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DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT IN ETHIOPIA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

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

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DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT IN ETHIOPIA

THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2017

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 2:00 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The hearing will come to order and good afternoon to everyone. As we begin today's hearing, we examine the troubling conditions for democracy and human rights in Ethiopia. Let us stipulate that this east African government is a prime U.S. ally on the continent. Ethiopia is a primary contributor to peacekeeping missions along the South Sudan border, in South Sudan with UNMISS, and AMISON in Somalia.

Ethiopia joined the U.N. Security Council in January and is one of the three African members of the Council, along with Senegal and Egypt.

During a series of private negotiations in the last months of the previous administration, Ethiopia officials acknowledged that the tense situation in their country is at least partly their government's fault. There have been discussions with opposition parties in consideration of changing the electoral system to use proportional representation, which could increase the chances of opposition parties winning parliamentary and local races.

Late last year, the government released an estimated 10,000 prisoners despite maintaining a state of emergency. However, there are at least 10,000 more people held in jail who are considered political prisoners and the government continues to arrest and imprison critics of its actions.

In January, two journalists from the faith-based station Radio Bilal, Khalid Mohamed and Darsema Sori, were sentenced to 5- and 4-year prison terms, respectively, for inciting what they said were extremist ideology and planning to overthrow the government through their coverage of Muslim protests about government interference in religious affairs. The journalists were arrested in February 2015 and convicted in December under the 2009 anti-terrorism law, alongside 18 other defendants.

In late February, Ethiopian prosecutors charged Dr. Merara Gudina, chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress, with rendering support to terrorism and attempting to disrupt constitu-

tional order. Dr. Merara had been arrested upon his return to Ethiopia after testifying in November at a European Parliament hearing about the crisis in his country. He testified, alongside exiled opposition leader, Dr. Berhanu Nega; and Olympic medal winner, Feyisa Lilesa. Other senior OFC leaders including the deputy chairman, Gerba, have been imprisoned on terrorism charges, so called, for more than a year. Both are viewed by many as moderate voices among Ethiopia's opposition.

According to the U.S. Department of State's newly released Country Reports on Human Rights Practices report on Ethiopia, security forces killed hundreds in what they say is the context of using excessive force against protesters in 2016. At year's end, there were more, according to the State Department, more than 10,000 persons still believed to be detained. Many have not been provided due process. The government has denied the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights access to the Oromia and Amhara regions.

The lack of due process in Ethiopian courts also affects foreigners. Israeli businessman Menasche Levy has been in jail for nearly 1½ years on financial crimes charges. The government officials accused of being involved with Levy in illegal activities have had their charges dropped and have been released from jail, yet Levy's next court proceeding won't be for several more months. We cannot determine his guilt or innocence on the charges, but it is clear that he has been denied a trial in a reasonable time frame and has been beaten in jail by other prisoners and denied proper medical care. These circumstances unfortunately apply all too often to people who come in contact with the Ethiopian court system.

My staff and I have discussed with the Government of Ethiopia the possibility of working cooperatively to find ways to end the repression without creating a chaotic transition. Unfortunately, there is significant variance in how that government sees its actions and how the rest of the world looks as well. That is why I and my distinguished ranking member, Ms. Bass, and some other of our colleagues have introduced House Resolution 128 to present the true picture, as true as can be painted, as to what is going on in Ethiopia today. This panel and this hearing is designed to elicit additional insights so that we can absolutely get it right and then hold that government to account.

In the first panel, we have witnesses who will provide an overview of the current state of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia. They will present the facts.

Our second panel consists of four Ethiopians representing various ethnic groups and organizations created to help the Ethiopian people.

We have no opposition parties appearing today despite the tendency of the government and its supporters to see anyone, anyone who disagrees with them and their actions as supporting terrorists seeking to overthrow the government. Presumably, this subcommittee falls into that realm as well.

It is my belief that until the Government of Ethiopia can squarely face the consequences of its actions, there will not be the genuine reform that it has promised. For example, government officials say we have mistakenly said that the ruling coalition holds 100

percent of the legislative seats. We have said the coalition holds all of the seats, whether in the name of the coalition itself or as affiliate parties. If the government cannot be honest with us or itself in such an obvious manner, it is unlikely that the conditions for reform can exist.

The government does appear to realize its precarious position. We have discussed the frustration it creates by not fully allowing its citizens to exercise their rights of speech, assembly, and association.

In a hearing that we had in June 2013, Mr. Nega said the government had created a situation in which there is no legitimate means to redress grievances. Although the government jailed him after he won the 2005 race to become mayor of Addis Ababa, he was not known to have begun his campaign of armed resistance until after that time.

Let me yield to my colleague, and then I will get into some introductions and then we will continue there. I would like to yield to the distinguished gentlelady from California, Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for holding these meetings and to our witnesses that will be coming on both panels. I want to thank you for being here. I look forward to hearing from each of the witnesses. And I also welcome the audience and understand their concern and desire to see the issue regarding the lack of democracy in Ethiopia thoroughly addressed. I know that there are a huge number of people outside that are not able to come in, and hopefully throughout the hearing maybe we can find room for them over time.

Over the past decade, Ethiopia has made significant economic strides addressing poverty and expanding economic development. Ethiopia has appeared repeatedly on the list of the world's fastest growing economies with growth rates in excess of 8 percent per year.

Ethiopia has also been a stalwart partner of the United States in many areas such as regional security, and increasingly, trade via AGOA and enjoying strong bilateral relations with the United States.

I must also note that by way of hard work, astute scholarship and a strong support system, the Ethiopian-American community has become one of the most successful African diaspora communities in the United States. The Ethiopian diaspora has never turned its back on its country and has contributed millions of dollars in remittances to the country's economy.

However, all of these achievements take place against a backdrop in Ethiopia which is described as a diminished political space and a steady assault on the human and civil rights of citizens. The right of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression is increasingly challenged. There is reportedly no free media in Ethiopia and Internet service reportedly has only recently resumed following the government declared state of emergency in October of last year.

According to the State Department's recently released 2016 Country Report Human Rights report, there were numerous reports of the government committing arbitrary and unlawful killings of security using excessive force against protesters. The protests

were mainly in Oromia and Amhara regions. At year's end, more than 10,000 persons were believed to still be detained.

While these two communities are clearly the focus, as was cited in House Resolution 128, supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia, several vulnerable communities in Ethiopia are subject to government interference such as the Muslim community and the indigenous Anuaks in the Gambela region.

I am privileged to represent a part of my congressional district that includes a section of Los Angeles that is called Little Ethiopia. Some of my constituents expressed concern before this hearing that they felt that they wanted to be sure that the hearing didn't over emphasize ethnic divisions and contribute to the U.S. stereotype of Africa, that the problems are just a result of inter-ethnic fighting. So I want to make note of that.

I also want to report on a description of what life is like in Ethiopia now as described by one of my constituents. She says that her mother says that the suspension of civil liberties is affecting every facet of daily life, that people cannot travel around the country to conduct business, visit friends, or care for relatives. She said that the Internet was down for some months, but she thinks it was between 2 to 4 months that there was no Internet service, but it has been back up for the last several weeks.

Members of her family are farmers who were forced off their lands by the government. The family has fled into the forest and is now part of the resistance force. The family doesn't like being in this position and doesn't want to participate in the resistance, but basically now has no crops and essentially cannot support itself. Buses won't travel to her part of the country and with travel restricted, even if there is a crop, it is hard to get to market. She describe a state of emergency that appears to have no end in sight.

I think it is important that I communicate concerns directly from my constituents and from the Ethiopian-American community and Little Ethiopia in Los Angeles. I will note and I am sure our chairman will, too, that we have a letter of explanation from the Embassy of Ethiopia that, needless to say, refutes most of these charges. I am just looking at the letter. I have not had an opportunity to read it. I will glance at it during the course of this hearing and might raise questions connected to their response.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Ranking Member Bass. I would like to now introduce our very distinguished first panel beginning with Dr. Terrence Lyons, who is an associate professor of conflict resolution at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. Dr. Lyons was a fellow at the Brookings Institution, served as senior program advisor to the Carter Center's Project on Post-Conflict Elections in Ethiopia in 2005, and has worked as a consultant for the U.S. Government, the World Bank, and several non-governmental organizations on issues relating to democracy and conflict in Africa. He has written extensively on Ethiopia and taught at universities there. Welcome, Dr. Lyons.

I would also like to welcome, Mr. Felix Horne, who is the senior Ethiopia and Eritrea researcher for Human Rights Watch. He has documented the human rights dimensions of Ethiopia's development programs, telecom surveillance, media freedoms, misuse of

counterterrorism law, and other topical issues in the Horn of Africa, including the year-long crackdown against peaceful protesters in Ethiopia. Previously, Mr. Horne worked on a variety of indigenous rights and land issues, including several years of research into the impacts of agricultural investment in several African countries.

Again, thank you for being here and I would like to note as well that we do have an overflow crowd of very interested Ethiopian-Americans and others who are concerned about human rights there.

It is a privilege to welcome each and every one of you here. I think you bring additional impact to all that will be said here, that there was such heightened concern about what is occurring there. And parenthetically Greg Simpkins visited Ethiopia right after the 2005 elections when people were being killed in the streets, sadly, under President Meles. We met with President Meles, and sadly we are now talking about a very, very serious deterioration of human rights and I look forward to your testimony.

Dr. Lyons, the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF TERRENCE LYONS, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, SCHOOL FOR CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND RESOLUTION, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Mr. LYONS. Thank you very much, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Bass. It is a great pleasure to be with you here today. You have very kindly given my introduction. I will maybe pause and reflect on one additional thing. The only other time I have ever testified before Congress was in 1992 after Ethiopia's local elections before the House subcommittee, so 25 years later I have the privilege again and that lets you know the years that I have tried to understand Ethiopia.

I want to make clear that my thoughts today represent my best judgment as an independent scholar who regards himself as a friend to a diverse range of Ethiopians on all sides of the political spectrum, rather than as an advocate for any specific constituency or policy. So I am going to try to provide a context to the current crisis, why I think Ethiopia is at the crossroads, and some thoughts as to what U.S. policy might be.

My first point, as you will see in my written statement, relates to the stakes in Ethiopia at this moment. But Chairman Smith, you covered much of that. Ethiopia is a country of enormous importance to the Ethiopians and to the other people in the Horn of Africa, to the United States, to policies on countering terrorism, peacekeeping, a country that has seen a remarkable process of development over the past decade or so. At the same time, a country with very serious human rights concerns that you outlined and my colleague will further elaborate.

So let me go and give one very, very large overarching point about where I see Ethiopia and then some of the more—break it down or unpack it.

Ethiopia, since 1991, has had a balance between a politics that was about autonomy, was about regional states, was about ethnically defined political parties. That was one direction that the state was going on. At the same time, it was a state of an extraor-

dinarily powerful, centralized regime, very much a top down development model of the developmental state and these two kind of opposing logics were in tension, but kept together by a very strong center, a very strong central committee.

It is my concern today that that balance has now been upset. That balance is now no longer holding and that is why I think this is a real structural concern, larger than simply something that a change of the cabinet is going to address.

Predictions that the regime is about to fall have been around since at least since 2005. Actually, people were saying that in 1992. I was among those. So I think it is worth pausing and thinking about that this is a regime that still retains considerable strengths. It is a party of some 8 million people. It is a party that controls mass organizations and large endowment efforts. It is a party that, as we pointed out a number of times, along with its affiliates won 100 percent of the seats in the most recent election. So it is something that is unlikely to disappear with the first movement against it.

It is also strong relative to its competition at home, particularly in terms of organized political parties. The regime has very systematically closed down political space so that opposition parties, civil society organizations, and independent media are not able to operate.

There have been prior demonstrations. I particularly want to note, as I do in my written statement, the early Ethiopian Muslim demonstrations that were really quite remarkable. But a new type of demonstration or a new phenomenon in Ethiopia happened in 2015, particularly in the Oromo region. In Oromia protests began in part because of concerns about Addis Ababa, a master plan expanding into Oromo areas, but a much more structural kind of struggle for control, for power, for the Oromos to be able to control their own land, to control their own destiny.

The pattern of Ethiopia's response to demonstrations in the past has typically been to deny there is a problem, to blame the opposition, or the diaspora, or Eritrea for fomenting the dissent and arresting lots of people, particularly young men in kind of sweeps and sometimes using live fire to clear the streets when they have perceived it as being necessary.

Those same things happened in 2015 in Oromia, but surprisingly or at least contrary to past patterns, the demonstrations weren't demobilized. They continued. And in fact, they spread. They became larger. It was a real momentum. And so the tactics of trying to repress opposition, to repress dissent, didn't seem to be working any more.

You mentioned the crackdown, the arrest of Bekele Gerba and Merera Gudina, somebody I know from my days at Addis Ababa University. And so the use of—the government succeeded in suppressing the demonstrations, but not really resolving the underlying state, the underlying concerns, the underlying grievances.

Similarly, in the Amhara region, demonstrators were not dissuaded by the power of the regime.

The state of emergency that was put in place, it was really an incredibly expansive state of emergency, has at least for now succeeded in lowering the level of violence, lowering the temperature,

if you will. And if that was being used a first step in a larger more structural process of political reform, there might be other ways of thinking about the state of emergency, but I don't think that is the case.

Let me just say a few things about why I think Ethiopia is at the crossroads, and then a few comments about U.S. policy.

As I alluded to earlier, I think Ethiopia is really at the crossroads because this original bargain of 1991, a constitution that was decentralized and set up these regional states, at the same time a very centralized, top down kind of regime. But that has been knocked off balance and it is not clear how it can be put back together again.

Part of the evidence for this is that there were elements within the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, the Oromo wing of the ruling party, that were at least looking the other way as the demonstrations were going on. Similarly, in the Amhara region, the Amhara wing of the ruling party supported some of the Amhara nationalists' ideas that were being advanced by the demonstrators. So this suggests that the ruling party really is beginning to, the elements of it are really beginning to question the direction of the center with unclear, where that will go. We haven't really seen that in 25 years.

The short term path forward I don't think is particularly hard to see. The Ethiopian Government, if it was serious about reform would have to end the state of emergency. Perhaps larger than that, reduce the role of the armed forces and politics. In general; release political prisoners. You mentioned some of them. But not simply reform the civil society proclamation, but I think it needs to be scrapped and start over again. It really has prevented the kind of advocacy networks, people working on human rights and democracy that Ethiopia so desperately needs. Respect the political space of opposition so that the alternatives are able to speak. And in general, a process of dialogue with a broad range of actors, rather than a kind of the EPRDF will sort it out within itself, the kind of instinct that they often have.

On U.S. policy toward the region, the first thing that I would note is that I think actually the U.S. needs to be quite modest in its assessment of its influence in Ethiopia. Many of my friends in the diaspora who are with me always disagree with me on this, but I don't think that the dynamics that are taking place on the ground within the ruling party and within the leadership are not because of what the U.S. is doing or not doing. These domestic politics, these regional constraints, the U.S. assistance has become less relative to the investments of China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other actors.

But I do think it is essential to speak clearly and plainly and publicly about Ethiopia's human rights record. The U.S. simply has to go on the record and explain why it is that we have grave concerns about the direction that the country is going and as a good partner, how we are looking for ways to engage the regime so that it can open up, so that it can have more political space and allow releasing the political prisoners and all those other things that I spoke about.

It seems to me to be past time for the U.S. Government to shift its emphasis when thinking about Ethiopia from a kind of counter-terrorism and regional security agenda. Those things are important. The Ethiopian military play very important peacekeeping roles, for example, in Sudan. But beyond that, there is a larger, longer term agenda that has to rest upon participation and rule of law. As a long-time partner of Ethiopia, I think the United States needs to shift its orientation in that way.

