *Obang, it is now just four hours before we go out to rally. We don't know what will happen but this may be my last message because the last time I went out I went with three of my friends and I was the only one who came back. That was seven years ago after the 2005 election. I may be the one not come back this time but I am not afraid. I am looking at it like going into a war zone, but the only difference is the other side has a gun and we have nothing. If they shoot, I have nothing to deliver. This is the kind of country we live in. But, we have the moral high ground and this is what is making me go out. I want someone to know.*

Ethiopia is a country which relies on the US as its number one supporter and here is one of their brave, but peace-loving heroes, going out not knowing what will happen to him and those with him. Most of you have met Ethiopians here in Washington D.C. as thousands of Ethiopians live and work in this city. They pay taxes to the same government that for too long has overlooked the serial violations of human rights and the emergence of a full-blown dictatorship.

Ethiopians have struggled under dictatorship for 40 years. With the death of Meles and the appointment of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn until the next election in 2015, ***Ethiopians may have been given the most opportune moment in 21 years for change; however, if Ethiopians—or donor countries genuinely wanting to see democratic reforms—step back, waiting to see what will happen under this new arrangement of power, rather than actively creating a process of change that is owned and managed by the people of Ethiopia, this opportunity will most likely be hijacked and the "system" of repression will continue with the same or new "strongmen" at the helm. The only acceptable outcome for the Ethiopian people is nothing short of the transformation of Ethiopia to a new society and a New Ethiopia where*** humanity comes before ethnicity or any other distinctions for no one is free until all are free!

This is a time when the U.S. should use their influence to put pressure on the Ethiopian government for reforms rather than waiting for simmering tensions to explode. Support for a people-driven process is the best alternative to bring lasting change to Ethiopia, more sustainable peace to the Horn and a better ongoing partnership with the US.

Thank you!

Please do not hesitate to email me if you have comments to: Mr. Obang Metho, the Executive Director of the SMNE at Obang@solidaritymovement.org

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[i] http://www.enufforethiopia.net/pdf/Revolutionary_Democracy_EthRev_96.pdf

[ii] http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/10/19/development-without-freedom-0 ; **Development Without Freedom: How Aid Underwrites Repression**

[iii] http://www.civicus.org/csw_files/CIVICUSAnalysisEthiopiaCharitiesProc160908.pdf; A repressive 2009 law against civil society, the Charities and Societies Proclamation now prohibits any organization that receives more than 10% of its budget from foreign sources from (a) advancing human and democratic rights, (b) promoting equality of nations, nationalities, peoples, gender and religion, (c) promoting the rights of the disabled and children, (d) promoting conflict resolution or reconciliation and, (e) promoting the efficiency of justice and law enforcement services.[iii] This has meant the closure of most every independent civic organization. In their place, the regime has created pseudo-organizations controlled by the regime. At the last tally this included over 2,600 organizations. The law carries harsh criminal penalties for violators. It is used for political purposes and has paralyzed civil society. In its place, look-alike pseudo-institutions have sprung up, all created and controlled by the government, oftentimes appearing legitimate to outsiders.

[iv] http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Rights-Groups-Ethiopia-Using-Anti-Terror-Law-To-Stifle-Dissent-134274558.html

[v] http://www.financialtaskforce.org/2011/12/05/illicit-financial-outflows-from-ethiopia-nearly-doubled-in-2009-to-us3-26-billion-reveals-new-global-financial-integrity-report/

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Metho, thank you very much for your testimony. Mr. Akwei.

STATEMENT OF MR. ADOTEI AKWEI, MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

Mr. AKWEI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Representative Bass. Amnesty International continues to look forward to working with you and to thank you for your leadership on behalf of the issues in Africa as well as on human rights.

I'm going to be very, very brief because I know that we're running out of time but I think the panelists who spoke before me have already said that this is a window of opportunity and that it's closing fast.

This is an opportunity not only for change in Ethiopia but also for change here in Washington in terms of U.S. policy toward the country.

What we have seen not only in Ethiopia but in other parts of the world is that history shows that governments tend to harden as oppose to soften if they are not—if they do not seize the opportunity for reform at the beginning, at the start.

And so I would urge that this committee and Congress push the administration to recalibrate and to revisit what it is exactly is going on in Ethiopia, what the government's genuine commitment in Ethiopia is to human rights and the rule of law, all of which are going to be critical and essential in terms of its future whether as a democracy or, as the first panelist said, where it's the alternative future, which nobody here wants.

I would also say that there are many levers that the United States has not yet used in terms of applying or challenging the Addis Ababa regime to meet its human rights obligations.

For example, the Ethiopian Government is a party to the ICCPR, to the Geneva Conventions, to the Convention Against Torture, to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights. The Ethiopian Government is also a party to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

All of these are very clear in what governments are supposed to do in terms of creating free and fair conditions and basic accountability by the ruling government to respect human rights and free expression.

Despite that—and excuse me, the Ethiopian Constitution also has at least 30 human rights provisions in it that speak to fundamental freedoms and rights.

Despite this, the litany of human rights concerns and abuses is, sadly, very depressing and these are issues that are not only reported by Amnesty International but by other human rights groups and the United States Department of State, which puts out its annual Human Rights Report—very specifically, issues of freedom of expression, crackdowns on human rights defenders, torture and ill treatment, which you mentioned earlier, the conflict in the Somalia region, which my colleagues have also referred to, the issue of villagization.

But the others are even more profound—for example, the lack of effective institutions. The Ethiopian judiciary continues to lack

independence and resources and, as has been illustrated in recent trials, is not yet a guarantor of rights or justice for the Ethiopian people.

The National Human Rights Commission is also severely lacking independence. Amnesty International believes that political will is the biggest obstacle to effective independent human rights and democratic institutions, and while the current political mind frame of the government remains unchanged it will be extremely difficult if not impossible for effective institutions to exist and to operate.

The final human rights concern that I would like to raise, obviously, is precedent and that has already been discussed—the 2005 elections and the crackdown that happened afterwards.

Those are not things that were ever accounted for. The numbers were never fully clarified and, certainly, there was never accountability.

Those are things that this government still is accountable for and has to answer to. I would just go, finally, to close to just try and remember that we're dealing with human beings and individuals—lots of them but, indeed, precious in their individuality.

Eskinder Nega, Debebe Eshetu, Yusuf Getachew, Akmel Negash, Yishak Eshtu, Temesgen Dessalegn—all of these are just a few of the names of Ethiopian heroes who are challenging and fighting for individual rights and the rule of law in their country who have suffered the brunt of the government's crackdown and its repression. There are thousands more like them and some of them we don't even have the names on.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that without the full enjoyment of human rights by all Ethiopians it will be hard to see how the country will fulfil the promise of individual freedom and dignity that it has claimed to espouse since the ouster of Mengistu in 1991.

Since 2005, the human rights situation in the country has deteriorated further with significantly increased restrictions on freedom of association, expression and other rights.

As I said and as Chairman Smith also noted, this has not happened in a vacuum and the international community is also in need of looking deeply into its policies and changing them.

The failure to speak out and press for change by the Ethiopian Government is critical and it has allowed Ethiopia to set a dangerous example for other governments in the region and has kept Ethiopian people themselves at risk of human rights violations and repressive governance.

We hope that the President will speak to some of these issues on his upcoming trip to the continent, in particular, the issue of civil society and the important and legitimate role that it plays in a healthy democracy and in the enjoyment of human rights by citizens and peoples in a particular country.

But we also hope that the discussion of legislation and of policies that are being conducted by the Meles regime—by the post-Meles regime including the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, the Charities and Societies Proclamation and other laws will also continue to be raised not only by Congress but also by the administration.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Akwei follows:]

Human Rights: The Missing Ingredient in Ethiopia's Effort to Build Democracy
Testimony by Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International USA[1]
before
the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
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[1] Prepared with the help of Claire Beston, Samantha Singh and Ben Devore

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I. Summary

2012 marked the end of the 21 year reign of Meles Zenawi. Under his tenure, the Ethiopian government restricted human rights, aggressively curtailing dissent. Despite this, the Ethiopian government e enjoyed strong support from donors, in particular the United States, based on Ethiopia's support for security operations deemed critical by Washington and also seemingly based on its economic performance and potential as a significant future market. This clampdown was exemplified by the government's brutal retribution against its political opponents and critics following its victory in the 2005 parliamentary elections and by the passage and aggressive implementation of the Anti- Terrorism Proclamation and the Charities and Societies Proclamation, both passed in 2009. The government has used these laws to gut the independent media and throttle human rights organizations and other sectors of civil society. The succession of Prime Minister Hailemariam offers a window for the international community, including the United States, to revisit policies and relationships with the Ethiopian government and press Addis Ababa for change.