Let me conclude there and I would just like to thank the subcommittee for this opportunity and look forward to any questions you may have. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lyons follows:]

Terrence Lyons

Associate Professor

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George Mason University
Arlington, Virginia

Testimony for a hearing entitled

"Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia,"

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

2:00 pm, Thursday, March 9, 2017

Introduction

I would like to thank Chair Christopher Smith and Ranking Member Karen Bass for organizing this timely hearing. It is a great pleasure to speak with the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organization on "Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia."

I have been a student of Ethiopian politics since my first visit in 1987 for my doctoral dissertation research. I have had the privilege of serving as the senior advisor to the Carter Center's 2005 election observation mission, as a lecturer at Addis Ababa University and Bahir Dar University with the support of the Fulbright Specialist program, and as a consultant to USAID regarding issues of conflict, democracy, and governance. My thoughts below are elaborated in a number of academic publications. They reflect my best judgment as an independent scholar who regards himself as a friend to a diverse range of Ethiopians on all sides of the political spectrum rather than as an advocate for any specific constituency or policy.

The Stakes

Ethiopia is in its most profound crisis since the current government came to power in 1991. The stakes are enormous, for the people of Ethiopia, for the larger Horn of Africa region, and for US national interests.

Ethiopia is the inevitable center of gravity of the Horn of Africa region. Its population of 100 million (second only to Nigeria in Africa) is larger than all of its neighbors combined and its central location involves it in the security concerns of the entire region. As the headquarters of the Africa Union, as the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations and to the AMISOM mission in Somalia, and as the convener of peace talks on South Sudan, Ethiopia is a major regional diplomatic player. It has been a state that has seen dramatic economic development and reduction of poverty. This may be seen in the real estate and construction sector boom in Addis Ababa but also in regional cities such as Hawassa and Bahir Dar, new rural roads that connect small towns to markets and services, new regional universities, and new health posts across the state.

Washington has long had important interests in Ethiopia. As a development partner, the United States has invested heavily in humanitarian assistance and programs to promote health and education. Washington and Addis Ababa both have concerns about violent regional groups such as al-Shabaab in Somalia, although each focuses on different aspects of the perceived threat. Washington has regularly criticized the lack of democratic space and violations of human rights in Ethiopia. The recently released 2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices states "The most significant human rights problems were security forces' use of excessive force and arbitrary arrest in response to the protests, politically motivated prosecutions, and continued restrictions on activities of civil society and NGOs."

The Current Crisis

Predictions that the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) was heading toward a crisis have been common over the years. The EPRDF, however, has demonstrated greater resilience than many analysts – this author included – understood. The EPRDF's system of governance includes two contradictory logics that have been held in balance since seizing power in 1991 by a strong central executive. On the one hand, the Ethiopian Constitution sets forth a decentralized federation composed of ethnically defined states ruled by ethnically defined political parties. The EPRDF is a coalition of four ethnically based parties – the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) – and each party has a distinctive history and relationship to the armed struggle that brought the coalition to power. At the same time, the center is very strong, with a disciplined, hierarchical structure that links the central committee down to the most remote villages. Resources are distributed from the center and economic policies designed to create a Developmental State further emphasize the centralizing tendencies at the expense of the ethno-federal autonomy forces. In 2016, however, this balance of contradictory logics seemed to falter, as central authorities sought to re-establish their dominance over regional states that sought to advance their own local agendas.

While the crisis is real, it is important to recognize that the ruling party retains considerable strength. Following the 2005 elections and subsequent crackdown, the regime successfully expanded and institutionalized its system of authoritarian control, virtually eliminating independent space for opposition political parties, civil society organizations, and non-state media. The party has approximately 8 million members. The EPRDF controls mass organizations for women and youth, humanitarian and development organizations, and large economic enterprises. This domination was made symbolically clear in 2015, when the ruling coalition and its affiliates won 100 percent of the parliamentary seats. This system survived the death of its long-time leader, Meles Zenawi, in 2012 and a major el Niño drought that left 10 million in need of international assistance in 2015.

On the other hand, in 2016 an unprecedented wave of protests erupted in Oromia and later in the Amhara National Regional State. These two states account for over half of Ethiopia's population, making this crisis an existential threat to the Ethiopian state. The underlying grievances were not new, but the intensity, scale, and duration were extraordinary. While preceded by important peaceful demonstrations by Ethiopian Muslims in 2012, these protests were spontaneous or mobilized by ad hoc decentralized structures loosely coordinated through social media. They were triggered by often quite local, parochial concerns but tapped into deeper grievances and a sense that the central government was vulnerable. The protests received widespread international attention when marathoner Feyissa Lilesa crossed the

finish line at the Rio Olympics marathon and flashed the crossed arms symbol to show solidarity with the demonstrators.

Reports that the regime was planning to take over Oromo lands as part of an expansion of the Addis Ababa region sparked protests in late 2015 that spread quickly throughout Oromiya. On December 23, 2015 security forces arrested Oromo Federalist Congress leader Bekele Gerba and charged him under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. The protests continued through 2016 despite widespread arrests and considerable violence. By some estimates over 24,000 were arrested and "at least 800 killed."[1] In some cases officials from the ruling coalition's Oromo wing, the OPDO, seemed unwilling to act against demonstrators. In other cases protestors targeted international investments or property associated with the ruling party. The mobilization of dissent was also transnational, with links to a growing sense of Oromo nationalism as articulated by new diaspora-based social media platforms and news organizations such as the Oromo Media Network. The tragic climax of this phase took place in October 2016 when significant casualties occurred when a huge traditional thanksgiving holiday ceremony in Bishoftu ended in a deadly stampede that killed at least dozens after security forces acted to disperse the crowd.

Protests were not confined to the Oromo region. In August 2016, protests broke out in the Amhara region as a dispute over whether the Welkait zone should be part of Tigray or Amhara region erupted in violence. When authorities tried to arrest the local leader of the Welkait Amhara Identity Committee, violence broke out and massive demonstrations quickly organized in Gondar and Bahir Dar. Demonstrations were followed by boycotts and stay-at-home protests. As in the Oromo protests, there seemed to be involvement by some high-level members of the Amhara wing of the ruling coalition.

The Ethiopian regime has followed a pattern in responding to protests. In Oromia and the Amhara region, but also in Konso over concerns about changes in wereda borders and in earlier protests among Ethiopian Muslims, in Ambo, Addis Ababa University, Hawassa and elsewhere, the regime typically refuses to consult or open dialogue with protesters but rather launches mass arrests, particularly of young men. Allegations of torture of those arrested are widespread and credible. On some occasions, live fire has been used to disperse crowds, resulting in the deaths of demonstrators. Not surprisingly, those sufficiently aggrieved to launch the protests are often further inflamed by the government's reaction, thereby generating additional escalatory dynamics. While in the past repression has served to demobilize protests, in 2016 they continued to spread and escalate.

The EPRDF generally seeks to categorize the protesters as "anti-peace" and "anti-development" forces, working on behalf of regional enemies such as Eritrea and

[1] This estimate is from Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: After a Year of Protests, Time to Address Grave Human Rights Concerns," 9 November 2016. Estimates on casualties are contentious and extremely difficult to verify, given the limited access to the countryside and restrictions on the media.

"radical Islam" or allies of armed exile opposition groups such as the Oromo Liberation Front, Gimbot 7, and "extremist" diaspora networks. The EPRDF argues that the fundamental interests of the rural majority relate to ending poverty and that the 2016 demonstrations therefore are merely a "hiccup." If pursued without distraction, the developmental state would transform the countryside and end dissent through "better governance" and service provision.

In November 2016, the government imposed a State of Emergency. This entailed creating military "Command Posts" to impose order and suspending constitutional provisions relating to freedom of assembly and expression. Access to social media and the internet was shut down for a period of time. This move was in part a strategy to discipline the ruling coalition's constituent parties (the ANDM reportedly voted against the declaration). The scale of the crackdown was large and successfully suppressed the protests, for a time at least. The regime released 11,000 detainees between November 2015 and January 2016, following what officials called "rehabilitative detention" that included trainings and lectures so that those detained would not return to protest. While insisting that they wished to open dialogue with the opposition, the regime arrested Merera Gudina, a university professor and leader of one of the few opposition parties operating legally within Ethiopia, upon his return from meetings at the European Union. By early 2017, martial law had succeeded in reducing violence on the streets but there are few indications that the regime is prepared to engage in serious reform efforts.

These popular protests and the regime's response may indicate growing fissures within the ruling party. As noted above, the EPRDF is a coalition of four distinct, ethnically defined parties and has always had significant (if opaque) internal contention and rivalries between the varied constituent parties. The TPLF, ANDM, OPDO, and SEPDM have different social bases and distinct relationships to the history of the armed struggle. This coalition was held together for 25 years by a strong Executive Committee, dominated by the TPLF.

In 2016, however, it appears that elements of the ruling coalition are willing to more-or-less publically side with protestors who are opposed to EPRDF policies. The OPDO was also accused of being too soft on the protests and as a consequence saw purges across all levels of the party and the appointment of leaders with experience in the security services. This gutting of party leadership raises questions regarding whether the Oromo wing of the ruling party can reconstitute itself as a viable part of the ruling coalition. The ANDM is in a stronger position than the OPDO and has reportedly resisted purging its leadership. There have been a series of moves by the ANDM to create distance between itself and the TPLF that has dominated the EPRDF since its origins

Ethiopia appears to be at an important crossroads. The protests and State of Emergency suggest that the political dispensation put in place by the EPRDF in 1991 is unlikely to remain the basis for a stable political order. The path toward a more

open, participatory, and stable political system requires serious steps by the ruling party. The first steps seem clear:

1. End the state of emergency and reduce the role of the Ethiopian Defense Force in domestic political affairs;
2. Release political prisoners, notably Bekele Gerba and Merera Gudina as well as journalists and other prominent activists, and initiate an all-inclusive political dialogue with all political parties.
3. Scrap the civil society proclamation and replace it with regulations to encourage non-governmental organizations to engage in advocacy, rights based development, and monitoring on human rights and democracy;
4. Recognize and protect the space for legally registered alternative political parties to articulate their policy positions and critique of the incumbent regime.
5. Engage in dialogue with all stakeholders on revising the electoral law, reforming the National Election Board, allowing domestic election observation, and allocating state-owned media time to all political parties.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence to suggest that the EPRDF shares this perception of the way forward or is interested in this kind of deep reform. The current State of Emergency has succeeded in suppressing protests but has not resulted in a serious effort to address the root causes of the conflict. In fact, there are reasons to worry that the top EPRDF leadership will become complacent and think that they have avoided the crisis and that they can go back to business as usual.

This would be a miscalculation, and quite possibly a very costly mistake. The underlying grievances remain and the crisis within the ruling party seems far from settled. If there is another round of demonstrations, they may well escalate more quickly and violently than the 2016 protests, leading the EPRDF to return to the use of central military power to govern restless areas such as the Oromo and Amhara regional states. In the unstable but strategically important Horn of Africa, instability in Ethiopia has broad implications.

US Policy Toward Ethiopia

The United States faces a series of dilemmas in constructing policy toward Ethiopia. It has strong interests in Ethiopia's continued stability and its continued role in UN peacekeeping and US-supported counter-terrorism programs. Ethiopia is regarded as a strong development partner that has seen significant progress in reducing poverty, promoting health, and broadening access to education in recent years. At the same time, Ethiopia is a state with a human rights record that challenges core US principles and a political system that is both authoritarian and increasingly at risk of instability.

Washington must be modest in its assessment of its ability to shape dynamics within Ethiopia. Internally driven political, social, and economic processes are far more important than the marginal influence of the United States. Other investors from China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and India are often more important than Washington. However, it is essential that Washington speak as plainly as possible about its concerns regarding Ethiopia's human rights record, its systematic efforts to restrict democratic space, and the deeply rooted nature of the current crisis. Many senior diplomats argue that such messages are best passed to Ethiopian officials privately. But there is value in speaking publicly and in solidarity with what remains of Ethiopia's civil society, independent media, and members of legally registered opposition parties.

The United States should actively and vigorously engage its Ethiopian partners at all levels in a serious discussion regarding the political reforms outlined above. Washington should be ready to support such reforms, if the Ethiopian leadership demonstrates a willingness to engage. Various leaders and spokespersons of the EPRDF have suggested that the government is ready to open a discussion of political reform around questions of the electoral law and perhaps the electoral commission. Such steps deserve attention and have been demands from the opposition since at least 2005. But these narrow technical changes are insufficient to address the deep crisis facing the regime. The agenda for a peaceful path forward must entail serious discussion of opening political space and allowing independent civil society, media, and alternative political parties to operate. Beyond the short-term imperatives of ending the State of Emergency and releasing political prisoners, Washington should stand ready to work with Ethiopians in a long-term process of institutional reform and dialogue among the diverse constituencies and stakeholders in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian diaspora, many of whom have joined us in the hearing room today, have an important role to play. As a result of the closing of political space since 2005, a significant number of Ethiopian intellectuals, journalists, and activists now live outside of Ethiopia. While the current leadership in Addis Ababa regards the diaspora as a threat, and some in the diaspora engage in irresponsible encouragement of armed resistance, it is essential that peaceful and democratic ideas and leadership be invited to play a role in Ethiopia's future. A process of deep and sustainable political reform is likely to require the engagement of members of the diaspora.

It is past time for Washington's narrative about Ethiopia to shift from an emphasis on counter-terrorism and regional security to a longer-term agenda based on participation and rule of law. Long-term stability cannot be built upon repression of debate and the marginalization of those who disagree with the ruling party. The United States needs to advance policies that are designed to work in partnership with a broad range of actors in Ethiopia to advance toward common goals in 2025 or 2030, not just the next election or fiscal year. The future of Ethiopia and the larger Horn of Africa requires that friends of Ethiopia speak plainly and seek

constructive partnerships with Ethiopians to find a path to a more open, participatory political environment.

Conclusion

Ethiopia faces its gravest crisis since the current ruling party seized power in 1991. It is a crisis that will not be solved by technocratic tinkering of the electoral law or by cabinet reshuffles. Rather, a new relationship between the ruling party and other constituencies is needed. The United States should seek to become a partner in such a reform process, if the current leadership demonstrates a sincere interest in making the needed changes. But Washington and Addis Ababa both must recognize that reform will require ending that State of Emergency, releasing political prisoners, allowing civil society to operate in ways that include advocacy for human rights and democracy, and provide the secure political space for diverse views to engage in determining their future.

I would like to thank the subcommittee for this opportunity and look forward to any questions you may have.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Lyons, thank you so very much. Mr. Horne, I regret that there are two votes that have been called. We have got about 5 minutes to get there. We will suspend briefly and come right back and you will be next on deck. So I apologize to you and to all of our distinguished witnesses for the delay. We stand in recess.

[Recess.]

Mr. SMITH. The hearing will resume, and I yield the floor to Mr. Horne. Thank you again for your patience.

STATEMENT OF MR. FELIX HORNE, SENIOR RESEARCHER, HORN OF AFRICA, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Mr. HORNE. Thank you. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, thank you for holding this important hearing on the current situation in Ethiopia and for inviting me to testify. I am pleased to be a part of it.

Ethiopia is a country of dual realities. Visitors and diplomats alike are impressed with the double digit economic growth, the progress on development, and the apparent political stability. But in many ways, this is a smoke screen. Many Ethiopians live in fear. The current government, the only one since 1991, runs the country with an almost complete grip on power, controlling almost all aspects of political, public, and often private life. Pervasive telephone and online surveillance and an intricate network of informants allow the government to quickly curb any threats to its control. It silences critical voices through the use of arbitrary arrests and politically-motivated prosecutions.

Ethiopia remains among Africa's leading jailers of journalists. If you are an independent journalist, you must choose between self-censorship, harassment or arrest, or living in exile. The government blocks Web sites. It blocks the Internet completely. It jams radio and television stations. In short, the state tightly controls the media landscape, making it extremely challenging for Ethiopians to access information that is independent of government perspectives. As a result, Voice of America, which broadcasts in three Ethiopian languages, has become an increasingly important source of information for many Ethiopians but the government has, at times, obstructed its broadcasts as well.

The independent civil society groups, independent NGOs face overwhelming obstructions also. The 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation has made obtaining foreign funding nearly impossible for groups working on human rights, good governance, and advocacy. As a result, many organizations have stopped working on human rights and good governance altogether to avoid problems.

There have also been serious restrictions on opposition political parties. This led to the ruling coalition in the 2015 election winning 100 percent of the seats in the Federal and regional parliaments. This is despite evident anti-government sentiments in much of the country, as the protests would later illustrate. The arbitrary detention of members and supporters, politically motivated criminal charges, and restrictions on financing ensure that political parties are constrained and largely ineffective.

The state also systematically ensures that many of the country's 100 million citizens, particularly those in rural areas, are depend-

ent on the government for their livelihoods, food security, and economic future. The government controls the benefits of development including access to seeds, fertilizers, jobs, healthcare, and humanitarian assistance, even when it is funded by the United States or other donors. While U.S. funded development assistance contributes to much needed poverty reduction efforts, it also adds to the repressive capacity of the government by bolstering Ethiopians' reliance on the government for their livelihoods.

Now there is no evidence that the ruling party rigs elections because they don't need to. The population's dependence on the ruling party and the limits on opposition parties leaves many citizens, particularly in rural areas, little choice but to support the ruling party come election time. As one farmer in the Amhara region told me in July 2014, "We do not like the government, but we always vote for them. We have to because we get our seeds and fertilizer from them. During times of drought, we get food aid from them. If we don't vote for them, we can't eat."

He went on to tell me about his neighbor who voted for the opposition in the 2010 election and shortly thereafter was denied food aid, was denied treatment at a government health clinic, and eventually was displaced from his land for an investment project run by a government cadre.

The justice system provides no check on the government. Courts have shown little independence during politically charged trials. Many opposition politicians, journalists, and activists have been convicted under the repressive 2009 antiterrorism law and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. Acquittals are rare, credible evidence is often not presented, and trials are marred by numerous due process concerns. Mistreatment and torture are common in Ethiopia's many places of detention.

So this begs the question: What avenues are left in Ethiopia to express dissent, to question government policies, or to voice concern over abusive practices, and how can the United States help strengthen human rights and democracy in Ethiopia?

I speak to you to today 16 months after large-scale and unprecedented protests started in Ethiopia's largest region of Oromia in November 2015, spreading to the Amhara region in July 2016. Ethiopian military and police cracked down on these largely peaceful demonstrations, killing hundreds and detaining tens of thousands as we have discussed. The protests were a predictable response to the systematic and calculated suppression of fundamental rights and freedoms that I have described here today.

On October 2, the protest movement took a devastating turn. In Bishoftu, in Ethiopia's Oromia region, security forces mishandled a large crowd at the Irreecha cultural festival causing a stampede that killed scores of people as they fled security forces. In the days that followed, angry mobs of youth destroyed government buildings and private property. Ethiopia was on the brink of chaos. One week after the Irreecha tragedy, the government announced a state of emergency, that was 5 months ago today, that remains in place. It prescribed sweeping restrictions on a broad range of actions and goes far beyond what is permissible under international human rights law. It signaled a continuation of the militarized response to the expression of grievances. While the state of emergency has

halted both the destruction of properties and the protests themselves, underlying grievances clearly remain. No one should deny there are serious risks, that more unrest could occur.

Since imposing the state of emergency, the Ethiopian Government has repeatedly committed publicly to undertake "deep reform" and engage in dialogue with opposition parties to address grievances. In short, the authorities are saying the right things. But the only changes the government has made so far are largely cosmetic and fall dramatically short of the protesters' calls for the protection of basic human rights.

The continuation of the state of emergency, which further crushes the space for free expression and divergent views of governance, is not conducive for the open dialogue that is needed to address Ethiopia's ongoing crisis. The government announced that it arrested over 20,000 people since the state of emergency began, and although there has been little corroboration of these numbers, it could be higher. These mass arrests along with politically motivated trials of key opposition leaders, like Merera and Bekele, reinforces the message that the government is continuing along the path of suppressing dissent by force and not engaging in genuine and meaningful dialogue with opposition groups and citizens.

The Ethiopian Government's responses to all of these abuses is consistent. The allegations are routinely denied without meaningful investigation, the government claiming they are politically motivated, while simultaneously restricting access for independent media and human rights investigators.

While we are speaking today about the lack of accountability over the brutal crackdown in Oromia and Amhara over the last 16 months, Ethiopians in other regions have also been victims of serious abuses, without any meaningful investigations by the government. For example, Human Rights Watch documented possible crimes against humanity committed by the Ethiopian Army in 2003 and 2004 in the Gambela region. There was no credible investigation into the abuses. In Ethiopia's Somali regional state, the Ethiopian military committed war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity between mid-2007 and 2008 during their counterinsurgency campaign against the ONLF, the Ogaden National Liberation Front. Since that time, there have been serious abuses committed in the Somali region by the Liyu police. Again, no meaningful investigations have been undertaken into any of these alleged abuses in the Somali regional state.

International scrutiny of Ethiopia's rights record has also been lacking despite its June election to the U.N. Security Council, and its membership on the U.N. Human Rights Council. Ethiopia has refused entry to all U.N. Special Rapporteurs since 2007, except for the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea. In total, there are 11 Special Rapporteurs that have outstanding requests for access to Ethiopia.

Despite abundant evidence of serious and growing repression by the Ethiopian Government, the U.S. Government has been a muted critic. Quiet diplomacy has proven ineffectual. It has coincided with the dramatic downward spiral in human rights and a serious constriction of political space leading to the crisis Ethiopia is in today. It is time for a new U.S. approach to Ethiopia in which Congress plays a leadership role in seeking a more balanced policy and re-

quiring more deliberate oversight as it has done in other countries in crisis, including the DRC and Egypt.

As a starting point, Members of Congress should speak out strongly and publicly against abuses by the Ethiopian Government. House Resolution 128 and the resolutions introduced last year are steps in the right direction and contain many important elements. While non-binding, they are impactful because they let the Ethiopian Government know there are repercussions for brutality against their own citizens, brutality that undermines U.S. priorities in the Horn of Africa, including security, development, and economic growth. These partnerships are dependent on long-term stability in Ethiopia. Opposition to the ruling party's repressive rule, as witnessed in the last 16 months, is a glaring indication that Ethiopia's governance model marked by lack of respect for basic rights, is incapable of ensuring that stability.

It is crucial that the U.S. makes it clear that if Ethiopia is going to remain a strong U.S. partner, it needs to open up legitimate political space and allow for critical voices to be heard. Members of Congress can and should call for the release of all political prisoners, including Bekele and Merera, because they should be part of any credible dialogue between the government and the opposition parties.

Members of Congress should also call for the release of all journalists unjustly jailed and call for the repeal or substantial amendment of repressive laws used to stifle critical voices. Now any meetings with the Ethiopian Ambassador to the U.S. should include these points, as should any meetings with other Ethiopian officials, whether in DC or elsewhere. As the FY18 budget process gets underway, U.S. support to the Ethiopian Government should be conditioned on making progress in these and other areas of concern.

Members of Congress should use available opportunities to tell Ethiopia to stop hiding its own human rights record from international scrutiny. As a member of both the Human Rights Council and the Security Council, Ethiopia should cooperate fully with U.N. special mechanisms, in particular the rapporteurs on peaceful assembly and torture.

As expressed in House Resolution 128, Members of Congress should reiterate the call of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and others, for an independent international investigation into the crackdown in Oromia and Amhara. Such action will send a powerful message to the Ethiopian Government that its security forces cannot shoot and kill peaceful protesters with impunity. It will also send an important message to the victims and families, including those here in this room, that their pleas for justice are being heard.

International legitimacy is very important to the Ethiopian Government. It wants to be a key player on the international stage and condemnation of its human rights record contradicts that image. So consistent, sustained, and vocal pressure is critical.

I will close by saying that I am aware of concerns expressed by some in the administration, and even here in Congress, that a more public stance on Ethiopia's domestic situation might undermine the bilateral partnership between Addis Ababa and Washington. But the United States has often underestimated its own le-

verage and been overly cautious as a result. Some of Ethiopia's international partners have made strong public statements in the last year and these statements have not undermined their strategic partnerships. Far from it. The U.S. may need Ethiopia, but Ethiopia needs the U.S., too. The U.S. should send a strong signal of support to the many Ethiopian citizens and Ethiopian-Americans who seek the protection of their rights, greater political space, and democracy but whose fight for dignity and freedom has been crushed time and again. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Horne follows:]

Felix Horne

Senior Researcher at Human Rights Watch (Ethiopia and Eritrea)

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

"Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia"
Thursday, March 9, 2017

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, members of the Subcommittee: thank you for holding this important hearing on the current situation in Ethiopia and for inviting me to testify. I am pleased to be a part of it.

Ethiopia is a country of dual realities. Visitors and diplomats alike are impressed with the double-digit economic growth, the progress on development indicators, and the apparent political stability. But in many ways, this is a smokescreen: many Ethiopians live in fear. The current government – the only one since 1991 – runs the country with an almost complete grip on power, controlling almost all aspects of political, public, and even much private life. Pervasive telephone and online surveillance and an intricate network of informants allow the government to quickly curb any threats to its control; it silences critical voices through the use of arbitrary arrests and politically motivated prosecutions. These actions also prevent critical and divergent views as many who may be impacted by these harsh policies fear repercussions.

Ethiopia remains among Africa's leading jailors of journalists. If you are or you seek to be an independent Ethiopian journalist you must choose between self-censorship, harassment, and possible arrest, or living in exile. The government blocks websites critical of the authorities and sometimes blocks the internet completely. Independent radio and television stations are regularly jammed. In short, the state tightly controls the media landscape, making it extremely challenging for Ethiopians to access information that is independent of government perspectives. As a result, Voice of America, which broadcasts in three Ethiopian languages, has become an increasingly important source of information for many Ethiopians but the government has, at times, obstructed its broadcasts as well.

Independent civil society groups face overwhelming obstructions. The 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation has made obtaining foreign funding nearly impossible for groups working on human rights, good governance, and advocacy. Leading members of the human rights movement have been forced to flee abroad and many organizations have stopped working on human rights and good governance to avoid problems.

There have also been serious restrictions on opposition political parties. This led to the ruling coalition in the May 2015 election winning 100 percent of the seats in the federal and regional parliaments. This is despite evident anti-government sentiments in much of the country, as the protests would later illustrate. Arbitrary dentition of members and supporters, politically motivated criminal charges, and restrictions on financing ensures that opposition parties are constrained and largely ineffective.

The state systematically ensures that many of the country's 100 million citizens are dependent on the government for their livelihoods, food security and economic future. It controls the benefits of development including access to seeds, fertilizers, jobs, health care, and humanitarian assistance, even when funded by the US or other donors. While US-funded development assistance contributes to much-needed poverty reduction efforts, it also adds to the repressive capacity of the government by bolstering Ethiopians' reliance on the government for their livelihoods and ultimately for their survival.

There is no evidence that the ruling party rigs elections – they don't need to. The population's dependence on the ruling party and the limits on opposition parties leaves many citizens, particularly in rural areas, little choice but to support the ruling party come election time. As one farmer in the Amhara region told me in July 2014, "we do not like this government, but we always vote for them. We have to because we get our seeds and fertilizer from them. During times of drought, we get food aid from them. If we don't vote for them, we can't eat." He went on to tell me about his neighbor who voted for the opposition in the 2010 election and shortly thereafter was denied food aid, was denied treatment at a government health clinic, and eventually was displaced from his land for an investment project run by a government cadre.

The justice system provides no check on the government. Courts have shown little independence during politically charged trials. Many opposition politicians, journalists, and activists have been convicted under the repressive 2009 anti-terrorism law and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. Acquittals are rare, credible evidence is often not presented, and trials are marred by numerous due process concerns. Mistreatment and torture are common in Ethiopia's many places of detention. Just two weeks ago, Dr. Merera Gudina, the chair of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), a legally registered political opposition party, was charged with "outrages against the constitution." A former fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Merera joins many other senior opposition leaders currently facing politically motivated criminal charges. Among those presently standing trial is OFC deputy chairman Bekele Gerba. Prosecutors included as ostensible evidence of his crimes a video of Bekele at an August 2016 conference here in Washington, DC, where he spoke of the importance of nonviolence and commitment to the electoral process. Like Merera, he has been a moderate voice of dissent in a highly polarized political landscape.

This begs the question: what avenues are left in Ethiopia to express dissent, to question government policies or to voice concern over abusive practices and how can the United States help strengthen free expression and association rights in Ethiopia?

I speak to you to today 16 months after large-scale and unprecedented protests started in Ethiopia's largest region of Oromia in November 2015, spreading to the Amhara region in July 2016. Ethiopian military forces and police cracked down on these largely peaceful demonstrations, killing hundreds and detaining tens of thousands. The protests were a predictable response to the systematic and calculated suppression of fundamental rights and freedoms.

On October 2, the protest movement took a devastating turn. In Bishoftu in Ethiopia's Oromia region, security forces mishandled a large crowd at the Irreecha cultural event causing a stampede that killed scores of people as they fled security forces. In the days that followed, angry mobs of youth destroyed government buildings and private property. Ethiopia was on the brink of chaos. One week after the Irreecha tragedy [five months ago today] the government announced a state of emergency that remains in place. It prescribed sweeping and vaguely worded restrictions on a broad range of actions undermining rights to free expression, association, and peaceful assembly. It goes far beyond what is permissible under international human rights law and signaled a continuation of the militarized response to the expression of grievances. While the state of emergency has halted both the destruction of properties and the

protests themselves, underlying grievances remain. No one should deny there are serious risks that more unrest could occur.

Since imposing the state of emergency, the Ethiopian government has repeatedly committed publicly to undertake "deep reform" and engage in dialogue with opposition parties to address grievances. In short, the authorities are saying the right things. But the only changes the government has made so far are largely cosmetic and fall dramatically short of the protesters' calls for the protection of basic human rights.

The continuation of the state of emergency – furthering crushing the space for free expression and divergent views of governance – is not conducive for the open dialogue that is needed to address Ethiopia's ongoing crisis. The government announced that it arrested over 20,000 people since the state of emergency began, although there has been little corroboration of these numbers, which could be higher. These mass arrests along with politically motivated trials of key opposition leaders, reinforces the message that the government is continuing along the path of suppressing dissent by force and not engaging in genuine and meaningful dialogue with opposition groups.

The Ethiopian government's responses to all of these abuses have been consistent. The allegations are routinely denied without meaningful investigation, the government claiming they are politically motivated, while simultaneously restricting access for independent media and human rights investigators. In a report to parliament last June, the Ethiopia Human Rights Commission, a government body, concluded that the level of force used by federal security forces was proportionate to the risk they faced from protesters. This is contrary to all available evidence, including that contained in the US State Department's recently released Human Rights Country Report for Ethiopia. No one has seen a written version of the Commission's report that would justify such a conclusion.

While we are speaking today about the lack of accountability over the brutal crackdown in Oromia and Amhara regions over the last 16 months, Ethiopians in other regions have also been victims of serious abuses, most often without any meaningful investigations by the government. For example, Human Rights Watch documented possible crimes against humanity committed by the Ethiopian army in 2003 and 2004 in the Gambella region. There was no credible investigation into the extrajudicial executions, rape, and torture. In Ethiopia's Somali Regional state, the Ethiopian military committed war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity between mid-2007 and 2008 during their counterinsurgency campaign against the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). The Liyu police, a paramilitary force formed in 2008 who report to the president of the Somali Regional state, have been implicated in numerous extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, and attacks on civilians accused of backing the ONLF. No meaningful investigations have been undertaken into any of these alleged abuses in the Somali Regional state.