II. Amnesty International and our work on Ethiopia

Amnesty International is the world's largest human rights organization, with more than 3 million supporters in more than 150 nations and territories. There are 80 country sections of Amnesty International; here in the United States we have nearly 500,000 supporters whose dedication to human rights has impacted both policy and practice around the world.

AI has documented human rights concerns and communicated our recommendations to the Ethiopian authorities since 1961. In the 1970s Amnesty International reported on abuses under the Dergue government of former head of state Haile Mengistu Mariam, including the persistent pattern of arbitrary detentions, torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, which peaked in the "Red Terror" campaign against government opponents. In the 1980s Amnesty campaigned against the systematic violation of human rights both in war zones and in the rest of the country.[2] In the 1990s AI offered specific recommendations to promote and protect human rights to the new government in Eritrea, headed by President Isaias Aferwerki and to the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) led by the late Meles Zenawi who headed the Transitional Government in 1991 before being elected Prime Minister in 1995. AI was denied permission to visit the country until 1997, after which sporadic visits were conducted, but during the 2000s the Ethiopia researcher was banned from visiting the country. Attempts to visit continued were but in 2011, our current Ethiopia researcher was expelled from the country and AI currently has no access. Despite this, Amnesty has continued to monitor, report and advocate to the Ethiopian authorities on human rights concerns in the country.

III. The Political Transition - Business as Usual

Ethiopia is headed by Hailemariam Desalegn, who was a former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2012 under the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Following Meles' death in August 2012, Hailemariam was appointed Acting Prime Minister, before

[2] *Ethiopia: End of an era of brutal repression - a new chance for human rights*, May 1991 (AI Index: AFR 25/05/91)

being elected as the Chair of the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and being appointed Prime Minister on September 15, 2012.

IV. The Ethiopian Government's Human Rights Obligations

The Ethiopian government has committed itself to numerous international and regional treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the African Charter on Human and Peoples RightsThe human rights standards lay out clearly the obligation of the Ethiopian government to, among other things, promote and protect the rights of the Ethiopian people, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, to be free from arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill treatment, and also obligate the government hold accountable persons guilty of committing human rights abuses. . The Ethiopian government is also a party to the African Charter On Democracy, Elections and Governance which spells out what must be done by the government to hold free, fair and transparent elections.[3]

The Charter on Democracy also spells out quite clearly the obligation to encourage adherence to the universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights, the principle of the rule of law premised upon the respect for, and the supremacy of the Constitution and to promote the holding of regular free and fair elections to institutionalize legitimate authority of representative government as well as democratic change of governments. The Charter also calls for the promotion and protection the independence of the judiciary and the establishment of the necessary conditions to foster citizen participation, transparency, access to information, freedom of the press and accountability in the management of public affairs.

Finally the Ethiopian Constitution includes a list of at least 30 human rights provisions in Chapter 3. Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.[4]

V. Key Human Rights issues

Freedom of Expression: Throughout 2011 and 2012, numerous attempts were made by the government to restrict freedom of association, expression, and of the press. On the whole, Ethiopian authorities vigorously stamped out all levels of dissent and criticism, whether in the form of protests, political activities, or media reports in newspapers or on the internet. The issues listed here only touch some of the human rights concerns Amnesty International has with the Ethiopian government. Many of these issues are mirrored in reports by other human rights organizations and the U.S. Department of State's Country Report for Human Rights Practices since 1991.

- Many journalists and opposition party leaders were put in jail on charges of terrorism, largely for committing such acts as calling for reform, criticizing the government, or being involved in peaceful protests. As well having their rights violated because of their political activities

[3] African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, http://www.achpr.org/instruments/charter-democracy/
[4] Ethiopian Constitution, adopted December 1994, http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/et00000_html

and exercise of the right to freedom of expression, their subsequent trials were marred by serious irregularities. This included a refusal on the part of the court to further investigate allegations of torture, severe restrictions or outright denial of access to legal counsel, and the use of confessions obtained under coercive interrogative methods as admissible evidence in court.

- Hundreds of Muslims were arrested between July and November of 2012 for participating in nationwide protest rallies. Police openly beat some of these protesters in the street, and several incidents openly fired against them, resulting in deaths and several injuries. These protests were sparked by alleged governmental restrictions on freedom of religion. In July the government arrested many of the leaders in this protest and at least one journalist, and the detainees were subsequently charged under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. Correspondents from *Voice of America* were detained and interrogated temporarily for interviewing participants in the protests.
- During 2011 and 2012, the Ethiopian authorities continued targeting the vanishing remnants of independent media. For instance, an independent journalist named Temesgen Desalegn was criminally charged in August for publishing pieces that were critical of the government and that advocated for peaceful protests against the authorities. One month after the incident with Mr. Desalegn, directives were issued to printing houses across the country, requiring an immediate removal of all information deemed "illegal." The unduly broad provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation meant that much legitimate content could be deemed illegal. .
- Besides these specific injustices, the Ethiopian government has issued a number of sweeping restrictions, such as blocking a number of politics, news, and human rights websites.

Human Rights Defenders:

- In addition to systematic attacks on freedom of expression, Ethiopian authorities directly attacked the ability to function of human rights groups in the country. The Charities and Societies Proclamation, a 2009 edict, severely hampers the work of human rights groups, particularly by denying them access to essential funding and through the creation of a government regulatory agency with excessive powers of interference in the running and activities of human rights organizations. The law continues to inflict harm upon groups like the Human Rights Council and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association. During 2012 both these organizations continued to see large amounts of their assets frozen because of this law.

Torture and other Ill Treatment:

- For Ethiopians held in detention, conditions continue to be extremely harsh. Torture is regularly reported to take place during interrogation in the initial stages of detention, often before the detainees have access to their families or to legal representatives. Prisoners have been slapped, suspended from the walls and ceiling by their wrists, beaten with various objects, denied sleep, electrocuted, and had weights suspended from their genitalia. Solitary

confinement for extended periods is often reported. Within prison facilities, sanitation was often reported to be poor. Amnesty International has received reports of medical resources being withheld, and reports of deaths in custody. Food and water is often in short supply, and is supplemented by visiting family members where access is permitted.

Conflict in the Somali Region:

- The Ethiopian government has been in a two-decade long conflict with the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in the Somali region. Amnesty International continues to receive regular information of the commission of serious crimes by the national army, and its proxy militia, the Liyu police, against the civilian population. Allegations regularly reported include arbitrary detention, extrajudicial executions, and rape, all on a significant scale. Torture and other ill-treatment of detainees were widely reported. Talks between the government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front collapsed in October 2012.

Forced Evictions:

- A program called "villagization" has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Although this program ostensibly declares such displacement to be voluntary and for the purposes of increasing access to infrastructure and services, there have been many reports of people being forcibly removed from their homes and land.

The legacy of previous elections on Ethiopia's future

While 2012 did not include any elections, the legacy of the 2010 and the 2005 elections remain a profound challenge to the rule of law and accountable government. The 2012 Department of State Reports for Human Rights Practices entry for Ethiopia noted that concerns by some observers from the European Union about intimidation, harassment and a climate of apprehension that had to be considered in assessing to overall election.[5]

The violence following the 2005 elections was even more alarming. The 2005 Report on Country Practices reported that the government of Prime Minister Meles committed serious human rights abuses including:

"limitation on citizens' right to change their government, unlawful killings, including alleged political killings, and beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces, arbitrary arrest and detention of thousands of persons, particularly those suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the opposition, detention of thousands without charge, and lengthy pretrial detention, government infringement on citizens' privacy rights, and frequent refusal to follow the law regarding search warrants, government restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists for publishing articles critical of the government; self-censorship by journalists, government restrictions on freedom of assembly including denial of permits, burdensome preconditions or refusal to provide assembly halls to opposition political

[5] http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper

groups, and at times use of excessive force to disperse demonstrations, government limitations on freedom of association and government interference in union activities."[6]

VI. The Human Cost of the Ethiopian Government's Repression – Some Individual Cases

- **Eskinder Nega, a** journalist and writer imprisoned for alleged terrorism-related activities. Eskinder was arrested (for the eighth time) on 14 September 2011 after publishing a column that criticized both the Ethiopian government's detention of journalists as suspected terrorists and the arrest of actor and activist **Debebe Eshetu**. Amnesty International believes the charges against Eskinder were politically motivated. He was found guilty in June 2012, and was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment.

  In July 2012, members of the committee selected by the Muslim community to present their grievances to the government, along with Editor **Yusuf Getachew** , of the *Muslim Affairs* Magazine, were arrested, and were subsequently charged with terrorism offences.

- Two other journalists from Muslim Affairs magazine, **Akmel Negash** and **Yishak Eshtu** left the country for fear of arrest.