International scrutiny of Ethiopia's rights record has also been lacking despite its June election to the UN Security Council, and its membership on the UN Human Rights Council – which requires it to uphold the "highest standards of human rights" and cooperate with UN monitors. Ethiopia has refused entry to all UN special rapporteurs since 2007, except the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea. There are outstanding requests from the special rapporteurs on torture,

freedom of opinion and expression, and peaceful assembly, among others. In total, 11 UN Special Rapporteurs have outstanding requests for access to Ethiopia.

Despite abundant evidence of serious and growing repression by the Ethiopian government, particularly since the 2005 election, the US government has been a muted critic. Quiet diplomacy proven ineffectual and has coincided with the dramatic downward spiral in human rights and a serious constriction of political space that has led to the crisis Ethiopia is in today. It is time for a new US approach to Ethiopia in which Congress can play a leadership role in seeking a more balanced policy and requiring more deliberate oversight as it has done in other countries in crisis, including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Egypt.

As a starting point, members of Congress should speak out strongly and publicly against abuses by the Ethiopian government. House Resolution 128 and the resolutions introduced last year are steps in the right direction and contain many important elements. While non-binding, they are impactful because they let the Ethiopian government know there are repercussions for brutality against their own citizens – brutality that undermines US priorities in the Horn of Africa, including security, development, and economic growth. These partnerships are dependent on long-term stability in Ethiopia. Opposition to the ruling party's repressive rule – as witnessed in the last 16 months – is a glaring indication that Ethiopia's governance model marked by lack of respect for basic rights, is incapable of ensuring that stability.

International legitimacy is very important to the Ethiopian government – it wants to be a key player on the international stage and condemnation of its human rights record contradicts that image. So, consistent, sustained and vocal pressure is critical.

It is crucial that the US makes it clear that if Ethiopia is going to remain a strong US partner it needs to open up legitimate political space and allow for critical voices to be heard. To begin with, members of Congress can and should call for the release of all political prisoners, including those like Bekele and Merera who should be part of any credible dialogue between the government and opposition parties. Members of Congress should also call for the release of all journalists unjustly jailed and call for the repeal or substantial amendment of repressive laws used to stifle critical voices. Any meetings with the Ethiopian ambassador to the US should include these points, as should any meetings with other Ethiopian officials, whether in DC or elsewhere. As the FY18 budget process gets underway, US support to the Ethiopian government should be conditioned on making progress in these and other areas of concern.

Members of Congress should use available opportunities to tell Ethiopia to stop hiding its own human rights record from international scrutiny. As a member of both the Human Rights Council and the Security Council, Ethiopia should cooperate fully with UN special mechanisms, in particular the rapporteurs on peaceful assembly and torture.

As expressed in House Resolution 128, members of Congress should reiterate the call of the UN high commissioner for human rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and others for an independent international investigation into the crackdown in Oromia and Amhara regions. Such action will send a powerful message to the Ethiopian government that its

security forces cannot shoot and kill peaceful protesters with impunity. It will also send an important message to the victims and families, [including those here in this room] that their pleas for justice are being heard.

I'll close by saying that I am aware of concerns expressed by some in the administration – and even here in Congress – that a more public stance on Ethiopia's domestic situation might undermine the bilateral partnership between Addis Ababa and Washington – including cooperation on development, security and peacekeeping. But the United States has often underestimated its own leverage and been overly cautious as a result. Some of Ethiopia's international partners have made strong public statements in the last year and these statements have not undermined their strategic partnerships. Far from it. The US may need Ethiopia – but Ethiopia needs the US too. The US should send a strong signal of support to the many Ethiopian citizens and Ethiopian Americans who seek the protection of their rights, greater political space, and democracy but whose fight for dignity and freedom has been crushed time and again through brutal force.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Horne, thank you very much for your very incisive testimony.

I will begin the questioning. You mentioned that U.S. policy has been muted. I can't tell you how welcoming that assessment is because it traverses both the Bush administration and the Obama administration since at least 2005 and before. I, my staff, and others in a bipartisan way have raised the issue that everything post-9/11 can't be antiterrorism and regional stability. Human rights ought to be at the core of what we say and how we condition our funding. So thank you for that refreshing and important admonishment to the new administration because the last couple have not gotten it right and that is unfortunate. I say that because we held hearings when we heard from the Ambassador and high officials in the Bush administration and I expressed not only my displeasure, but my deep concern over unwitting complicity. Looking the other way is complicity. And the same thing has happened, unfortunately, under the Obama administration.

Now we have provided some $820 million between 2015 and 2017 for health, food, and development aid to Ethiopia. You have pointed out in the testimony that people have been denied access to medical care and food, humanitarian assistance if they were not part or supportive of the regime.

Has there been a response from the U.S. Government when that has happened? Are they aware of it? Have we pushed back and said wait a minute, we are the prime providers of that aid. We want to make sure it gets to the poorest of the poor or those who are at risk without any kind of political pre-condition.

Secondly, you talked about the VOA and I think your point, all of the points that have been made about the journalists and being one of the worst areas where journalists are censored and the idea of self-censorship is a terrible consequence because that which is never written because of fear means that obviously human rights abuses go unscrutinized.

But you mentioned the VOA at times is inhibited. Is that through jamming? How do they do that? Has it happened recently? What has been the response of the U.S. Government when that has happened? Because obviously, we should speak out loudly and clearly. Perhaps Dr. Lyons, either of you might want to speak to this, but the idea of hiding in plain sight, potential crimes against humanity and other kinds of serious human rights abuses, this is what adds to the shock and horror of that is that in plain sight of the African Union which is based in Addis, as we all know. It seems to me that a showcase city ought to have a showcase government that respects the dignity of everybody's life and not just those that are supportive of the regime. So if you could.

Mr. HORNE. Yes, thank you for those important questions. On the misuse of development assistance, Human Rights Watch documented this in 2010 in a reported called "Development Without Freedom" and it was focused on how the government uses the benefits of development assistance to control the rural population. And the response from donors, not just in the United States, but all of Ethiopia's Western donors was very much one of yes, that might be happening, but it is not happening on a very wide scale and the benefits of development outweigh these potential problems.

There was initially some discussion about them potentially investigating the extent of this problem, but we have not seen any evidence that it has been investigated. And it is a very tricky thing to investigate, of course, not easy. But I can say in that time, in the interviews that we do about other human rights abuses, it comes up so often that you do not get—things I mentioned, food, seeds, fertilizer, everything, unless you are a member of the ruling party. It used to be that as long as you weren't considered to be the opposition then you wouldn't have problems, but now it seems to be much further, and lots of individuals who seem to genuinely avoid being involved in politics, including refusing to join the ruling party, have reported not being allowed access to food aid, to the seeds, the fertilizers.

In Ethiopia and in many parts of the country, poverty is still a big problem and so yes, they don't have anything to fall back on. So it means they are really dependent on government. So it is definitely something that needs to be investigated more, because it is a big problem.

On the Voice of America question, I think there are a number of ways that Ethiopia uses to prevent international broadcasters and this applies to others as well, including some of the diaspora stations that broadcast into Ethiopia, but yes, jamming is a big problem; jamming of radio and also jamming of television stations for some of the diaspora stations. But also, denial of work permits, a lot of the international broadcasters report having great difficulty having people on the ground. We talked to many individuals who were sources of information, who were interviewed on VOA and other stations who were arrested as a result. So the government uses various techniques to ensure that VOA can't operate.

I can't comment on whether VOA or the other stations self-censor, but this is part of the strategy. If you make it difficult to do your media, and jamming and other tactics increase after you have reported on something very sensitive or after individuals were on VOA that the government doesn't approve of, the national tendency would be a self-censor. I am not saying VOA is self-censoring. I can't speak to that, but that is the strategy that they use.

Mr. LYONS. I will just state one or two brief comments on the African Union. It came up in perhaps a more dramatic context in the mid-1970s during the period of Red Terror in Ethiopia where the OAU again, different organization, different era, was there while horrific street violence was taking place. This was, of course, before this regime came to power.

The African Union is a growing organization that is increasingly talking about things like governance, human rights, and democracy. I think it should be encouraged. I think the United States does have important bilateral relations and has an Ambassador to the AU and that is all to the good. But the Africa Union is also an organization of heads of state who typically do not want to look too closely at the governance of neighboring states and to the extent that they do, it is often through the kind of quiet diplomacy that we were referencing earlier with the United States. It rarely becomes public and that in and of itself is part of the problem.

Mr. SMITH. Before yielding to Ms. Bass, I just point out we have got a very sophisticated report from the Embassy which I suspect

has been produced in whole or in part by their lobbying organization which was set up, funded, beginning on January 1 by SGR LLC. And if the filings we have seen are correct, we are talking about a $1.8 million year cost for the lobby.

And you know, having been on this committee now 36 of my 37 years, I have to tell you that I remember which Nicolae Ceausescu, one of the most brutal dictatorships with a Securitate, the KGB equivalent, every year his lobby firm would come around with bullet points and made them look like they were Mother Theresa. It was just incredible.

So I think we all need to look at that submission very carefully, but the lobby firms are very adroit at putting things together that obscure very often the heinous human rights abuses that we are trying to highlight.

Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Wow. I actually wanted to refer to it on the next panel because I want to ask questions based on the memo.

But I believe, Mr. Horne, you were saying that other countries, the U.S. is concerned because obviously Ethiopia is a strategic partner and you were referring to other Western countries that have not ruptured their partnership because they have been critical and perhaps Dr. Lyons would like to respond to this as well. So I wanted to hear from both of you about other countries in the international community that have significant partnerships with Ethiopia and how they are responding to the situation.

Mr. HORNE. I think maybe there are two examples that I would speak to. One is the European Parliament. In January of last year, they passed a very strong resolution that condemned Ethiopia for some of these human rights abuses. It was the strongest thing we have seen out of the European Parliament in many, many years on Ethiopia. And since that time, the relationship between Europe and Ethiopia has strengthened. There is lots of assistance on migration, on supporting refugees, on development which has continued to go into Ethiopia, so it doesn't seem to have had a particularly negative effect of those sort of strategic partnerships.

The more recent example is Germany. Chancellor Merkel visited Ethiopia just after the state of emergency had been called and in a public setting made a very strong statement that talked about the importance of political space, to open up space for the opposition. That was a very strong thing to say in public, in Addis and they didn't chase Germany away.

In fact, the opposition dialogue that is currently under way and Germany is playing a leading role in facilitating that. So yes, I think there are lots of examples to point to that shows that yes, they are not. As angry as they get and the response with these briefing papers about how we are all wrong about the human rights abuses, they do get angry, but at the same time they are very strategic and they realize that U.S. assistance or Germany assistance in that case is very important to their country.

Ms. BASS. Dr. Lyons.

Mr. LYONS. My point will be just on the more general question of who has leverage over who. Typically, Ethiopia says listen, we are not going to take your conditions. We don't accept your human rights, State Department's human rights report or whatever it is

that they are unhappy about. And because there are things that the United States wants to work with Ethiopia on, let us talk about the peacekeepers in the Sudan. That position is never pushed.

I think I agree that there is a lot more room to say we are not going to back down just because you are angry at us, but rather, as a partner who wants to remain engaged with you for the long term, as a long term friend, we have to say it again, and we have to say it even more clearly because we think it is so important to us. So I guess without—you had the specifics. I can think of the Europeans as well. Germany is another good case. So I would share those.

Ms. BASS. Are there any African countries?

Mr. LYONS. Do you have a quick——

Mr. HORNE. I mean I wouldn't say—I can't think of any African countries offhand that have made strong statements on Ethiopia. I mean the Africa Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights called recently for an investigation. I mean that is probably the closest thing we have.

Ms. BASS. So you said then that statements have been made. The question is what results were produced because of that?

Mr. LYONS. I am going to use Mr. Horne's example. I do think that, while I have concerns about it being not a deep enough process of reform, the fact that the EPRDF is now engaging in discussions with a fraction of the opposition is a good thing. It is perhaps a small step in the right direction. It is not enough and so on. And I do think that while you never know what causes what, that it did follow some tough statements from European leaders and particularly in Germany. So at least it is consistent to say it was after Germany made a tough statement that EPRDF began to talk to elements of the opposition. The causation, of course, would be impossible to tease out.

Mr. HORNE. I would just say I think it is very difficult to, because there hasn't been that many strong public statements, it is very difficult to ascertain whether that is the correct strategy on Ethiopia.

What is clear is that the quiet diplomacy hasn't worked. We have been talking about this for 10 years, since 2005. It clearly hasn't worked. So it is time to try something new. So I think this is something worth exploring.

Ms. BASS. So I know that in many times in Los Angeles, my constituents would like for me to support the termination of all foreign aid, even humanitarian assistance. I have difficulty with that notion because I am concerned that, you know, their point of argument is that it never gets to the people that it is supposed to get to. And I guess what makes me fearful with that is that I don't want to play into forces here that are hostile to foreign aid and if it gets to some, then is that not better than others.

And I think both of you made a statement that you thought foreign aid should be conditioned on making progress. One, do you think the foreign aid gets to the people, to some of the people who need it? And then two, if it is conditioned on making progress, number one, what would those conditions be and how would anybody verify?

Mr. LYONS. I do not support ending all aid and particularly humanitarian aid because I do think it makes a tremendous difference on the ground. There were some 10 million people in Ethiopia following the El Niño drought of 2014 or 2015 who were able to survive, in part, because of the generosity of the United States and other donors.

An important part of our aid package is for things like HIV/AIDS and PEPFAR money and education programs. You can go out to regional medical centers and see lots of things that USAID has done. You can see the work on regional universities and other things.

We have a very, very small democracy and governance budget in Ethiopia. I think that there could be places where that could be used more creatively to try to get momentum behind some of these larger processes of all party dialogues and of a real discussion of how this country goes forward. Those discussions would not be possible unless there were things like release of political prisoners and the opening of political space. I think that that could be a place where there is leverage.

The other place of leverage I think that is probably stronger and more available to use is diplomacy. Ethiopia wants to be a respected member of the world community. It matters greatly. They really, really wanted President Obama to visit. They thought that was an important way for them to be recognized as the most important state in Africa or something like that. And that then you don't necessarily get that recognition unless certain conditions are met.

Ms. BASS. You know, there is the role that Ethiopia played in the negotiations with South Sudan.

Mr. LYONS. Very important.

Mr. HORNE. Yes, I would certainly echo all of that. I think that Human Rights Watch does not call for aid to be cut off to Ethiopia. What we have called for is increased monitoring of the aid that is given, so the positive benefits of the aid can be experienced, but without some of the negatives. And right now what we see is that there is all of this money being put in, but there is not a lot of effort to really monitor the negative aspects like this increased repressive capacity that it gives the government.

Ms. BASS. One other question I had as I know my colleagues want to ask questions, too, is that I have heard that the Ethiopian Government is feeling less pressure with the new administration in thinking that there is not going to be a concern considering that the positions that are being put out there are really more inward looking, concerned about what is happening here and not a concern so much on the international, especially with little to no mention of Africa at all.

So I want to know what you believe in terms of the signal the new administration is sending to Ethiopia.

Mr. LYONS. It is a very difficult to know where this administration is planning to head toward Africa, in part, because the personnel just aren't there yet and the kind of road map, the budgets and so on are unclear. The way I would—signs that I would look for is that on the one hand if this administration has heightened concerns about terrorism and counterterrorism, that there is a way to think that Ethiopia then would be able to get more attention in

Washington because it would be able to play that role or at least position itself to play that role.