- On August 9 charges were filed against *Feteh* editor in chief **Temesgen Dessalegn** for allegedly inciting the youth to participate in violence. Bail was denied due to concerns that he might continue to write articles offending the government if released.

- On January 19th, 2012: journalists **Woubishet Taye** and **Reyot Alemu**, and opposition leader **Zerihun Gebre-Egziabher Tadesse** were convicted on terrorism charges and given lengthy prison terms. They were tried and convicted alongside **Hirut Kifle Woldeyesus** a former opposition member,and journalist and blogger **Elias Kifle** who was convicted in absentia on same charges.

- In July, **Jemal Kedir** was charged and sentenced for sending text messages supporting the release of the Muslim protest movement detainees.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Mr. Chairman, Amnesty International's focus is on human rights. We believe that without the full enjoyment of those rights, by all Ethiopians, it will be hard to see how the country will fulfill the promise of individual freedom and dignity that has been espoused since the ouster of Haile Mariam Mengistu in 1991.

Since 2005 the human rights situation in the country has deteriorated still further, with significantly increased restrictions placed on freedom of expression, association and other rights. Sadly the Ethiopian authorities have not acted in a vacuum during this period. The United States and others in the international community have failed to raise concerns over the government's systematic violation of human rights and flouting of its international obligations. The failure to speak out and press for

[6] http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61569.htm

change has emboldened the government and also allowed Ethiopia to set a dangerous example for other governments in the region to emulate. It is critical that the United States and other members of the international community press the Ethiopian authorities to address human rights concerns and repeal and reform key legislation and policies.

Specifically Amnesty International urges the United States to:

- Urge the Ethiopian government to respect, protect and fulfill the right to freedom of expression, as it is obliged to do under domestic and international law. As a first step toward that end, it should immediately end the practice of arresting those who hold different political opinions;

- Call upon the Ethiopian authorities to cease the targeting of journalists who are conducting their legitimate professional work, which includes reporting on peaceful protests and reporting on the activities of opposition groups, armed groups and groups proscribed as terrorist organizations;

- Urge the Ethiopian authorities to cease the use of criminal prosecutions to silence the freedom of expression of opposition politicians, independent media, and other groups critical of the government;

- Urge the Ethiopian authorities to amend the *Anti-Terrorism Proclamation* to remove provisions that do not conform to rights of freedom of expression guaranteed in international human rights law. Pending such legal reform, do not use charges that criminalize legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression;

- Urge Ethiopian authorities to amend the *Charities and Societies Proclamation* to remove the restrictions on human rights activities, and to recognize, respect and protect the vital work of human rights defenders;

- Urge the Ethiopian authorities to ensure that all detainees are promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offense or are released immediately and unconditionally;

- Urge the Ethiopian Government to initiate prompt, thorough, effective and impartial investigations into allegations of torture or other ill-treatment made by detainees, and ensure that, should there by enough admissible evidence, suspected perpetrators are prosecuted and tried in a fair trial in accordance with international standards;

- Call upon the Ethiopian authorities to make available full details of all those arrested in 2011 and 2012, including members of political parties and students. Information must include the names, current location and detention status of all detainees.

- Call upon the Ethiopian authorities to guarantee that arrested persons are never detained in un-gazetted places of detention. Immediately move any detainees currently held in an unofficial place of detention to a recognized detention center.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so much for your testimony. I regret that there are a series of votes that will take about an hour so I'll be very brief.

If anyone would like to stay, I'll be back in an hour but I know that's presuming on your time, and maybe Ms. Bass can come back too. I'm not sure what her schedule might be.

But let me ask some very quick questions. First of all, Mr. Akwei, I think your point about a window closing is a very, very important one.

If the international community coalesces and somehow accepts the egregious human rights abuses as okay, if little changes around the edges bring about a great deal of positive feedback from the international community, this has not been helpful. That includes during the Bush administration, as well as now during the Obama administration. I would suggest that for those who are suffering torture—and there are 400-plus political prisoners in Ethiopia—and everyone else who is suffering, delay is denial.

You said it very well, political will, I would say paraphrasing you, is a decision which can be made and that's what leadership is all about. You don't lead from behind. You lead by being the Prime Minister who says we are going to change this.

I announce today we are going to reintroduce the Ethiopia Human Rights Act with very serious benchmarks——

[Applause.]

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. And about the balance that the administration spoke about, I think it is unbalanced, I agree with combatting the HIV/AIDS pandemic and all the other humanitarian initiatives but the political side, the changes, the good governance, is absolutely a prerequisite, as was said by Mr. Gast as well, to the sustainability of all of those other programs as well.

The Charities and Societies Proclamation, that is an outrage. The journalists point that Dr. Nega talked about, he knows about, he suffered in prison. He knows what it's like. He knows what fellow inmates suffered at the hands of Meles and people continue to suffer today.

When you pointed out that Ethiopia is the leading jailer of journalists—and I hope the media takes note of this—in sub-Saharan Africa and ranks among the top ten in the world, that has to change.

An unfettered press keeps checks on the Congress, on the President. It needs to do the same in Ethiopia. So thank you for your testimonies. They were very, very strong.

You said, Dr. Pham, tantalizingly, I would hope that for Prime Minister Hailemariam, that things will move in the right direction; but still, friends don't let friends commit human rights abuses.

We have waited. We've talked about this. When do we do an Ethiopia hearing? We had hoped that there would be changes sooner rather than later and as you said, Dr. Akwei, that window is closing and it's not opening to reforms and that's what we need to fight for. So thank you so much.

Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Yes, and I'm——

[Applause.]

Ms. BASS [continuing]. I'm so sorry that we do have to leave to go to votes and unfortunately I won't be able to return but—and I'm hoping though that maybe we can have another hearing on Ethiopia soon to follow up with this.

You know, Dr. Nega, you mentioned a term that sent chills up me, frankly, which was "constructive engagement" because I think I've heard that term before, and so that's a very chilling notion.

I wanted to know, though, if you would comment on a couple of things that Dr. Pham said. You know, you certainly pointed out all of the difficulties but you did say that you thought it was a little bright light that organized opposition was allowed—the protests that just happened—and I guess there's a window that there could be more protests in the future, and then also higher education.

And I wanted to know if you could just comment on those, and let me just say that I just really appreciate everybody's participation and everything and I just hope that we'll be able to return and have a more lengthy hearing.

Mr. NEGA. Thank you. Let me just very quickly say something before I go into the specific question about the statistics and the data that you hear about improvements and things of that sort.

I would like to suggest to anyone who is dealing with Ethiopia to be very, very cautious about what kind of numbers they are playing. I mean, according to official data right now, Ethiopia has less poverty than Mexico. It has less poverty than Botswana. It has less poverty than a number of European countries.

That is official data. You know, in 2010, they came up with a number in one region in Afar where they said 5 million kids are going to school that year. The total population of Afar is 1.4 million. That's how absurd this data is.

And that is the kind of numbers that you hear these international experts come up and then talk about how things are improving. I would really—it is very hazardous.

I'm an economist by training and I know how these numbers are put together. So it would be better to be careful about that, cautious about that.

But to the question about improvements, I really want you to take something very, very seriously, Ms. Bass. What I see is conflict. What I see is war. What I see is a civil war coming to Ethiopia.

Ms. BASS. Okay.

Mr. NEGA. In fact, that's one of the reasons why I want to testify today and I want you to take this seriously because this country is not going into the same way that it has gone over the last 21 years.

I think people are fed up, I think people are going to fight and nobody can blame people for fighting against tyranny. That's where it's going.

Ms. BASS. Do you think that there is an organized—do you think the opposition is organized enough to——

Mr. NEGA. Yes.

Ms. BASS [continuing]. Actually wage that——

Mr. NEGA. I do—I do believe that the opposition——

Ms. BASS. Do you think there is conflicts in the—conflicts in the existing government then?

Mr. NEGA. Yes. I do believe that the opposition that was fractured has started to seriously talk about mounting a unified challenge.

That's what is going to happen and that's why I'm trying to be more, you know, if you might call it alarmist in the sense that if people in the policy making apparatus think that you can just keep going the way you are going about it, a surprise is coming to you.

Ms. BASS. Okay.

Mr. NEGA. That is a very, very dangerous game that people are playing.

So that's why I say, you know, did it allow this demonstration recently? They did. But are they going to allow in the future? I don't think they will.

Ms. BASS. So one more quick question. I know when I talk to my constituents they believe that we should cut off all foreign aid and I feel a little conflicted over that, considering the humanitarian challenges, the food insecurity, the HIV and maybe, you know, other panelists could comment about that. Is that what the U.S. should do, end all foreign aid? Yes.

Mr. METHO. I think that the U.S. has the leverage and the leverage that the money that we're giving I think that earlier when we heard from the USAID they're saying that they give $300 million for a democratic process.

Where? Where is democratic process in a country where we know that, you know, almost every seat is held by the same government?

So that kind of funding going for that that's not going to go and help with the poor Ethiopian. That is helping the regime.

That's a leverage that this money that we give for the regime, you know, it's—there are a lot of money which is really not going to the peoples.

The money that goes for the people we should give it to the people. The second thing too is lack of transparency and accountability, and this is a clear cut that most of the time people don't talk about this.

Just recently examples, people were displaced in some—in the west part of Ethiopia. The World Bank inspector finally went to investigate. The Ethiopian Government they don't want to cooperate with the World Bank.

Just like me giving you—you give me the money to feed my family, you say did you feed my family I say none of your business.

So there is a way that the funding—when I say earlier we need the U.S. support you can—this has been done in Burma. It's been done in other places.

There's no political space. There's no, really, any media at all in Ethiopia. You know, the journalists are being accused as a terrorist. People who are activists, just like me. Like in Ethiopia, for example, even all of these journalists if they were in Ethiopia they will be accused of it generally.

For me, I never held a gun. I never talk about any war or anything. But the Ethiopian Government labelled me. Among the 24 people who wear labels I was one of them just because I speak the rights.

So the point is going back to what Dr. Berhanu said. Before it go to war Ethiopian people have suffered enough. Reconciliation

can be done. The people in Ethiopia there are some moderates within the government.

There are some moderates within the opposition. That if the U.S. take that initiative—we had enough blood. We have—HIV and lack of food is killing us. We cannot kill each other but what we are asking is reconciliation is possible. It's never been tried before and there's no way one cannot do it.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Again, I apologize. If you could hold that. We're out of time for voting so Ms. Bass and I have to run over to vote.

There's seven votes and eight in succession. They should be rather quick but then there's another series of votes about 20 minutes to 30 minutes after that.

If you can stay I would ask you to. We'll come back, ask some additional questions. You might want to elaborate, and then we will have to conclude the hearing.

Thank you.

[Recess.]

Mr. SMITH. The hearing will resume its sitting and, Dr. Nega, thank you for your patience. I, again, deeply apologize for these interruptions with votes.

We have been joined by Congressman Stockman, who has been a leader on African issues. He is a new member, but not a new member to this work. He's back, on a return trip to the House, and I yield to my good friend.

Mr. STOCKMAN. Thank you for coming out. I'm really serious about thank you for your patience. We normally don't have that many votes in a row and—but I've been to your beautiful country and I appreciate you coming out today.

And we always have in this committee very good staff, very good people and an excellent chairman. I'm biased but I think he's a great chairman, and but one of the things we always like to hear from the witnesses is how we can help you achieve goals in your country.

Sometimes Americans are interpreted as being too interventionist, where we're criticized if we go in, such as Iraq, and then now we're criticized for not going in Syria. So we're kind of damned if we do, damned if we don't.

So we want to get from you what the proper temperature we should do and what kind of things we can do to facilitate freedom in your country. It's disappointing that it's gone this way in this direction and that you had to suffer so deeply.

So I will yield to you the direction you should give us.

Mr. NEGA. Thank you, Congressman Stockman.

I understand perfectly that realistic politics is a difficult business. I mean, it's not an easy thing. Intervention always have a problem especially if it has something to do with intervening by force and things of that sort.

What we are talking about now is the degree to which American taxpayers' money can be used to effect some of the basic principles and values that this country holds dear.

Unfortunately, what has been going on in Ethiopia is that the U.S. taxpayers' money is being used to shore up a dictatorship that's so brutal that raises quite a lot of questions in the minds of

Ethiopians that, you know, this is not the America that we know. This is not the America that we understand and American relationship, as you know, goes a long way, although some people really understand the realistic issues that are involved in terms of national security reasons in the region and things of that sort.

What people don't understand is where is it that countries would start to say enough is enough. Now, and what I submitted today is this is not just about Ethiopia and humanitarian issues in Ethiopia.

Now it has become a serious geostrategy issue for the United States because Ethiopia is roughly about 93 million, 90 million people, the largest country in the region. A destabilized Ethiopia is going to destabilize that whole region.

It's a very serious issue and all U.S. strategic interests are going to be affected by what happens in Ethiopia.

So the question is if we let things go the way they are would we at least achieve the strategic objectives of the U.S., which in this case means a stable Ethiopia that can—that can support the antiterrorist struggle in the region.

And the answer to that, I believe, is unfortunately the way things are going that's not going to happen because Ethiopia itself is going to be destabilized because after 21 years people have become so traumatized.

People have literally given up hope that there is a possibility of peaceful transition that there is now more recourse toward armed resistance against the state.

Now, you can imagine once armed resistance starts you don't even know which direction it takes. I mean, if there is anything about Syria that we can talk about, you know, it started as a peaceful resistance.

The state refused to relinquish power. You know, one thing leads to another. People start to get fed up and they go into this—then at that point you don't even know who is—which one you are going to be able to influence.

Mr. STOCKMAN. I have limited time. I guess what I'm asking you, if you were in my shoes and you were given this guidance on a bill we could write what would you recommend that we put in that bill to facilitate a positive outcome in Ethiopia?

Mr. NEGA. A very clear targeted time bound set of issues that leads toward meaningful democratization in the absence of which U.S. foreign aid to Ethiopia would be seriously endangered. That's number one.

Two, the U.S. work with other allies, especially the European Union, to work toward this objective because Ethiopia is really amenable to financial pressure.

This is not a government that could just brush away—you know, although they say this always that, you know, you can take your money and, you know, we can tell you what—that is not a government that can allow that.

So use your financial support to the government to good end. Use it to effect substantive change in the behavior of the state. That is what I would say.

Mr. STOCKMAN. Do you think a delegation from United States would impact, if we visited there and said we have these concerns?

Mr. NEGA. If the statement is very clear, if it is something that you can back it up. I mean, this is not the last delegation that go to the U.S. I mean, Congressman Smith has been there repeatedly. Donald Payne has been there. I mean, there are Congress people going always.

The point is they will always tell you exactly what you want to hear and the minute you leave they go on behaving the way they are behaving.

Unless otherwise you have a tangible set of measures that you would take—unless otherwise, X, Y, or Z happen. And in that case what you are saying is then our money, our taxpayers' money, is not going to be used for this.

You can do whatever you want. We will not intervene militarily or anything but our money will not be used unless otherwise X, Y, Z. Release prisoners. We'll give you X amount of time. Introduce a series of reforms.

Mr. STOCKMAN. Release the press that they have——

Mr. NEGA. The press that the government owns that is not used for anything else. Respect your constitution. Just respect the constitution that are written.

Mr. STOCKMAN. We're trying to get that done here. No, no, no, I'm just——

Mr. NEGA. But, you know, the national election board, these institutions, the justice system, you know, there are things that can be done to actually introduce a set of reforms so that people can start to play by the rules.

Mr. STOCKMAN. The intervention in Somalia, how much does that affect the economy and the budget of Ethiopia?

Mr. NEGA. You mean—I don't think that was fought from Ethiopia's purses.

Mr. STOCKMAN. Well, I understand there's—you have some soldiers in another country. How much does that cost the government?

Mr. NEGA. But I don't think the Ethiopian Government pays for it.

Mr. STOCKMAN. Oh, you think United States does?

Mr. NEGA. I can tell you that the Ethiopian Government is not—in almost every place that the Ethiopian army is it is either the U.N. or the U.S. or somebody else paying.

Mr. STOCKMAN. Well, even the U.N. I think we end up paying for.

Mr. NEGA. Exactly. Indirectly you'll start paying for it, yes.

Mr. STOCKMAN. So it's not coming out of the pocket—there's no impact on the budget? Okay. Except for life and time and material.

Mr. NEGA. Yes.

Mr. STOCKMAN. So your suggestion is we—if I understand correctly, if I hear you correctly, is that we say if you don't have free elections release the press, release the prisoners, then we will cut it by a third by next year.

We'll cut it by another third the year after that and then cut it all off if you don't receive it in 3 years or something like that——

Mr. NEGA. Yes.

Mr. STOCKMAN [continuing]. Timetable? We would direct the State Department and other agencies to that effect?

Mr. NEGA. Yes, and very importantly coordinated with other allies, particularly the European Union. When we talk to the European Union they always say that the U.S. has to take a lead on this, that if the U.S. takes a leadership position on this the European Union follows.

Then literally that's the whole aid money that's going to the country and it's not going to happen. Trust me, it's not going to take a year or two before the government starts responding because they cannot survive without that aid money. They just can't.

Mr. STOCKMAN. Okay. Well, that's helpful because as we're—I think you need to take a standing—I appreciate the audience's participation too.