But on the other hand, if USAID gets cut in a dramatic way, that presumably would be something that falls on Ethiopia as well as other countries. And so I just find it very difficult to know which way things will go with regard to U.S. policy toward Ethiopia.

Mr. HORNE. Yes, agreed. I think there is still a lot of importance to U.S. relationships and partnerships with Ethiopia that have been there for a long time and will continue to be there on security, on peacekeeping, and potentially development assistance.

Ms. BASS. Is there oil in Ethiopia?

Mr. HORNE. That is a good question. Yes, there is believed to be some oil and natural gas in the Somali region, definitely. But I think when we talk about the importance of benchmarks and human rights measures and conditioning some of this support, it is also because you all saw what happened last year, you can't have a partnership on security, on development, on delivering humanitarian aid when people are protesting when a country almost descends into chaos. So respect for human rights actually makes development and security assistance much more effective which I think is an important part of this.

Mr. SMITH. Before yielding to Mr. Garrett, without objection, a correspondence from a coalition of NGOs, diaspora groups that support this effort, they also call for the passage of House Resolution 128, without objection will be made a part of the record.

Mr. Garrett.

Mr. GARRETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just curious if either of these gentlemen could enlighten us as to what sort of accountability we think has happened as it relates to the crackdown on dissenters that we saw just last year in the region and then on top of that, and obviously, I have had your present testimony of the transparency as it relates to that accountability.

Mr. HORNE. Yes. I mean there were some calls from various countries for an international investigation. And Ethiopia's response to that always is we can investigate ourselves. We don't need the help of the international community. The fact of the matter is they haven't investigated. So the Human Rights Commission, which is the body that would be mandated in doing that investigation, they presented an oral report to Parliament in June of last year, the day that the Human Rights Watch came out with a big report into the protests in Oromia. And they largely exonerated the Federal security forces. No one knows who they talked to. No one knows how they arrived at a conclusion that was so radically different from what everyone else has found who has looked into the issue. And we have spoken to many diplomats, foreign diplomats in Addis, but also Ethiopian Government officials, and no one has seen a written version of that report.

So in short, it doesn't seem that there was any meaningful investigation that was undertaken. There continues to be more promises with more investigations, but we haven't seen anything to date.

Mr. LYONS. If I could add just a couple of sentences on to that because there is a media piece to this as well. The Ethiopian Government is often very unhappy when groups like Human Rights Watch and others come up with estimates on how many died or

what the casualties were and so on and so forth. But there were very few other estimates, in fact, because the journalists cannot go out and ask questions and talk to people and go to the emergency rooms or whatever it is to get a handle on—we are here on the ground and we think that Human Rights Watch has overestimated it, but there is nobody on the ground collecting that with credibility. And so that is a further problem.

The restrictions on the press mean that that type of restriction on accountability.

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Chairman, I want to preface this by saying that we have had very few allies in some regards better than Ethiopia as it relates to combatting terrorism, the number of peacekeepers that the Ethiopians have contributed to global missions and I want to hat tip Ethiopia for that.

Now as an editorial aside, I will tell you that one of my great complaints is that I think sometimes the United States participates in creating vacuums vis-a-vis regime change initiatives without contemplating who will fill said vacuum upon the creation of the vacuum.

What is the state? What we have here in one person's estimation is a nation of Ethiopia that on the one hand does wonderful things to be integrated into the world community and on the other hand stymies any freedom of the press and we know is certainly very vigorous on cracking down on dissent.

Is there even a viable opposition that would be an entity with whom we could do business in Ethiopia just by your estimate? Because again, the worst thing I think we can do, look at Libya pre- and post-Ghadafi. Look at Syria. Look at what happened in Egypt with Sisi sort of stepping in and creating stability where we don't know if we would have a Morsi, but I contemplate that it might be far worse. Is there a viable opposition at all?

Mr. LYONS. The way I would frame that question is that there are a number of small parties and civil society organizations that, at great personal risk, have continued to operate within Ethiopia, but they have been marginalized by systematic actions by the regime.

The way that I would put it about the vacuum, however, though is that if the EPRDF is a strong regime, which in some ways it is, 8 million members of the party, 100 percent seats in the Parliament, one of Africa's most effective militaries in peacekeeping and so on and so forth, double digit growth, it may also be a very brittle party that once challenged could very quickly, the veneer collapses and the underlying structures cannot stand. So that would be the concern I would have for a vacuum, that if the ruling party can't hold it together because it is under too much pressure, then what? And so it is not that we need to put pressure on——

Mr. GARRETT. I know I am interrupting, but with all due respect, that is my question. Then what? If the ruling party fractures, and there is a vacuum, who rushes in to fill that vacuum?

Mr. LYONS. Very hard to know. My best expectation or my—it is really a guess rather than even a very strong conclusion is that the organizations in Ethiopia that have the ability to mobilize are one, ethnically-based political parties that are part of the ruling coalition, so some of the power might gravitate back to the ethnic re-

gions and it will be weaker centrally; and two, the Ethiopian military, which is very, very difficult to get a bead on. And typically, historically has kept out of politics, but in the state of emergency, it is much more directly in politics, the command centers that are part of the state of emergency are Ethiopian military command centers. And so those would be two possible dynamics. One more toward autonomy and two, a greater role for the military.

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Horne?

Mr. HORNE. Yes, it is a difficult question for us to answer. I guess what I would just point to is that there has been a—in my statement I talk about this, that there are a lot of tactics they have used to decimate the opposition to ensure that the opposition is not effective. And quite often when it gets to be hundreds of protesters over the last year and when you ask them about how they see the opposition, they don't see the opposition as being terribly effective. They don't see the opposition being able to represent their views in any sort of form.

Mr. GARRETT. So Mr. Chairman, I would yield back in a moment. I want to be very though. My concern is that in pushing Ethiopia to be a better actor as it relates to openness, freedom of the press, etcetera, that we accidentally create a vacuum that creates chaos beyond that which we currently imagine. So everybody, I think, on both sides of the aisle, wants to see free and fair democratic societies across the globe, but sometimes if we push and something falls off that ledge, what steps to fill the vacuum is not any better than the one that precedes and oftentimes, unfortunately, is worse.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Garrett, thank you very much. The gentleman from New York, Mr. Suozzi.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to echo some of the things that Mr. Garrett was just talking about. I am new to this party. I am a freshman member and this is a new area for me as well as a member of this committee.

But my big concern in the world today is not so much this country versus that country or this ideology versus that ideology, but it was described in Tom Friedman's recent book of control versus chaos, places that are stable versus places that are unstable.

And so many places in the world today that were once propped up by the Soviets or by the Americans during the Cold War that are average or sub-average governments or that are either incompetent or corrupt or just lack resources, are not able to survive in the current environment because it is easy to be, as he described, a breaker in the world as it is to be a maker.

And a lot of places end up with, because of climate change and the droughts such as you are experiencing in Ethiopia with 80 percent of the people involved in agriculture and these terrible droughts and so many people are suffering and then they move into the cities and they are looking for a better life, but they can't find it there and there is civil unrest and it becomes political foment and we have gone from 35 million refugees in the world to 65 million refugees in the past 10 years.

And so if there is a movement to make this change, but as a result there is terrible unrest and de-stability that takes place in the country as a result, you have got another hot spot and another source of refugees in the world that have really few places to go.

So what should we be looking at to help Ethiopia to not only address some of the concerns that you were testifying about, but also just to be stable in this world where there is so much instability?

Mr. LYONS. The answer, one is broadly and then a little more precisely. I think another way of thinking about the concern in Ethiopia is not kind of a binary, is not control versus chaos, but rather in a context of rapid change, including within Ethiopia beginnings of new forms of development, but in a time of rapid change and without deeply embedded institutions and rule of law, is that the path to chaos? In other words, what you need is to have a political opening to better manage the process of change so you don't get to chaos.

I certainly agree and many Ethiopians have gone through periods of chaos and have seen neighbor states go through chaos. That is not the desired end point. The question is if the Ethiopian Government does not recognize the challenges that face it, is it more likely to lead to that chaos or can a process of opening the regime up better manage that threat?

I do think there are ways to open it up in terms of releasing political prisoners, of allowing these opposition parties to operate, and other things that I listed in my testimony. That does not mean that the regime is going to collapse. This isn't regime change. This isn't going in and bombing Benghazi or sending troops into Iraq. This is getting them to provide space so that Ethiopians who care about democracy and human rights are able to speak about those things. And it would be a very, very precariously perched regime that thought that that was what was going to lead to chaos.

The Zone 9 bloggers are an example of that. A young group of Ethiopians who blogged in a way that was critical of the regime and the regime was very, very unhappy about that and regarded them as criminal. If you are worried about a group of young people who are blogging, when you have just won 100 percent of the seats in Parliament, you have the strongest military in sub-Saharan Africa or one of the strongest militaries, there is a disconnect there. Why are you so worried about being criticized, if in fact, you are the control and not the chaos?

Mr. HORNE. Yes, I mean I think this isn't the first time there has been sort of this protest in Ethiopia. We said it is unprecedented, the scale of the protest was unprecedented and the scale of the brutality was unprecedented. But under this government there has been protests, movements in the past, and the government's response to that is to crush it through force. And it has worked. That approach has worked. It didn't work last year. And for so many people that I interviewed who were out there, when they faced bullets, when they saw their friends being shot and killed, when they faced tear gas, arrests, torture, and detention, it just emboldened them further.

So if we care about Ethiopia's stability and we all do, everyone agrees, we want Ethiopia to be a stable, long-term partner, respect for human rights is core to that, is crucial to that. This is not about a vacuum of which party can take over post-EPRDF. That is not what we are talking about. We are just talking about basic respect for human rights which will keep Ethiopia stable and will ensure

that it can be a valuable partner for the United States for many years.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, we will have some additional questions that all of us will submit for the record, but thank you for your tremendous input to this subcommittee and for your leadership for so many decades.

Mr. LYONS. Thank you.

Mr. HORNE. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. I now would like to welcome our second panel beginning with Ms. Seenaa Jimjimo who was born in South Oromo, in Ethiopia. From a very young age, she grieved over the injustice she saw growing up and studied political science in the hopes of becoming the solution.

While in school, she served as president of the African Student Organization and assistant executive director for the Oromo Community Association of Chicago. Currently, she is president of the Coalition of Oromo Advocates for Human Rights and Democracy and is an environmental health inspector as well.

We will then hear from Tewodrose Tirfe, who is one of the founding members of the Amhara Association of America, an organization dedicated to organizing Amhara people and a refugee who came to the United States in 1982. He has worked with international human rights organizations to bring attention to oppression of Amharans and worked to engage policy makers and raise awareness of humanitarian issues in Ethiopia that advocates for a policy that ensures that American interests and moves Ethiopia on the path of democracy. He also works as a senior network engineer.

We will then hear from Mr. Guya Abaguya Deki who is a torture survivor from Ethiopia. He contracted polio when he was 3 years old and was raised in an orphanage. He was an outstanding student and became an activist for disability rights and the general manager of the Ethiopian National Association of the Physically Handicapped. Ethiopia's ruling party tried to force him to join the party and when he refused, they arrested him several times and dumped him in the jungle area with his wheelchair believing that hyenas would attack him and kill him. Miraculously, Mr. Deki survived, came to the United States in 2003, and was granted political asylum in 2014.

We will then hear from Mr. Yoseph Tafari who was born and educated in Ethiopia where his social and political activism forced him to flee to Khartoum, Sudan in 1976. During his time in Sudan he successfully organized the Ethiopians who were exiled in that country to have the full protection of the UNHCR. Since coming to Colorado, he has worked as a project manager in constructing the largest Ethiopian Orthodox church ever built outside of Ethiopia and co-founded the Ethiopian Drought Relief Aid of Colorado, an advocacy group bringing awareness and much needed aid to the victims of the Ethiopian famine. He also owns a printing company.

I would like to now yield to our distinguished first witness. I would point out to our witnesses, I have been called to a leadership meeting at 4:00. I have to be there for it and I apologize. I will read your testimonies very carefully. Ms. Bass and I both invited you to be here, so we both, all of us on the subcommittee want to hear

you, so I apologize. When I do depart, it is not a lack of interest, I can assure you.

Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF MS. SEENAA JIMJIMO, PRESIDENT, COALITION OF OROMO ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

Ms. JIMJIMO. Thank you, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the subcommittee for this opportunity. I must say my presence here is historic and I am beyond honored for the opportunity to speak before you here.

Today, I acknowledge the suffering of many Ethiopians like the Amharas. I am here to speak about three generations of pain, agony, and political oppression against the Oromo people. My grandfather saw massacres, my father and uncles served in prison camps as do my younger brothers and sisters today. This is not just the story of my family, rather the story of Oromos who constitute over 40 percent of the Ethiopian population and occupy the most productive lands. Oromia is the backbone of the Ethiopian economy, with the key export items: Coffee, gold, other precious minerals. Yet, the Oromo are politically, socially, and economically marginalized people.

I must also acknowledge that while hundreds are better qualified than I could be here today, I bring a unique voice. To begin with, I am a follower of Wakefanna, the much less known indigenous religion. I am also a woman, the primary victims of human rights violations you often never hear about. And I represent a generation that knows, understands, and lives in two different worlds, my birthplace and America, land of opportunity.

To speak the truth, I highly doubt my own people, for whom I am fighting day and night, will value me equal to my brother who cares less about them. It is with this understanding that I not only value the American interest in the region, but believe it is necessary that the American mission succeed because it is the only voice for women like me. Therefore, I want to assure this House that American interest is my interest and the interest of so many Oromos.

Twenty-six years ago, in June 1991, Assistant Secretary of State of Hermann Cohen testified in front of House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He said, "No democracy, no support." For 26 years, Ethiopia has become an open prison for so many Ethiopians, particularly Oromos, who make the overwhelming majority of the prison population. Today, 26 years later, under the code name of "state of emergency," a husband watched his wife and daughters get raped, sons taken away or killed.

Even though I myself have lived under this terror and been watched and beaten by this government, what is new is the use of this new term "state of emergency," which allowed it to shut off the small means of communication to the outside world. In Ethiopia, as others before me have said, all sorts of media is either banned or greatly curtailed. Social media is punishable by up to 5 years in jail, all rights organizations banned, requests by U.N. for independent investigations are denied, and U.S. concern is ignored. Moreover, although as early as January 2016, the Ethiopian Gov-

ernment admits to the use of excessive force, no single individuals have been brought to justice. Now 3 years later, nothing has changed except the implementation of the most brutal system of killing, silencing innocent people under the cover of martial law. For Oromos, the torture is unending, even as they flee Ethiopia. It follows them wherever they go in the region. As a proud partner to the U.S. War on Terror, the Ethiopian Government can go to Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, and even as far as Saudi Arabia to bring back those who they consider threats to their power.

While I understand the need for strong and dependable partners in a volatile region too close to extremism, reliance on a minority-dominated government hailing from a mere 6 percent of the population, cannot be sustainable and would rather endanger American interests. A country of 100 million people inhabited by 82 different ethnic groups cannot survive a fake democracy or federalism.

Mr. Chairman, a blind support of this government can only extend what is inevitable. If what we seek is united democratic recognition where all people have equal opportunity as a human being, we must ask for greater accountability and push for real tangible actions. Certainly, the introduction of House Resolution 128 is a great start. While I thank the leadership being behind it and all those who co-sponsored it, I ask you and I beg you to reach out to your colleagues to co-sponsor to speak before it is too late.

The window of opportunity closes with each passing day, with each passing day, lives are murdered at the hands of this government. We know that in no democratic country, let alone Ethiopia, can a ruling party win an election by 100 percent. We should not ignore the young people's aspiration for democracy and justice who make up 50 percent of the entire population. We must not leave Ethiopia's fate to the current government or leave it up to them to investigate into its own gross human rights violations documented by the United States Government. Ethiopia's ruling party does not represent the country's future, but the past. A regime that kills its own people cannot be a regional team player for peace or stability.