But I'm glad you're directing us because, honestly, from this side of the table we can't do it without input from people that have been there and know what's going on and we don't want to go too far one way or not do anything and I really appreciate you taking the time and staying so long.

I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. Let me just ask some final questions and then I will ask if you have any final comments you'd like to make.

How would you assess President Obama's assessment of the situation on the ground and his policies, particularly as it relates to human rights and governance?

Mr. NEGA. Well, I think for the Ethiopian community in general President Obama's policy has been a bit of a disappointment in the sense that, you know, if you remember the first few speeches that the President has made in relation to freedom and liberty and democracy in Africa—I mean, the Ghana speech and, you know, everybody was hoping that a new day is going to come in Africa because we all know at the end of the day even the economic issues that we face are directly tied to these issues of governance and human rights and things.

So everybody thought not only our politics is going to change, not only human rights is going to be respected but even prosperity can come. Corruption can be tackled. You know, when you have an accountable government a whole host of issues.

So everybody was hoping that President Obama would follow on what he has said and one of the biggest disappointments for most Ethiopians, I would say, is precisely the fact that it has become an administration that cannot follow on what it promises to do and it's always disappointing when you hear that.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just ask a question with regards to the 21 years that Ethiopia has been headed by a minority ethnic group.

After being in power for the past 21 years, it is well positioned to remain in power without the leadership of an internationally known Prime Minister. How do you see the ethnic politics in Ethiopia playing out in the years to come?

You've talked about this cauldron. Are we missing the signs? We missed them in Egypt. When the people took to the streets of Egypt, I heard euphoria at the State Department, the White House, and here in Congress.

I said this is the bridge of the Muslim Brotherhood and I held three hearings on Egypt and about how Islamists would crowd out

moderate Muslims very quickly, as well as Coptic Christians. Sure enough, now Egypt is far worse than it was under Mubarak.

I don't see that kind of thing happening in terms of an Islamist type of movement, although there are always threats, I know all of us would like to see, an absolutely peaceful transformation.

But if we miss the signs and don't take the steps that we need to take, unwittingly, I think, we can enable that. What's your view?

Mr. NEGA. There are two parts—two parts to this, Congressman Smith. One is on the side of what the government is doing and other one is on the side of what the people and you are not doing.

For the government, it was part of its raison d'etre to divide people along ethnicity, along religious lines because the only way that a minority government, a government that represents 6 percent of the population ruling strictly on the base of ethnicity—strictly, I mean, this is a government that says your identity is your ethnicity.

You cannot even say you are an Ethiopian. You have to say you are from a particular area. This is the politics that they have introduced into this country.

The only way that they can survive with that kind of policy was if they could divide the society. So purposely calculatively they have divided society so that one ethnic group would be against the other.

Now, the chickens are coming home to roost. You know, this has now stayed for over 20 years. People have started to think of themselves in terms of ethnic groups and they try to foment conflict.

Recently, as you have seen, they kicked out Amharas from the Benishangul in the southern region so that deliberately there is that hostility. That is the bad part. If the government—if things go the way the government wants them to go, Ethiopia is on a very, very treacherous dangerous course.

The good sign, on the other hand, is on the side of the public. Despite all this repeated deliberate fomentation of hatred and difference, people keep saying no, we still want to keep our country peaceful. We still want to live with other ethnic groups in peace. All we want is our rights to be respected.

The other very good thing that's happening is at least among the opposition we have started for the first time hearing that these different ethnic-based organizations have come together and say at the end of the day what we want is a real democracy in our country. If a real democracy comes, then these ethnic conflicts can be seriously addressed.

So those are the two trends that are taking place and my hope is that the opposition gathers the strength so that it can stop this deliberate conflict that's being created by the government.

Mr. SMITH. Earlier today, Amnesty International's representative, Mr. Akwei, spoke at great length, particularly in his written submission, about the use of torture. I've raised torture many times. I've written laws to combat torture, raised it in our Ethiopia Human Rights Act, as one of the conditionalities.

Why were people so disbelieving or why did they look askance? I'm talking about our own Government under President Bush as well as under President Obama. You know, it's there in black and

white and it seems to get looked over. We look askance. Why is that? I'm baffled by it.

Mr. NEGA. Honestly, Congressman Smith, I honestly think certainly it's part of human nature. You want to believe what you want to believe.

You want to believe not the facts on the ground, not what you see, but what you think is the thing that you need to believe in order to do what you are doing continuously.

The U.S. administration has historically been interested in Ethiopia on security and other grounds. The U.S. administration wants to continue the relationship with Ethiopia. In order to do that it has to come to terms with this issue of a brutal regime that is torturing its own people, that's killing its own people. Then how do you—how do you merge the two?

Usually, the human mind, I think, plays tricks on you and you say it's not happening, I mean, you know, or you try to ignore it. You try to think as if it is not happening. It is denial.

That is exactly what is going on in the policy making circles of the United States and Europe. They just don't want to believe what they see because then they have to do something about it.

Then they have to do something real about it and they can't do anything real about it. They don't want to do anything real about it.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask you, you spent some considerable time in your testimony on the interference in religious affairs and you talked about the manipulation of the leadership of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Could you expound upon that? Because that is a very serious assertion and it seems to me that, you know, we do have the International Religious Freedom Act.

There is a commission which has written about these issues before relative to Ethiopia. It would seem to me this should be an engraved invitation to do it again to them, and we also have the international religious freedom office at the U.S. Department of State. In your view, how bad is it?

Mr. NEGA. Oh, it's really bad. I mean, it's bad to the point where—I think the U.S. institution that deals with religious freedom recently had a hearing, I think, on the issue of the Muslims and for the first time openly acknowledged that this was a gross—a result of gross intemperance, in fact, a deliberate taunting as if, you know, because when you say Muslim and terrorism the two come together and the Ethiopian Government thinks that by calling them terrorists while it actually is taking away their own religion and trying to impose its will on them.

With the Orthodox Church, this is the first time in Ethiopian history that the Orthodox Church is openly split into two. There is the patriarch elected by the government and its supporters and an exiled patriarch.

As you know, the basic rule in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is you don't change a patriarch until the patriarch dies. This government came and changed the patriarch while he was still alive and the patriarch left and he has now created, you know, around him another synod where most people in the Diaspora are now settled.

This is the first time in Ethiopian history that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was purposely split. The same thing they are trying to do with the Muslims.

It is—you see, this is—as I said in my written statement, it is a government that is allergic to the existence of any independent body, whether it's religious, whether it—they have to be under their control.

That's what they are doing. Unfortunately, as you know, religion is a very sensitive thing. As you push people then they start to resist. That's exactly what the Muslims are doing. That's what we will expect that the Christians will be doing too.

Mr. SMITH. One or two final questions on the Charities and Societies Proclamation, which I think gets very little notice in Washington. It gets some, but it seems to me it ought to be getting much more because it does have an antiterrorism component, and under the rubric of antiterrorism, a whole lot of bad things can be pushed. Could you tell us what you think are the worst aspects of that law?

Mr. NEGA. The worst is that there are these five areas in the law that deal with any institution that deals with human rights, that deals with children's rights, that deals with reconciliation, that deals with—I forgot the other two—anything that has to do with human rights and any institution that deals with these issues cannot get foreign funding, period.

Now, anybody who knows Ethiopia, all NGOs, all these institutions, operate on the basis of projects that they put to foreign donors. All of them are closed now. Ninety percent of these institutions are closed.

So if I have to pick one terrible aspect of this law, it is the fact that everything that has to do with human rights and good governance is completely out from Ethiopia.

But let me say one last point about this. It is very important, Congressman Smith, to realize that the Charities and Societies Proclamation is one part of a broader capture of institutions in Ethiopia.

There cannot be independent institutions so far as this government is in power. They cannot allow independent institutions. That is what this law is about.

Mr. SMITH. Yesterday the U.S. Department of State in a very, very important ceremony, and I was there with Secretary of State Kerry, released this year's Trafficking in Persons Report.

Parenthetically, I'm the author of the law that authorized that report and addressed many other aspects on combatting human trafficking.

It's known as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. Ethiopia was given a Tier II rating, which means that it has a serious problem with trafficking, but that it is making or taking actions to combat it.

And I have been in at least one of the USAID-supported shelters in Addis Ababa on one of my trips there so I know we are trying to provide aid to help the victims and to more effectively end trafficking there.

Have you had the time, and I know it only came out yesterday, so you might want to take this question and take a look at the nar-

rative that's in the TIP Report, but are you satisfied with that rating? I would have hoped to have asked some of our other witnesses this as well.

It had the same rating when we had our hearing in 2006, Tier II. Are they making progress, serious and sustained?