For me, I speak about this knowing I am putting my family who still lives there and those who I mentor in great danger. I choose to speak because this is not history, but rather testimony on my own personal experience for which I am ready to accept all sacrifices.

Thank you again for your commitment in promoting democracy, peace, justice, and your relentless efforts to speak on human rights violations in Ethiopia. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Jimjimo follows:]

Testimony of Seenaa Jimjimo
President of Coalition of Oromo Advocates for Human Rights and Democracy
House Subcommittee on Africa, Global health, Global Human Rights and Intentional Organization
March 9, 2017

"Democracy under Threat in Ethiopia"

*All points stated in my testimony are documented or can be validated by State Department report that came out on Friday March 3rd, 2017 and by HRW, AI, FR and other independent publication

Good afternoon!
Chairman Smith, Ranking Members Bass, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you very much for this opportunity. I must say my presence here is historical and I am beyond honored for the opportunity to speak before you here.

With the understanding of the countless suffering of Ethiopians like the Amhara, today, I am specifically here to speak about three generations of pain, agony and political oppression against the Oromo people. My grandfather's saw massacres, my father and uncles served in prison camps as do my younger brothers and sisters today. This is not just the story of my family, rather the story of many Oromos who constitute over 40% of Ethiopian population and occupy the most productive lands. Oromia is the backbone of the Ethiopian economy, home for the country' key export items: Coffee, gold, other precious minerals. Despite its huge demography and huge contributions to the national economy, the Oromo are politically and socially marginalized in Ethiopia. Oromia is supposedly a self-governing state, but in reality, it does not enjoy any more autonomy than as province under previous Ethiopian administrations. Culturally, the Oromo language, one of the country's most spoken, is relegated to a provincial status. For example, while the capital is situated at the heat Oromia, the Oromo could not receive services there in their mother tongue. To make matters worse, not even simple translation services are available for them, which is why people resisted, in the face of widespread human rights violations, being incorporated into the capital through the botched Addis Ababa integrated master plan.

The human rights violations I talk about are of individuals I know personally, who got killed, mutilated, tortured and still languish in prison. Their crime is for only being Oromo and outspoken.

I must also acknowledge that while hundreds better qualified than I can be here today, I bring a unique voice. First of all, I am a woman, the primary victims of human rights violations you often never hear about. Secondly, I am women's rights advocate for voiceless within voiceless. Thirdly, I am a follower of Wakefanna, the much less talked about indigenous Oromo religion. Fourth, I represent a generation that knows, understands and lived in both countries (my birthplace and America, land of opportunity), from a place where religion is imposed to a country where religious diversity is celebrated. As an African in America, I am an eyewitness to the harms of religion extremism and sexism.

To speak the truth, I highly doubt my own people, for whom I am fighting day and night, will value me equal to my brother who cares less about them. It is with this understanding that I not only value the American interest in the region but believe it is necessary that the American mission in my region succeed because it gives voice to voiceless woman like me. Therefore, I want to assure this House that American interest is my interest, the interest of many Oromos.

26 years ago, in June 1991, Ass Sec of State of Hermann Cohen testified in front of House Foreign Affairs. He said, "No democracy no support." For 26 years Ethiopia has become an open prison for so many Ethiopians, particularly Oromos who make the overwhelming majority of the prison population. Today, 26 years later people are afraid to speak and exercise basic rights guaranteed by the constitution. Under the codename of "State of Emergency" a husband watches his wife and daughters get raped, sons taken away or killed. Even though I myself have lived under terror and being watched and beaten by this government, what is new is the use of this new term State of Emergency, which allowed it to shut off the small means of communication between my people and the outside world. In Ethiopia all independent media, including VOA, is greatly curtailed, journalists jailed, opposition party leaders charged with terrorism, social media punishable by up to five years in jail, all rights organization banned and request by UNHRHC for independent investigation denied and US concern statements ignored.

In fact, opposition party leaders are arrested for speaking to EU leaders and human rights organizations. In a single year from Nov 2015-2016, over 1000 Oromos were killed. Using the emergency law, the regime forces citizens to feed armies patrolling the street, literally paying to keep its killers alive. Even though it seems like lots has happened to the world, for us, Oromos abuse by the state has always been part of our upbringing, the fiber that made who we are. What made 2016 special to us is not the amount of lives lost rather the fact the world has finally come to know and see the true color of this government, and the suffering of the Oromo people.

#OromoProtests erupted in Nov 2015 in response to what is known as Addis Ababa Master plan which sought to expand the capital into the Oromia region displacing millions of farmers, curving Oromia into two regions, changing the livelihood of 36 Oromia towns and 17 districts. When we think of Ethiopia's capital city, we must remember Addis Ababa sits at heart of Oromia, and an integral part of Oromia. Thus, the change would have meant for those displaced being forced to speak a new language, play by new culture, live under a new administration and these Oromos could no longer call themselves and be who they really are, Oromo. What is more is also that for Oromos the issue of land is tied to how they see themselves and how they worship their gods. All these happened without consulting residents. It was then that primary and secondary school students took to the streets after watching their neighbors and families' lands being sold to investors to grow flowers, cotton and seeing their siblings becoming beggars, porters and lowly-paid security guards. A land they once called home and a neighborhood they once saw as part of who they are becoming more and more alien to them and they becoming foreigners on their ancestral land.

On the other hand, although as early as January 2016 the Ethiopian government admitted to use of excessive force, no single individual has as of yet been brought to justice. Six month after its

admission, in June HRW release a 61 page document detailing interviews with hundreds of people who survived gruesome and inhuman acts by the security forces. As protests continued the government continued giving lip services to the western government by admitting that there were indeed serious issues of lack of good governance and that they will open talks with opposition parties. However, now two years later nothing has changed except the implementation of a brutal system of killing and silencing innocent people under the cover of martial law.

Moreover, torture never ends for Oromos even when they flee Ethiopia. It follows them wherever they go in the region. Tired of the deafening silence from the international community, having watched their fellow brothers and sisters being taken back to Ethiopia one by one, and facing discrimination and harassment from governments of neighboring countries, on July 28, 2016 two Oromo refugees set themselves on fire in front of Cairo's United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in the hope of bringing attention to their dismal plight. As a proud partner to the US war on terrorism, the Ethiopian government can go to Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and even as far as Saudi Arabia to bring back those that it considered threats to its hold on power. As if this was not enough, on September 3 the notorious Qilinto prison was set on fire killing 23 prisoners by government's own admission but hundreds more are still missing nearly 8 month later. What is more, even though many see this as a failed attempt to kill high profile prisoners like BekeleGerba, the government is now turning around and charging them for starting the fire.

Among the most horrific acts of crime by this government, the October 2 Irreacha massacre stands as the darkest day in modern history for the Oromo where hundreds were killed though the government puts the causality at 53. I must also note that while Oromos and the Oromia region was under the current form of military control for over a year, the official declaration of the state of emergency, code name for cover up came only in October 2016 and the only intent was to use it as an excuse to cut off the little information people received from abroad. We all know that the declaration of state of emergency bring law and order but rather to make sure no foreign media will cover heinous crimes being committed and to silence dissent.

Mr. Chairman, we know in no democratic country, let alone in Ethiopia, can a ruling party win an election by 100%. The "victory" of Ethiopian's 2015 election, is achieved by using the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation to lock up opposition leaders as terrorists, intimidate their supporters, and rig the election when all else fails. Sadly, the US government, my government, is looking the other way.

In the name of standing with allies, we should not be enabling tyrants to oppress their people, disregard the rule of law, and trample upon basic human freedoms. At this age of international turbulence, America cannot afford to send the wrong message to foreign leaders. The US has a moral obligation as the greatest nation on earth, as the beacon of hope for liberty and as a shining light many looks up to.

Moreover, we must know a blind support of this government can only extend what is inevitable. The death of thousands of Oromos and other Ethiopians cannot bring a lasting solution to the country's mounting problems. In fact, Ethiopia's growing domestic troubles are slowly but surely limiting the country's ability to play a constructive regional role. One of the

main reason why Ethiopia was given $864 million in 2014 and far more in 2016 was for her role in the Somalia and Sudan peacekeeping missions. As of 2017, Ethiopia's effectiveness in these roles has greatly diminished with growing domestic troubles, be it the protests, the insurrections and the looming famine, with larger and larger numbers of troop withdrawing, with large gains by Al-Shabaab, and with the election of the new Somali president handily defeating his Ethiopia-backed rival. Recent US rapprochement with Kenya and Egypt and its decision to open talks with Eritrea speak to Ethiopia's diminishing regional role.

While I understand the need for strong, reliable and dependable partners in a volatile region too close to extremism, reliance on a minority-dominated government hailing from a mere 6% of a population 100 million strong cannot be sustainable and would rather endanger American interests. For now, under the draconian state of Emergency, Ethiopia may seem calm and the government may say they have brought back law and order but that should not fool us because we know the truth. Ethiopia is a country of 100 million people inhabited by 82 different ethnic groups. Such a diverse state could not survive under a fake federalism, as farmer Ass Sec of State for African Affairs, Cohen said in 2016, where a minority clique clings to power through a divide and rule strategy. Some want to say as if there is no alternative to the ruling party. The alternative is not between an oppressive system and the unknown or chaos. The US has clear alternatives in Ethiopia. True democracy is the only lasting solution. I don't think we should give into the unfounded fear of seeing that country disintegrate because the people have lived side by side for centuries. In fact, if there is a true democracy I don't doubt the people will choose to live appear with their neighbors, family members which are intermixed with and lived happily side by side for generations. Love happens, it need not be forced. Oromos are one of the most peace-loving people that I have heard of, not because I said it but history show us. Time and again, Oromia has protected everyone that lives within her borders creating a safe-haven to everyone, including Tigreans at a time when they were brutally murdered by 1000s during the previous dictatorial regime.

Mr. Chairman, if what we seek is a united democratic nation where all people have equal opportunity as human beings, we must ask for accountability and push for real and tangible action. The United States government and Congress must ask for an immediate release of all political prisoners, journalists, dissidents, the lifting of the State of Emergency and the restoration of peace in border areas by stopping attacks by the Liyu Police with the backing federal army. Certainly, the introduction of H. Res 128 is a great start. While I thank the leadership behind it and all those who co-sponsored it, I ask you and beg you to reach out to your colleagues to co-sponsor and ask all those caring about Ethiopia to speak up before it is too late. The window of opportunity closes with each passing day, with each passing lives murdered at the hands of this government either at the border by Liyu police, at homes or refugee camps.

Clearly Ethiopia is in a serious not only from rising human violations but also the never-ending requests for foreign aid to feed the millions starving Year after Year. We must ask ourselves, how long are we or should we keep financing a regime that got 30 billion in foreign since it came to power in 1991 and stole 30 billion according to (Steinman, 2017). The current government has been given more than enough opportunity and resource to uplift its people from poverty and transition to democracy. We must say enough and save Ethiopia before it is too late.

My generation, the Oromo people and many other Ethiopians look up to American democracy as a beacon of hope. We cannot ignore the young generation. The youth, who makes up 50% of the entire population, aspires for democracy, peace and security. We must not leave Ethiopia's fate to the current government. We cannot leave it up to the current government to investigate into its own gross human rights violations documented by the United State government. It is time to work on alternatives. Ethiopia's ruling party does not represent the country's future but its past.

In fact, I think we have a brand-new opportunity with a new administration. Let the oppressive region know that American resources and support comes with accountability. A regime that kills its own people cannot bring peace in neighboring countries.

For me, I have young girls in middle school that I support in rural part of Oromia. They look up to me as their role model. They see me as the American girl but one of them to which they can relate. If they can see me make it this far, they know it is a matter of time for them to go further. With the rise of religion extremism, my presence as a secular voice is the most powerful message that women like me can give. Those girls mean the whole world to me. But today, because of what I said here this afternoon, I am putting them and my family members left in Oromia in great danger. I chose to testify because this is not history but rather a testimony on my own personal experience for which I am ready to accept all sacrifices.

Thank you again for your tireless efforts to stop human rights violations in Ethiopia and for your commitment to promoting democracy, peace, justice and rule of law.

STATEMENT OF MR. TEWODROSE TIRFE, CO-FOUNDER, AMHARA ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Mr. TIRFE. Good afternoon. Esteemed members of the Subcommittee on Africa, on behalf of the organization I represent, Amhara Association of America, Ethiopian-Americans across this country, and all Ethiopians who have suffered unconscionable brutality at the hands of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the ruling party of Ethiopia, I want to thank you for holding this hearing and bringing awareness to a humanitarian crisis that has been unfolding before us for the past 26 years.

The subject of today's hearing, Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia, is an misnomer in many ways since democracy has never existed under this current Ethiopian Government.

Since the establishment of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, in their 1976 manifesto, they labeled their struggle as "anti-Amhara oppressors" and in order to achieve their struggle they must destroy the old and the dominant Amhara culture which represents over 30 percent of the Ethiopian population and replace it by a new and revolutionary culture. It is only through this that they may be able to secede from Ethiopia and establish the Republic of Tigray.

The TPLF-led government has forcefully annexed historical Amhara lands of Wolkite, Tegede, Humera, Tselemti, and Raya-Azebo to Tigray. Under the late Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, the TPLF transferred thousands of Tigray settlers to the annexed Amhara land in an attempt to change the demographic make-up of the region.

As the ruling party of Ethiopia, TPLF has been and continues to commit ethnic cleansing on the Amhara people in Wolkite. Their native tongue, Amharic, is suppressed. Widespread discrimination, killing, arrest, torture, and confiscation of land have led to many of the ethnic Amhara people in this escaping to Gonder City, other regions of Ethiopia, and foreign countries for survival.

In 2015, under the guidance of the Ethiopian Constitution's covenants, the Amhara people organized themselves and petitioned the Ethiopian Government to have the Wolkite region to rejoin to the Amhara State. The response by the TPLF regime was to kidnap the officers of the Wolkite Amhara Identity Committee in the middle of the night in 2016, and charge them with terrorism.

These officers were named in a joint letter to the U.N. Human Rights Council by 15 human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

They are: Colonel Demeke Zewudu, who is the face of the Amhara Resistance; Getachew Ademe, Atalay Zafe, Mebratu Getahun, Alena Shama, Addisu Serebe, and Nega Banteyehun.

My family is from Wolkite. I, myself, was born in the Wolkite city of Humera. Some of the men arrested are either related to me or close to my family. The chairman, Getachew Ademe, was a student of my father. Nega Banteyehun is my cousin. Their crime is being Amhara and petitioning the government for the Wolkite region to be rejoined to the Amhara State.

I have family members who have fled Ethiopia to neighboring countries because they are being hunted down, one escaping with bullet wounds. I have had to collect money to send to these young

men who have fled to Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda. It has been both financially and emotionally challenging for us.

But Wolkite and Raya-Azebo are not the only areas where ethnic cleansing and genocidal acts have been committed against Amharas. We can cite in the areas of Benishangul, West and East Arsi and Afar between 1990 and 1994, close to 41,800 Amharas were killed and 70,000 Amharas were displaced from their homes. In the areas of Wollega in the year 2000, 1,200 Amharas were killed and 14,000 displaced from their homes. During this atrocity, children were thrown into fire and a 4-year-old child was forced to drink the blood of her dead father. In Bench Maji, 2015, 600 Amharas were killed and 22,000 Amharas were displaced from their homes. In West Shewa, 500 Amharas were displaced in 2015. Since the Amhara protests began in 2016, over 227, and these are government-provided numbers, have been killed, but we believe the numbers are much higher. This is just a small sample of the many atrocities committed against Amharas.

As stated in the 2007 Ethiopian Census that was released, the Amhara population was short by 2½ million. A debate was not even allowed in Parliament when this fact was presented. Some estimates have the number now closer to 5 million. We believe there has been a systematic effort by the government to depopulate the Amhara population. Thus, the recent protests by Amharas was not about democracy or economics, but was simply about their identity, their land, and the need to survive as a people. Hundreds have been killed while peacefully protesting, hundreds of homes burned by security forces in retaliation against Amharas, and thousands imprisoned. We can never know the exact number killed, wounded, tortured, and arrested unless an independent and transparent investigation is conducted by an international body.

When all these horrendous acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing were occurring, the world including Ethiopian opposition groups were silent. It is because of this silence, the Amhara people had no other choice but to organize themselves so they may have a voice. It is because of this silence and the basic need for survival the Amhara farmers in Gonder and Gojam decided to wage an armed struggle. One of the leaders of these brave farmers, Gobe Malke, was lost to Amharas just 2 weeks ago.

The Amharas are not the only victims of this brutal regime, of course. We have witnessed the atrocious violence committed against Oromos where thousands have been killed while peacefully protesting, the Konso people, Anuaks, Afars, Somalis, and I can go on. The TPLF regime reasons to represent 6 percent of the Tigray population while at the same time suppressing the majority Ethiopian population.

In the past 26 years, Ethiopia has received over $30 billion from the United States and over $20 billion from our allies. This figure does not take into account the humanitarian aid Ethiopia receives from the U.S., Europe, and other donor countries. Still, Ethiopia ranks as one of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the world. Independent research has revealed a corrupt system whereby $2 billion to $3 billion annually is leaving the country.

Ethiopia is again facing a massive famine, with an estimated 5.6 million Ethiopians requiring emergency food assistance by June

2017. The question Ethiopian-Americans are asking is where is all the U.S. aid going? Where is the accountability from the State Department and European partners? This is not representative of a democratic form of governance, and may even be failure by our own democratic government to account for taxpayer aid. Unaccountable support to the Ethiopian Government does not serve the national security interest of the United States. I am honored today to be accompanied to this hearing by one of my younger brothers, Yowseph Tirfe, who is a veteran of the U.S. Marines and who proudly served a tour in Iraq. He was inspired to give back because he valued and wanted to preserve the freedom that he and our parents were afforded as immigrants in this great country. My younger brother, Yowseph Tirfe, has served in the United States Army. Ethiopian-Americans are law-abiding and tax-paying citizens who are proud to be Americans and deeply cherish the security, opportunity, freedom, the value of human rights, and representative democracy we have in America. However, we are very disappointed with the U.S. foreign policy that has failed the Ethiopian people and have appeased a brutal regime.

As an Ethiopian-American based organization, the Amhara Association of America has provided a 14 point recommendation that we believe will ensure our national security interests and will lead Ethiopia on a path to democracy.

Thank you and I forward to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tirfe follows:]

Name: Tewodrose G. Tirfe
Title and Organization: Board Member, Amhara Association of America
Committee: U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee: Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Date: March 9, 2017
Title of Hearing: Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia

Congressman Smith and esteemed members of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, on behalf of the organization I represent, Amhara Association of America, Ethiopian-Americans across this country, and all Ethiopians who have suffered unconscionable brutality at the hands of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the ruling party of Ethiopia, I want to thank you for holding this hearing and bringing awareness to a humanitarian crisis that has been unfolding for the past 26-years. I praise your leadership and devotion to the Ethiopian people and commitment to a U.S. Foreign Policy that serves the interests of both Americans and Ethiopians.

The subject of today's hearing: Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia is an misnomer in many ways since Democracy has never existed under this current Ethiopian government.

Since the establishment of Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), in their 1976 Manifesto, they labeled their struggle as "anti-Amhara oppressors" and in order to achieve their struggle against the Amhara oppressors they must destroy the old and the dominant Amhara culture and replace it by a new and revolutionary culture. It is only through this struggle that they may be able to secede from Ethiopia and establish the Republic of Tigray. TPLF ascension to power was due to a power vacuum created as a result of the many warring parties during the Ethiopian civil war. TPLF purports to represent the Tigray ethnic group which makes up 6% of the population. In essence, the result of the TPLF's rule is a minority party controlling the majority of the population in Ethiopia. Since coming to power, the TPLF ruling party has been persecuting Amharas to achieve their mission as stated in their Manifesto.

The TPLF led government has forcefully annexed historical Amhara lands of Wolkite, Tegede, Humera, Tselemete and Raya-Azebo to Tigray. Under the late Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, the TPLF transferred thousands of Tigray settlers to the annexed Amhara land in an attempt to change the demographic make-up of the region. The land mass of the Tigray Region has grown by a 3rd since annexation of historical Amhara lands including lands annexed from the Afar Region. This forced annexation has had a devastating effect on the Amhara people in the Wolkite Region. As the ruling party of Ethiopia, TPLF has been and continues to commit ethnic cleansing on the Amhara people in Wolkite. Their native tongue Amharic is suppressed. Widespread discrimination, killing, arrest, torture, and confiscation of land have led to many of the ethnic Amhara people in this region escaping to Gonder City, other regions of Ethiopia, and foreign countries for survival.

In 2015, under the guidance of the Ethiopian Constitution's covenants, the Amhara people organized themselves and petitioned the Ethiopian Government to have the Wolkite Region rejoined to the Amhara State. The response by the TPLF regime was swift and brutal response:

the TPLF Special Forces deployed to kidnap the Officers of the Wolkite Amhara Identity Committee in the middle of the night, and then charged them with terrorism.

These officers were named in a Joint Letter to the UN Human Rights Council by 15 Human Rights Organizations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

They are:
Colonel Demeke Zewudu, the face of the AmharaResistance
Getachew Ademe (Chairman)
Atalay Zafe
Mebratu Getahun
Alena Shama
Addisu Serebe
Nega Banteyehun

This is what led to the massive protests in the Amhara State. My family is from Wolkite, I myself was born in the Wolkite city of Humera. Some of the men arrested are either related to me or close to my family. The Chairman, Getachew Ademe was a student of my father. Nega Banteyehun is a cousin. These men and many other members of the Wolkite Amhara Identity Committee members who are now charged with terrorism have not committed any crime against the state. Their only crime is being Amhara and petitioning the Government of Ethiopia for the Wolkite Region to be rejoined to Amhara State.

I have family members who have fled Ethiopia to neighboring countries because they are being hunted down, one escaping with bullet wounds. So these past few months have been extremely challenging for my family. I have had to collect money to send to these young men who have fled to Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda. It has been both financially and emotionally challenging for us.

But, Wolkite and Raya-Azebo are not the only areas where ethnic cleansing and genocidal acts have been committed against Amharas, we can site:

1. In Metekel, Benishangul from 1992-1994, between 15,000 and 20,000 Amahras were killed. In the same area, in 2013, 5,000 Amharas were displaced from their homes.
2. In West Arsi, 60,000 Amharas were displaced in 1992 and many were killed.
3. In East Arsi in 1992, 5 woredas (areas) were put on fire; 1,500 Amharas were killed and 500 thrown to a deep underground pit alive.
4. In West Arsi, Gelemiso from 1991-1993, between 13,000-20,000 Amharas were killed.
5. In Kemash, Benishangul, in 1990, 300 Amharas were burnt alive. In 2013, 5,000 Amharas were displaced from their homes.
6. In Wollega, in the year 2000, 1,200 Amharas were killed and 14,000 displaced from their homes. During this atrocity, children were thrown into fire and a 4-year old child was forced to drink the blood of her dead father.
7. In Bench Maji, 22,000 Amharas were displaced from their homes and in 2015 600 Amharas were killed.
8. In West Shewa, 500 Amharas were displaced in 2015.

9. Since the Amhara Protests began in 2016, over 227 (government provided numbers) have been killed but we believe the numbers are much higher.

This is just a small sample of the many atrocities committed against Amharas.

As stated in the 2007 Ethiopian Census that was released in 2010, the Amhara population was short by 2.5 million. A debate was not even allowed in parliament when this fact was presented. Some estimates have the number now closer to 5 million. We believe there has been a systematic effort by the government to depopulate the Amhara population. Thus, the recent protests by Amharas was not about democracy or economics, but was simply about their identity, their land, and the need to survive as a people. Hundreds have been killed while peacefully protesting, hundreds of homes burned by security forces in retaliation against Amharas, and thousands upon thousands imprisoned. We can never know the exact number killed, wounded, tortured, and arrested unless an independent and transparent investigation is conducted by an international body.

When all these horrendous acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing were occurring, the world including Ethiopian Opposition groups were silent. It is because of this silence, the Amhara people had no other choice but to organize themselves so they may have a voice, it is because of this silence and the basic need for survival the Amhara farmers in Gonder and Gojam decided to wage an armed struggle. Since the armed uprising began, over 500 TPLF security forces have been killed in the Amhara State. These brave farmers were led by the late Amhara leader Gobe Malke.

The Amharas of course are not the only victims of this brutal regime; we have witnessed the atrocious violence committed against Oromos where thousands have been killed while peacefully protesting, the Konso people, Anuaks, Afars, Somalis, and I can go on and on. It is very disturbing to see a government forcefully remove millions of people from the land they have farmed and cared for for thousands of years only to be sold to foreign investors and the beneficiaries being TPLF bureaucrats.

The Ethiopian Government has had one of the worst human rights records in the world. The free press is non-existent, there's no space for opposition political parties, and civic organizations are constantly under attack via the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO) law. Though the U.S. State Department is aware of these atrocities there has been no meaningful action taken against the government. The TPLF led political party; Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) won 100% of the Parliamentary seats in 2015 election and 99.99% of the Regional elections. That's an improvement from the 2005 election where they only won 99.99% of the Parliamentary election. You don't need any more proof then this to understand the level of oppression and corruption by this regime.

In the past 26 years, Ethiopia has received over $30billion from the United States and over $20billion from our European allies. This figure does not take into account the humanitarian aid Ethiopia receives from the U.S., Europe, and other donor countries. Still, Ethiopia ranks as one of the poorest and corrupt countries in the world. Independent research has revealed a corrupt system whereby $2-$3billion annually is leaving the country. Ethiopia is again facing a massive

famine, with an estimated 5.6 million Ethiopians requiring emergency food assistance by June 2017. Where is all the U.S. Aid going? Where is the accountability from the State Department and European partners? This is not representative of democratic form of governance, and a may even be failure by our own democratic government to account for tax-payer aid.

Unaccountable support to the Ethiopian Government does not serve the national security interest of the United States. The Ethiopian Government is a destabilizing factor to the region and its own citizens. Even with the State of Emergency in place, the Ethiopian Government cannot sustain control of the country when majority of its citizens have risen against it. Just two weeks ago over 20 Ethiopian security forces were killed by Amhara armed resistance fighters. Amharas, Oromos, and other ethnic groups are taking to arms because they have had enough of the brutality and unfair treatment against their own people. Thousands of Ethiopians are fleeing the country with the hopes of reaching Europe or America for safety putting pressure on neighboring countries. When a majority of the Ethiopian citizens in almost all parts of Ethiopia are protesting against this government, we expect our U.S. Government to stand with the Ethiopian people, not a government that has turned its guns against its own people.

I am honored today to be accompanied to this hearing by one of my younger brothers Yowseph Tirfe who is a veteran of the U.S. Marines and who proudly served a tour in Iraq. He was inspired to give back because he valued the freedom that he and our parents were afforded by the United States as immigrants and he wanted to play his role in preserving our freedom. Another inspiration for Yowseph was the service of another younger brother, Eyassu Tirfe who served in the United States Army. Many Ethiopian-Americans have proudly served in the U.S. Armed Forces because they love this country and want our values preserved. Ethiopian-Americans are law abiding, hardworking, tax-paying citizens who are proud to be Americans and deeply cherish the security, opportunity, freedom, value of human rights, and representative democracy we have in America. However, we are very disappointed with the U.S. Foreign Policy that has failed the Ethiopian people and have appeased a brutal regime. We believe there can be balance that ensures our national security interests and move Ethiopia on a path towards democracy.

As an Ethiopian-American based organization, Amhara Association of America would like to make the following recommendations to our elected officials, State Department, and policy makers keeping in mind our U.S. national security interests:

1. All Foreign Aid to be tied directly to measureable improvement towards democracy and improvements in human rights.
2. Release of all journalists, political opposition leaders and members, human rights activists, and protesters who were arbitrarily detained during and after the protests.
3. Allow opposition political parties to operate without persecution.
4. Allow independent media to operate without persecution.
5. Open up radio, television, and Internet to private and independent Ethiopian companies. All these entities are now under the control of the Ethiopian government.
6. Allow independent civil institutions to operate without intimidation and to flourish. A strong and vibrant independent press and civil institutions are the foundations of a strong democracy.
7. Repeal the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP) which has been used to jail journalists, human rights activists, and opposition politicians.

8. Repeal the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO) which has shuttered many nongovernmental organizations and the few that exists has hampered their ability to work on human rights, good governance, and advocacy on the rights of oppressed ethnic groups, women, children, and the disabled.
9. Stop the persecution of Amharas and other ethnic groups who are targeted by TPLF.
10. Return and Integrate Wolkite and Raya-Azebo Region to the Amhara State. This will offer some level of protection to this targeted group.
11. Allow for international, independent, and transparent investigation to the cause of 2.5million-5million missing Amharas.
12. Allow for international, independent, and transparent investigation into all of the deaths caused by Ethiopian security forces and other human rights violations and hold those responsible accountable.
13. Immediate and targeted sanction including travel visa bans to individuals and entities that have committed internationally recognized human rights atrocities.
14. Invest more in civil institutions that have seen their numbers shuttered and capacity diminished due to the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO) law.

If the Ethiopian Government does not take immediate and measureable efforts on the above points, the State Department should cut 1/3 of the foreign aid funding and redirect to civil institutions. And cut an additional 1/3 each year after that if there are no measurable improvements. We believe if the above measures are taken via legislation, a more humane, democratic, stable government will emerge in Ethiopia that will ensure America's security interest and a Government that more closely aligns with our shared values of Freedom, Democracy, and value for human Dignity.

Amhara Association of America's immediate concern is regarding the millions of "missing" Amharas. We are requesting the members of this subcommittee to immediately take this issue to the Ethiopian Government and the United Nations Human Right office of the High Commissioner and request an independent investigation.

Thank You. I look forward to answering any question.

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Mr. SMITH. Thank you, sir. Mr. Tafari.

STATEMENT OF MR. YOSEPH TAFARI, CO-FOUNDER, ETHIOPIAN DROUGHT RELIEF AID OF COLORADO

Mr. TAFARI. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the situation in Ethiopia.

I would like to open my testimony first by thanking our representative of the 6th District of Colorado, the Honorable Mike Coffman, for his unyielding supportive voice for the

Ethiopian people and our diverse community in the state. I also would like to recognize the passionate advocacy of my Ethiopian brothers and sisters from the Oromo community, especially Mr. Jamal Said, who is here today.

Please allow me to introduce myself to make relevance of my presence before you. My name is Deacon Yoseph Tafari, co-founder of the Ethiopian Drought Relief of Colorado. I am an ordained deacon serving under the Archdiocese of the exiled Ethiopian Orthodox Holy Synod. I am an entrepreneurial businessman operating a commercial printing company in Colorado.

I grew up in Ethiopia where in 1976 I was forced to flee Ethiopia and seek refuge in the neighboring Sudan. Fortunately, I was allowed to enter the United States as a refugee which paved the way to a life-changing journey. Since then, Ethiopia has not fared well in most measures, especially since the current TPLF, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, regime took the central political power in 1991. Ethiopia has gone from bad to worse.

Please allow me to provide some of the major aspects of Ethiopia's profile.