Mr. NEGA. Congressman Smith, this is in fact—I think it was last week that the Ethiopian Government officially for the first time talked about the problem of human trafficking officially, for the first time, and the Ethiopian Government including the Prime Minister were on TV saying this is the fault of those who are leaving because they don't know how good they have it in Ethiopia.

That was their understanding of what actually is going on when tens of thousands of Ethiopian young women go to these Middle Eastern countries. While some of them were thrown from three or four stairs, killed, raped, and this is what the government knew was going on.

I mean, if you go to the Ethiopian immigration authority office, the line that you'd find is kilometers of these young women coming from rural areas, urban areas, trying to get the hell out of that place, and there are officially organized institutions that are actually doing this—government-owned government-sponsored institutions.

So they talk about human trafficking and anybody believes that they are really against human trafficking? It really is mind boggling how the West wants to believe this when actually thousands, tens of thousands of people, are leaving the country under organized trafficking of human beings in Ethiopia.

Mr. SMITH. In the 2 years leading up to the so-called Arab Spring when Egypt went from Mubarak to Morsi, the amount of money the U.S. Government dedicated to civil society and democracy dropped significantly and it's a matter of record.

Many of us complained. Yes, foreign aid has been cut so there are difficult choices that often need to be made. I asked earlier today about the balance that Ambassador Yamamoto and Mr. Gast talked about. In 2013 we're spending $351 million in total aid given to Ethiopia, $1 million of which is for civil society.

That's a Congressional Research Service number and maybe there's further explanation for that and maybe it's more but that's their number.

I'm wondering, and I did ask that question, whether that shows some disproportionality and perhaps the lack of focus on building up civil society as a bulwark from authoritarianism or worse.

Mr. NEGA. What they don't tell you in the testimony the numbers tell. The $1 million out of the $350 million tells a much bigger story than what they will tell you because I think—I think the international community has given up on the possibility of change through civil society institutions. I think after the Charities Proclamation they have said there is nothing you can do about it.

In fact, Congressman Smith, that's exactly why I said if you look at the lay of the land in Ethiopia, the possibility of change through a peaceful mechanism, through using civil society institutions, is gone.

That's why the West has stopped funding them. That's why the whole thing is moving into—so for Ethiopians any hope that there could be any change through that route is gone.

So the choice that they have is either you fight to protect your liberty or to get your liberty, or you die as a slave. You die as, you know, a subject.

And that's why I said so far as I know I don't think Ethiopians are going to accept tyranny forever. I think the little hints that we were seeing in 2005 is now gone—the possibility of change through a peaceful mechanism.

The money that you quoted is simply a reflection of that. Everybody has given up. They will tell you all kinds of things—yes, we are working on it on this side. The money says there is no work done toward building civil society toward democratization in any form or shape.

They have given up. The only thing that is left for Ethiopians, that's why, is to fight. There is nothing else left. That's why this policy—I mean, while they look at it, it is going in that route and they cannot do anything about it. That's what is sad about it. It really is sad.

Mr. SMITH. Hopefully, as Amnesty's witness said, while the window is closing, there is still time. I think it behooves us on this committee to redouble our efforts and I will.

We hope to work with a large number of people and get input on benchmarks and reintroduce, as I said before, the Ethiopia Human Rights Act. Before I close the hearing, Mr. Stockman?

Mr. STOCKMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to say thank you for taking your time doing this. There's 435 members and I'm honored to serve with you on this and I'm really touched that we're going to make real impact in the world. I'm just honored to be here with you. Thanks.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so much to my friend and colleague.

[Applause.]

Mr. SMITH. I would, without objection, ask unanimous consent the two testimonies be included in the record.

And I would like to give you the final word and then this hearing is adjourned.

Mr. NEGA. Yes. And very quickly, Congressman Smith, I mean, I have no words to thank you about what you have done and what you would do, and let me assure you this is not just about Ethiopia.

This is about the U.S. interests, and it's very important that people realize that this is about U.S. strategic interests. An unstable Ethiopia is going to be a very dangerous place but that's where we're heading.

So if something is going to be happening it has to happen soon. It has to happen as quickly as possible because people have waited for 21 years. I have no basis to believe that they will continue to wait for that moment.

So what you have started in terms of introducing this legislation I think is going to be very important. I hope it has a bite. I hope it's not just a statement.

I hope it has a very clear, as I said, clear benchmarks, clear measurable elements in it and in doing so you have or you will be contributing to maybe, maybe a peaceful transition to democracy.

But at least you have done your part. At least you have done your part. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

The hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 2:31 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ), Chairman

June 18, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at www.foreignaffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Thursday, June 20, 2013

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Democracy and Human Rights

WITNESSES:

Panel I
The Honorable Donald Y. Yamamoto
Acting Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Earl W. Gast
Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Africa
U.S. Agency for International Development

Panel II
Berhanu Nega, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Economics
Bucknell University

J. Peter Pham, Ph.D.
Director
Michael S. Ansari Africa Center
Atlantic Council

Mr. Obang Metho
Executive Director
Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia

Mr. Adotei Akwei
Managing Director for Government Relations
Amnesty International USA

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations* HEARING

Day *Thursday* **Date** *June 20, 2013* **Room** *2172 Rayburn HOB*

Starting Time *11:28 a.m.* **Ending Time** *2:31 p.m.*

Recesses [*1*] (*12:47* to *2:02*) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Chris Smith

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]
Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Human Rights and Democracy

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Bass, Rep. Meadows, Rep. Weber, Rep. Stockman

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

Rep. Royce

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Questions for the Record from Rep. Smith for Amb. Yamamoto
Questions for the Record from Rep. Smith for Dr. Pham
Questions for the Record from Rep. Smith for Dr. Nega
Statement from the Oromo Democratic Front, submitted by Rep. Smith

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *2:31 p.m.*

Gregory B. Simpkins
Subcommittee Staff Director

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador Donald Yamamoto
Chairman Chris Smith (#1)
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights,
and International Organizations
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
June 20, 2013

Question:

You were U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia at a very troubling time in that country. From what you saw of the late Prime Minister Meles, what are you seeing in the current government that gives you hope that political and economic reform is possible?

Answer:

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn was elected to office in a peaceful transition in September 2012. He and his cabinet deliberately reflect the ethnic and religious diversity of Ethiopia.

Promoting democracy, human rights, and governance are fundamental aspects of our bilateral relationship. The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) continues to dominate the government, but it is noteworthy that Hailemariam is not a member of the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), one of four ethnically based parties that has traditionally led the EPRDF. Opposition groups and individuals remain restricted from exercising their constitutional rights to freedom of expression and association. Ethiopia's Charities and Societies Proclamation severely limits the operations of civil society and human rights organizations. Regular protests by Muslim activists against government interference in religious affairs continue, and tensions have been aggravated by government prosecution of Muslims accused of terrorist activity under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP).

We have seen encouraging signs. On June 2, the Government of Ethiopia permitted a large demonstration to proceed, – the first officially authorized protest since 2005 – and there have been others since then. It also released its highly anticipated National Human Rights Action Plan in March, and continued to prosecute individuals for corruption. Under Hailemariam's leadership, the government has not levied any new charges under the ATP against journalists or opposition political figures, though they continue to be subject to arrest and detention.

To promote the development of the private sector, Hailemariam organized two large, public meetings (October 24, 2012, and June 27, 2013) with representatives of Ethiopia's business community to solicit its input and concerns. The government's opening to increased private sector development creates opportunities for the United States to advocate for economic reform and greater U.S. investment.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador Donald Yamamoto
Chairman Chris Smith (#2)
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights,
and International Organizations
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
June 20, 2013

Question:

This Administration and the one that preceded it always referred to the positive contributions of the Ethiopian government, but acknowledged our government's concern over restrictions on opposition political parties and civil society organizations. What steps are we taking to promote reform in Ethiopia? How receptive has the government been to our efforts in this regard?

Answer:

In Washington and in Addis Ababa, we actively promote the importance of civil and political rights with the Government of Ethiopia. The Embassy maintains an active dialogue with opposition political parties and leaders, civil society organizations and members, human rights groups and advocates, and religious groups and figures. We have facilitated dialogue between the government and opposition political parties; introduced senior government officials to western academics with expertise on the liberalization of dominant political parties; and shared comparative legal expertise to advocate the diminution of regulation of non-governmental and religious organizations. We periodically train members of Ethiopia's media, and have aided the establishment of two community radio stations. Our Speaker and International Visitor programs promote U.S. values. We build linkages between Ethiopian and U.S. universities, assist university women so they can stay in school and succeed, and promote English language acquisition and library access. These activities expose young Ethiopians to the marketplace of ideas and allow them to see a real democracy in action. The Government of Ethiopia has not impeded these efforts, and is particularly responsive to empirical examples of how other developing countries have managed political and economic transitions.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador Donald Yamamoto
Chairman Chris Smith (#3)
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights,
and International Organizations
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
June 20, 2013

Question:

Dr. Berhanu Nega has predicted a violent uprising in Ethiopia as a reaction to repression. How concerned is the Administration about such an outcome because of the restriction of political space in Ethiopia, especially in light of the ongoing low-level conflict throughout the country?

Answer:

The current restrictions on political space in Ethiopia deprive Ethiopians of opportunities to express dissent constructively, pursue desirable political adaptation and policy change, and strengthen democracy generally. The U.S. government focuses on expanding political space as part of our engagement with Ethiopia. The Government of Ethiopia, through the vehicle of its five-year Growth and Transformation Plan (2010-2015), is primarily focused on achieving UN Millennium Goals, especially in health, education, food security, and poverty reduction. U.S. assistance efforts support achievement of those goals. The GOE recognizes that advancement in the population's education, economy, and social development will foster a citizenry that demands greater civil and political rights. U.S. advocacy presses the GOE to permit the full exercise of constitutional guarantees of basic human rights.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD OF THE HONORABLE CHRIS SMITH

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
"Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Democracy and Human Rights"

June 20, 2013

Questions for Dr. J. Peter Pham

You seem to downplay the serious restrictions of political space in Ethiopia and referred to the "opposition provocations in the wake of the 2005 poll." Both the June and November demonstrations against the delayed release of election results were peaceful until government forces opened fire. Surely you're not saying that the Ethiopian government was justified in a response to dissent that resulted in nearly 200 deaths. Could you explain your position further?

As I stated in my written testimony, I am not defending every action taken by the Ethiopian government under the late Prime Minister Meles, much less trying to justify those which followed the elections in 2005. What I am trying to do is to put things into context and to respectfully point out that, without excusing any specific actions on the part of the government, one should also not give the opposition a pass. While there is seems to be little doubt about opposition victories in Addis Ababa and other urban centers, the opposition clearly did not do so well in rural areas where an overwhelming majority of Ethiopians live. I was in the country in the weeks before, during, and immediately after the vote. I met with a number of opposition leaders, including some subsequently jailed, before and after the poll. It was clear that while they had made significant advances, they did not win the elections nationally; in fact, they did not even mount a serious campaign in many constituencies. Thus the claims made by some to have won against all evidence to the contrary could certainly viewed as provocative, especially by an incumbent government which was as surprised as anyone by the relative strong showing of the opposition. The same could be said of the blatant ethnic appeals made by some members of the opposition. Furthermore, the willingness at the time of some opposition leaders to align themselves with Ethiopia's foreign enemies—a collaboration which, regrettably, seems to continue today as we have seen recently with the apparent acknowledgement by Dr. Berhanu Nega to having accepted funds from the regime in Eritrea—contributed likewise to the climate in which events unfolded.

As you stated, waters passing through Ethiopia account for nearly 90% of the water and 95% of the sediment carried by the Nile River. The Grand Renaissance Dam project in Ethiopia has caused great concern in Egypt over the flow of the Nile, and another dam project, Gibe III could have a damaging impact on Kenya. Has Ethiopia taken careful consideration of the impact of its water and electrification projects on its neighbors?

There are two separate issues which need to be disentangled.

The first is legal right. Absent a negotiated agreement to the contrary that is valid under international legal norms—which the Anglo-Egyptian deal on the Nile waters is not for the simple reason that one cannot give away what one does not possess title to—there is no doubt that Ethiopia has the sovereign right to do whatever it wants with the water in its national territory. For more than eight decades, Egypt counted on a weak Ethiopia and, ignoring what is black-letter law, refused to negotiate a reasonable accord based on recognition of Ethiopia's legitimate rights. Now, with Ethiopia's growing economic and political strength, the weakness of that obstinacy shows itself in the bind which Egypt finds itself in, isolated from the upper riparian states. Going forward, any negotiation must necessarily begin with the acknowledgement of Ethiopia's legal right.

Of course, the second point is that just because it can legally do so does not make it politically sustainable for Ethiopia to ignore the concerns of its neighbors. And, to their credit, the current Ethiopian leaders have not done so. It has entered into a multilateral framework with its upper riparian neighbors to better manage the use of the Nile and its resources and has even reached understandings with Sudan, which had long opposed the Grand Renaissance Dam project, to include the latter country in studies of impact. Egypt is thus the diplomatic outlier. However, even here progress is being made and trilateral talks between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan are expected towards the end of August.

I would also like to avail myself of the opportunity to add that I believe that, as a matter of policy, the United States should actually look favorably on the Grand Renaissance Dam project. Once it is completed, Ethiopia will become a net energy exporter in a part of the world where the chronic lack of dependable electricity not only discourages investment and development, but, in all too many cases, endangers the lives and health of ordinary citizens who do not have the means to afford their own private—and carbon footprint-heavy--generators. Moreover, the water stored in the reservoir can help alleviate the droughts that occur with too much regularity in this region, causing humanitarian crises across the Horn of Africa. And, once the reservoir is filled, the flow of the Nile will not be diminished in any appreciable amount.

As for the Gibe III project and concerns that it may endanger Lake Turkana, it should be recalled that this dam is being built for hydropower generation and the electricity produced will not only benefit Ethiopia, but potentially also northern Kenya. Because this dam is designed for water flow in order to generate electricity and not for irrigation, the water will continue to flow. The question is the period of time required to fill the dam. Ethiopian authorities have acknowledged the environmental impact if they were to stop the water altogether during this period and, because of this awareness, have repeatedly given assurances that they will opt to fill the reservoir over a longer period of time in order to maintain a flow into the lake. Rather than give into alarmism or sensationalism, the most constructive approach should be the one President Reagan adopted with respect to arms control: "Trust, but verify."

I might add that, insofar as it maintains its position as a friend to the governments involved, the United States is well-positioned to help not only facilitate the diplomatic process along, but also provide some of the technical expertise in helping achieve solutions that benefit all parties. In this respect, the patient work and efforts over many years of the U.S. State Department in general

and, in particular, of its special coordinator for water resources, Dr. Aaron Salzberg, should be commended.

Many were impressed with the lack of violent government reaction to the June 2nd demonstration as opposed to those in 2005. However, while you cite government assurances of no police interference in future demonstrations, there are reports that the government has decided not to allow future demonstrations. What makes you certain that the assurances you received are accurate?

I can, of course, offer no guarantees about the future conduct of either the Ethiopian government or of members of the opposition, but only the perspective that in my experience with them, those officials who told me that future peaceful demonstrations which observe basic requirements of pre-notification in order to minimize disruptions of traffic and other such public order concerns will be permitted have been straightforward and candid and, consequently, I have no reason to approach what their assurances with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Time will tell and, as an analyst, I am prepared to amend my conclusions as the evidence warrants.

Moreover, I would emphasize that Ethiopia has a new prime minister and, along with him, others of a younger generation of the ruling coalition, many of whom are certainly more progressive than their predecessors, are moving into positions of influence. While the speed with which they are moving may be slow to some, they are much more open to our concerns—including on human rights and political freedom—as long as the United States is seen as a friend willing to give them a chance, rather than a hostile critic.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD OF THE HONORABLE CHRIS SMITH

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

"Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Democracy and Human Rights"

June 20, 2013

Questions for Dr. Berhanu Nega

Since the troubled aftermath of the 2005 elections in Ethiopia, political leaders such as yourself have been jailed, forced into exile or both. What do you see as the prospects for the political opposition to make any significant inroads in next year's elections?

Answer:

As I said in my prepared remarks, I don't expect any fundamental change that would come out of the election. For the elections to be meaningful, the institutions of state that not only conduct the elections (the election board) but all the other institutions that make open and meaningful contest possible (the judiciary, the media…etc.) have to function properly. What is clear from the history of the ruling party is that it will never allow these institutions to function independently as stipulated in the constitution. So, the coming election is going to be a total farce as were the past elections. In short neither I nor any serious observer of current events in Ethiopia will expect any change coming from this coming election.

In light of the many opposition political parties and coalitions that failed to succeed over the past decade, why did you decide to establish Ginbot 7? Since the party has been banned, what are the next steps to pursue the political goals your party had established?

Answer:

Ginbot7 was established as a movement to bring the various political organizations and the public at large to focus on two important issues that we believe are critical for the long term survival and stability of the country. These two issues were an agreement on meaningful democratic politics with all its facets and the unity and sovereignty of the nation. We felt that addressing the politics of identity within a unified country can only be achieved through a meaningful and accountable democratic politics. Focusing on these two issues, we felt, would put the question of political power in the back burner to be decided by the public once the institutions of democracy are put in place. This is a task we take seriously and that we are working on diligently. This requires bringing the various political organizations and civic groups to work together for a common objective.

Although the party is banned by the authorities, that does not in any way limit our activities other than prohibiting us from participating in the elections which, as I stated above, we don't take seriously as a conduit to the desired change. So, we continue our activities by working with other

legally registered organizations or civic groups inside the country as well as organizations that are banned like us that operate from outside the country to put pressure on the government to change its ways or to change the government through popular resistance. As we have observed in the Arab Spring, such pressures are the only way to usher in democratic politics when the government in power refuses to submit to the will of the people and abuses the rights of its citizens with impunity.

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Written Testimony of the Oromo Democratic Front

US Congress

Subcommitee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

June 20, 2013

Mr. Chairman and other members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit this written statement since including us in the hearing of **Ethiopia After Meles: The Future of Democracy and Human Rights** proved impossible. My name is Beyan H. Asoba and I am head of the Foreign Affairs Department of the newly formed Oromo Democratic Front (ODF).

The ODF was formed by persons who are mostly former members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), who became increasingly frustrated with the lack of imagination and the paralysis engendered by it. We differ from the OLF by taking the stand that a genuinely democratic multinational federation in Ethiopia could satisfy the Oromo quest for self-determination.

We also disagree with the TPLF/EPRDF leaders who have structured Ethiopia as a multinational federation but are systematically stifling democratic rights. Although practicing democracy without federation is certainly possible, instituting federation in the absence of democracy is not only an oxymoron but could even culminate in disastrous breakups as the experiences of the former USSR and Yugoslavia amply demonstrate.

We similarly disagree with those whose rhetoric displays their belief that democracy and multinational federation are incompatible. This appears to be the stand of those raving against "ethnic politics". These ones are currently promising to respect our individual rights and liberties if we are willing to forego our collective cultural and language rights. In the context of how contemporary Ethiopia came into being, withdrawing the cultural and language rights that have been upheld for more than two decades does not appear possible without significant bloodshed. Consequently, we stand for both individual rights and liberties as well as collective cultural and language rights.

The Oromo are Ethiopia's largest nationality whose voice has been, and continues to be, suppressed at home. We believe that the same should not also happen abroad. Hence, we hope that we will be allowed to air the interests of the Oromo in future hearings on Ethiopia.

The ultimate aim of the ODF is creating an Ethiopia-wide democratic alternative to the EPRDF that would achieve the next breakthrough in instituting both democracy and

multinational federalism. The lack of democracy within the EPRDF coalition is the most important factor standing in the way of achieving such a breakthrough Ethiopia. The EPRDF, itself being an undemocratic entity, cannot function as a democratizing agency.

The reason why democracy has to be stifled within the EPRDF coalition can be stated very clearly. It is to make the coalition an instrument for imposing and sustaining domination by the minority Tigrean elite. We are concerned that this lack of internal democracy within the EPRDF may be fanning a steadily rising frustration by the non-TPLF members, which does not bode well either for the coalition or for the country at large.

We believe that it is necessary and possible to create an internally democratic replica of the EPRDF coalition that would take Ethiopia into the next phase of the evolution of its political life. In this next phase, the multinational federation needs to be democratized. And we would like to work with the EPRDF and all stakeholders to achieve this breakthrough towards both democracy and genuine federation.

We are convinced that those wishing to preserve the *status quo* should recognize that instituting some changes may be necessary for achieving such an aim. Similarly, those seeking change should realize that preserving aspects of the *status quo* may be necessary for such a purpose. In short, the devastating practice of sweeping away all institutions associated with the incumbent, which has recurred in Ethiopia's history, should come to an end. The positive aspects of the *status quo* should be distinguished from the negative ones and preserved while the latter are made the subject of discussion and reform.

Structuring Ethiopia as a multinational federation was a step in the right direction. What needs to be addressed now are the factors that stand in the way of democracy. After being at the helm for more than two decades and amassing significant gains for themselves and their primary constituency, TPLF leaders should be persuaded that it is in their interest to engage other stakeholders in talks with the view of steadily leveling the playing field. They should be made to realize that obstinately trying to keep all may culminate in losing all.

The passing away of their long-time leader and ruler of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, sad though it is, should serve as an opportune moment for reflecting on these difficult choices. The TPLF used to have a collegiate leadership style in which equals could openly debate issues. After the TPLF captured central power in 1991, this collegiality started experiencing steady erosion and finally came to an end subsequent to the internal party crisis of 2001 during which some important challengers of Meles Zenawi either left or were expelled.

Thereafter, Meles Zenawi dominated both the party and state institutions and gradually came to personify them. He positioned himself at the nexus where the state and party institutions as well as the military/security and civilian state organs intersected. And as the architect of these diverse institutions, he was more knowledgeable about them than anybody else and was thus eminently able to smoothly orchestrate them.

Hence, one scenario appears plausible after his departure from the scene. Nobody else would be able to conduct this orchestration with the same ease and finesse. And any slight

incoherence in this delicate orchestration could likely snowball into an ever-rising institutional discord. In these kinds of tightly centralized dispensation, a slight ripple in one corner could reverberate throughout the network of inter-linked institutions creating disharmony.

Meles Zenawi was armed with a sharp intellect, which he continuously honed through voracious reading. This fact enabled him to intellectually dominate his immediate colleagues and to win their respect. He ended up cultivating a relationship with them that came to resemble that between a teacher and his pupils, as stated by one of his former TPLF comrades. However, this dominance had a downside. The other members of the leadership often left deep and creative thinking to him and expected him to come up with solutions to challenging policy issues. His death has robbed them of this reliable fountain of wisdom and knowledge thereby likely exacerbating their lack of confidence.

Meles Zenawi's performance on the international scene was quite impressive. His articulate delivery won him the respect and admiration of his interlocutors. As a salesman who could sell sand to the Sahara and water to the Oceans, he was able to successfully give explanations that were expected to refute external criticisms of his administration's handling of domestic crises. No one among his colleagues could have done the same after the bloody crackdown following the disputed elections of 2005.

Consequently, his successors could be more apprehensive when confronting similar crises. Whether this would deter them or drive them to become even more brazen, only time will tell. But one thing is certain. They will be measured internationally by the degree to which they could fit into Meles Zenawi's shoes. And there is no question that none would likely to succeed in this regard. Handicapped by the loss of their greatest diplomatic asset, they could become increasingly defensive.

Like his predecessors, Meles Zenawi may have expected that the respect and admiration he earned abroad would redound to his domestic stature. However, this did not happen. Meles utterly failed to have an effective communication with the Ethiopian public. His communication style was often seen as being abrasive and even abusive by an audience that expects decorum from its leaders. Even when he won public debates, which he routinely did in the rare instances that they took place, he tended to anger most Ethiopian listeners. Hence, he was disparaged at home as much as he was lauded abroad.

Authoritarian regimes often develop an insatiable appetite for control. And the instruments for achieving this ever-tightening control are their ever-burgeoning security and military apparatuses. In these kinds of dispensations, individuals who benefit from reporting potential causes of insecurity proliferate. Such individuals have a vested interest in identifying one social category or another as the source of threat.

And this process has been gathering momentum ever since the TPLF/EPRDF came to power. This has now culminated in an extreme form of micromanagement of society. The system has now reached a stage in which out of every five families/individuals one is reportedly made an informer. This obsession with security often proves counterproductive. The system could

become obese by eating up every available resource and to thus grow increasingly cumbersome.

The military is the instrument that stands behind this pervasive eavesdropping. But the military and security apparatuses may not be satisfied in simply serving as an instrument for civilian leaders. They could, in due course, come to harbor the aspiration of having a direct say, in one way or another, on policy issues. Whether the civilian leadership would accommodate this desire or not is difficult to say at present.

But one choice is clear for all involved. Either consent is allowed to steadily replace coercion or coercion continuously rises until the very instruments for imposing it take center stage. The latter scenario appears more likely unless the regime is persuaded to start instituting democratic reforms.

The regime can start signaling its willingness to institute reforms by taking the following concrete confidence building measures:

- Release all political prisoners;
- Revoke all laws hampering the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- Revoke the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO) and Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2009.
- Stop interfering in the internal affairs of all religious organizations;

Mr. Chairman and Other Members of the Subcommittee,

Ethiopia once again stands at a crossroads subsequent to the death of Meles Zenawi. The regime can continue doing more of the same or could re-evaluate its position and launch a turnaround in order to put back on track a democratization process that got derailed as long ago as 1992. We are willing to work with the TPLF/EPRDF in designing a process that would result in such a turnaround. We hope this Subcommittee also would work with us in persuading the regime that achieving such an aim is in its best interest.

Finally, thank you for giving me this opportunity to submit our written testimony.

Beyan H. Asoba (J. D.)

Head: Department of Foreign Affairs

Oromo Democratic Front

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