Religious freedom. One of Ethiopia's enduring virtues is its multi-century tradition of the coexistence of people with various Semitic faiths which exists to the present day of Ethiopia. By and large, the Ethiopian Christians, Muslims, and Jews together have long recognized the individual right to worship free from persecution as the only way for national cohesiveness. Throughout its history, evidence of common inter-religious marriages, co-observation of sacred holidays, social assimilation, mutual inter-dependence for trade, and even the gallant sacrifices shared to defend the freedom of the country is a rare find anywhere.

Therefore, in the fight against extremism and global terrorism, one can never find a better natural ally than the people of Ethiopia who for centuries have possessed the wisdom and ingredients for peaceful coexistence amongst people of different religions. This collective asset will undoubtedly contribute far more lasting regional stability, provided it is represented by a democratic political structure. Instead, Ethiopia is ruled by a minority ethnic regime which has brought about highly destructive governance by perpetually marginalizing and terrorizing other ethnic and religious groups by pitting one against the other which may yield a damaging consequence to the nation's unique virtues and ultimately the fight against extremism and global terrorism itself.

Ethnic identity. From the early days of its foundation, TPLF goals have been well documented. It is to break up Ethiopia's population by ethnic identity while simultaneously controlling all the

nation's resource for the benefit of a single ethic minority group. All actions in every layer of civic duties, legislation, public policy, economic planning, as well as national security is shaped by this singular mission. Today, Ethiopia is strained to a breaking point due to excessive marginalization of the majority ethnic population. Desperate for their lives, hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians are fleeing the country making it one of the world's top refugee producing nations.

Oromo and Amhara are the two biggest ethnic groups, together composing over 65 percent of the population. Since taking power, the regime embarked on a national campaign to incite conflict between these two significant ethnic groups to no avail. When the clear majority of Ethiopians finally said enough, massive protests were sparked across the country. In particular, a joint declaration of unity between the Oromo and the Amhara ethnic groups, has resulted in the regime declaring an emergency decree on the entire nation. Unlike its predecessor, the TPLF is a silent killer utilizing covert methods including assassins, sniper sharp shooters, poisoning, and numerous inhuman methods against its own people. The emergency decree is an added blanket tool in its lethal arsenal to efficiently execute its barbaric measures against all humanity in Ethiopia.

Much ink has been spilled in documenting the crimes of the TPLF regime against the Ethiopian people. In short, Ethiopia is a country with no opposition, judicial system, civil society, independent media, or political space. Instead, the country has turned into closed killing chambers and the prisons and detention centers are packed with thousands of political prisoners while the world is looking the other way.

Ethiopia's aspiration for genuine democracy and the reality of ethnic dictatorship, to point a few highlights in order to frame today's discussion.

Religious freedom. All religious institutions are under the strict control of the regime making moral challenge virtually impossible to the ruling party's brutal measures.

Political freedom. Systematic suppression of independent political parties especially after its resounding defeat by the opposition parties in the 2005 national election. Since then, the regime has devised the most perfect—I say that again—the most perfect rigging mechanism of the entire election process, resulting in "perfect vote score" of 100 percent electoral margin in the subsequent national elections of 2010 and 2015.

Independent media. Ethiopia has virtually no independent media within its borders and international broadcasters' signals are regularly jammed. Today, Ethiopia is the second-highest number of jailed journalists in sub-Saharan Africa.

Independent judicial branch. The legislative and judicial bodies in Ethiopia are totally controlled by the regime as a convenient "legalizing platform," an effective tool for the executive branch to rule the country at will.

The military. Ethiopia has no national army. I know this may come as a surprise to many, but the entire military apparatus is a direct extension of the ruling party, and over 95 percent of its

generals are ethnic Tigray to ensure unwavering loyalty to the minority regime.

Economy. Highly centralized where by the largest source of gainful employment source in the country is the government itself. In order to self-serve the ruling party, it is used as an exclusive weapon for nationwide mechanism to reward its supporters and punish its potential foes. Despite claims of growth and prosperity, Ethiopia still remains the eighth world's poorest nation where nearly 20 percent of the population is facing endless chronic famine.

Mr. DONOVAN [presiding]. We are going to put your entire statement into the record. I just want to give the other witnesses a chance to speak and make sure all the members get to ask their questions.

Mr. TAFARI. Can I——

Mr. DONOVAN. Do you want to sum up? Yes, certainly, sir.

Mr. TAFARI. Okay. Ethiopia has been gripped by an apartheid-like system of governance affecting 100 million of its citizens. The regime has repeatedly showed the world that it operates much as an underground criminal enterprise than a ruling body with a mandate to govern an ancient country like Ethiopia. All its activity and sheer existence is for monetary gain from the nation which has made a few individuals of the inner circle fabulously wealthy. To those individuals, Ethiopia is for sale and the asset of the nation is to be monetized in every turn. By providing material assistance it receives under the pretext of "ally against terror" the regime should never be given the license to terrorize its own people. The United States needs to take into account that dictatorship based on the sole interest of a minority ethnic group can be the most ruthless force as the world is just witnessing the humanitarian crisis unfolding in present-day Syria. The primordial fear of retribution becomes a self-fulfilling cycle of suppression and human rights violations by this minority ethnic dictatorship.

Last, we can find examples within the same continent of much better political solutions in which the United States played a major role in bringing to historical outcome. This fine example is none other than the end of apartheid system in South Africa. In both instances, the culprit for the suffering of the people of Ethiopia and South Africa is minority ruling dictatorship. Intrinsic to its core belief, such system can only function by forceful suppression of the will of the majority. As a result, both TPLF of Ethiopia and the apartheid system of South Africa are the perfect example of unsustainable political status quo.

As in the case of South Africa, the gallant struggle of the majority combined with world economic embargo forced the dictatorship to come to the table for peaceful transition, thereby creating a more perfect union. In my opinion, that is the "the fierce urgency of now" for Ethiopia today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tafari follows:]

Testimony of Deacon Yoseph R. Tafari before the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

March 9, 2017

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the situation in Ethiopia

I would like to open my testimony first by thanking our representative of the 6th district of Colorado, the honorable Mike Coffman for his unyielding supportive voice for the Ethiopian people and our diverse Community in the state. I also would like to recognize the passionate advocacy of my Ethiopian brothers and sisters from the Oromo community, especially Mr. Hassen Ararso and Mr. Jamal Said

Please allow me to introduce myself to make relevance of my presence before you. My Name is Deacon Yoseph Tafari, co-founder of the Ethiopian Drought Relief of Colorado. I am an ordained deacon serving under the Archdiocese of the exiled Ethiopian Orthodox Holy Synod. I am an entrepreneurial business man operating a commercial printing company in Colorado.

I grew up in Ethiopia where my deep love and appreciation of for the country and its people has forever shaped to who I am today. At a very young age I was exposed to the daily struggle of my people caused by abject poverty many faced all around me. For a brief period I volunteered with Oxfam relief campaign in a remote village in Wollo province which was devastated by a dreadful famine that took place during 1971-1974. During the campaign I witnessed unspeakable suffering of children dying a slow agonizing death due to lack of food and water all while those in a position of power remain indifferent to the unfolding plight. This dichotomy subsequently lead me to join student protest which coincided with the overthrow of Emperor Hailesalasie's government by military junta known as "The Derg". The new order was much more menacing and swift especially during the time known as the "The Red Terror" that took the lives of many young Ethiopians including my own 14 year old brother. In 1976 I was forced to flee Ethiopia and seek refugee in the neighboring Sudan in order to save my own life. Fortunately, I was allowed to enter United States as a refuge, which paved the way to a life changing journey. Since then Ethiopia has not fared well in most measures, especially since the current TPLF (Tigrai People Liberation Front) regime took the central political power in 1991, Ethiopia has gone from bad to worse.

This backdrop of my own journey to America a country that provided me and my family the opportunity to be free and share its dreams, is in some way allowed my own objective commentary regarding the present day danger facing Ethiopia.

Please allow me to provide some of the major aspect of Ethiopia's profile:

Religious Freedom

Ethiopia a nation which has been referenced in the book of Genesis through the manuscript of the New Testament is a country with 3,000 years of written history that has never been colonized by foreign power. One of Its enduring virtues is its multi century tradition of the coexistence of people with various Semitic faiths which exists to the present day of Ethiopia. By in large, The Ethiopian Christians, Muslims and Jews together have long been recognized the individual right to worship free from persecution as the only way for national cohesiveness. Throughout its history, evidence of common inter-religious marriages, co-observation of sacred holidays, social assimilation, mutual dependence for trade and even the gallant sacrifices shared to defend the freedom of the country is a rare find anywhere. It is a unique model in play considering the approximation of the very region to where these sematic religions originated from, and thus remains the great wonder of Ethiopia's history. This virtue is in our DNA passed on from our fathers, and it is truly Ethiopia's greatest gift to the world.

Therefore, in the fight against extremism and global terrorism one can never find a better natural ally than the people of Ethiopia who for centuries have possessed the wisdom and ingredients for peaceful coexistence amongst people of different religion. This collective asset will undoubtedly contribute far more lasting regional stability provided it is represented by a democratic political structure. Instead, Ethiopia is ruled by a minority Ethnic regime which has brought about highly destructive governance by perpetually marginalizing and terrorizing other ethnic and religious groups by pitting one against the other which may yield a damaging consequence to the nation's unique virtues and ultimately the fight against extremism and global terrorism.

Ethnic Identity

From the early days of its foundation, TPLF goals has been well documented. It is to breakup over the Ethiopian population by Ethnic identity while simultaneously control all the nation's resource for the benefit of a single ethic minority group. All actions in every layer of civic duties, legislation, public policy, economic planning as well as national security is shaped by this singular mission. Today Ethiopia is strained to a breaking point due to excessive marginalization of the majority ethnic Ethiopians in the last 25 years. Desperate for their lives, hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians are fleeing the country making it one of the World's top refugee producing nation.

Oromia and Amhara are the two biggest ethnic groups, together comprising around 65% of the population. Since taking power, the regime embarked on a national campaign to insight conflict between these two significant ethnic groups to no avail. Ethiopia is a mosaic of nationalities, but yet this ethnic regime has been waging war

consistently against the Afar, the Anuak, The Ogden Somali's, The Gambella, The Benishangul people as well as countless minority ethnic groups. When the clear majority of Ethiopians finally said enough, massive protests were sparked across the country. In particular, a joint declaration of unity between the Oromia and the Amhara ethnic groups, have resulted in the regime declaring an Emergency decree on the entire nation. Unlike its predecessor, the TPLF is a silent killer utilizing covert methods including assassins, sniper sharp shooters, poisoning, and numerous inhuman methods against its own people. The Emergency decree is an added blanket tool in its lethal arsenal to efficiently execute its barbaric measures against humanity.

Much ink has been spelled in documenting the crimes of the TPLF regime against the Ethiopian people. In short Ethiopia is a country with no opposition, judicial system, civil society, independent media or political space. Instead the country has turned into closed killing chambers and the prisons and detention centers are packed with thousands of political prisoners while the world is looking the other way.

Ethiopia's aspiration for Genuine Democracy and the reality of Ethnic Dictatorship

To point a few highlights in order to frame today's discussion:

1. Religious Freedom: The expulsion of the Orthodox Holy Synod from Ethiopia for the first time since its establishment in the 4th century as well as the imprisonment of Sheik Ahmedin Jebel the Ethiopian Muslims faith leader have made the country to make moral challenge virtually impossible to the ruling party's brutal measures.

2. Political Party: Systematic suppression of independent political parties especially after its resounding defeat by the opposition parties including by Dr. Berhanu Nega and Engineer Hailu Shawel and other political parties in the 2005 national election. Since then, the regime has devised the most perfect rigging mechanism on the entire election process, resulting in "Perfect vote score" of 100% electoral margin in the subsequent national elections of 2010 and 2015 with no independent international election observers to validate the "election" process.

3. Independent Media: Ethiopia has virtually no independent media within its borders and international broadcasters' signals are regularly jammed. Even social media and online blogs are monitored, restricted and censored. Those who dare to report their grievances are charged with terrorism and put in prison for years. According to the Washington Post (February 11, 2014), the TPLF has even gone far enough to hire a notorious spyware vendor with spying tools in an attempt to eavesdrop on exiled Ethiopian journalists in the United States. Today Ethiopia is the second-highest number of jailed journalists in sub-Saharan Africa. According to CPJ 2017 report Ethiopia has just reached 259 journalists jailed, worst year on record.

4. Independent Judicial Branch: The legislative and judicial bodies in Ethiopia is totally controlled by the regime as a convenient "Legalizing Platform ", an effective tool for the executive branch to rule the country at will.

5. The Military: Ethiopia has no national army. The entire military apparatus is a direct extension of the ruling party, and over 95% of its generals are Ethnic Tigray to ensure unwavering loyalty to the minority regime. Instead of safeguarding the national security interest, the Ethiopian military's allegiance has been to the Tigrai People Liberation Front.

6. Economy: Highly centralized where by the largest source of gainful employment source in the country is the government itself. In order to self-serve the ruling party, it is used as exclusive weapon for nationwide mechanism to reward its supporters and punish its potential foes. According to Ethiopian Broadcasting Corp report, a large number of the population's sole income is remittance from family and friends in the diaspora. In 2015 alone remittances to Ethiopians from abroad was $3.7 billion. Despite claim of growth and prosperity, Ethiopia still remains the 8th world's poorest nation where nearly 20 percent of the population is facing endless chronic famine.

7. Foreign Aid: According to Forbes (2017) report, the amount of American financial aid received by Ethiopia's government since it took power is $30 billion. It is such foreign aid without condition that has empowered the regime's oppressive infrastructure against the Ethiopian people.

8. Illicit Financial Flows: According to Commissioned by the AU/ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, since the current ruling party came to power, $30 billion has been illicitly taken out of Ethiopia.

9. **Corruption**: According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index Ethiopia ranks 108 out of 168 countries as the most corrupt state in the world, thereby impeding democracy and the rule of law in the country. In an undemocratic system like Ethiopia, public institutions and offices do not have any fear when they misuse their power for private interest. Today, bribery, cronyism and nepotism is the bedrock economic foundation of Ethnic Dictatorship in Ethiopia, where the demarcation line between public and private has long disappeared.

10. Famine: Ethiopia is facing another famine for which the regime have asked $946 million for immediate assistance while it hired U.S based firm, S.G.R LLC lobbying at a cost of US $1.8 million a year. Humanitarian assistance transcends all condition to provide lifesaving effort. However, funds should never directly be given to a corrupt dictators without any accountability.

Since the El Nino's global weather pattern alone cannot adequately explain Ethiopian famine reoccurrence, we need to closely examine the failure of the political system itself. Nobel Prize winner and economist Amartya Sen has extensively analyzed the relationship between democracy and famine in his book "Development as Freedom". Sen argues,

"Democracies don't have famines, only authoritarian systems do. Famine tend to happen in places where the victims are oppressed by dictators. A historical investigation of famine also identified 30 major famines during the 20th century. All happened in countries led by autocratic rule or that were under armed conflict, four being in Ethiopia. Why does autocracy lead to famine? The most fundamental reason is that autocrats often don't care enough about the population to prevent famine. Autocrats maintain power through force, not popular approval. This argument has been proven true in the case of Ethiopia."
Sadly, a fraction of the $30 billion illicitly flowed out of Ethiopia would have mitigated the current famine relief requested by the regime..

11. Human Trafficking: As a result of the continued crises, Ethiopia has become one of the highest sources of human trafficking in the world. Many young Ethiopians flee by foot or sea attempting to reach the Middle East or Europe, where many die in transit from inhuman conditions or become exploited by human traffickers. According to the U.S Department of State's "Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons", up to 1,500 Ethiopians depart daily in search of better opportunities. Many Ethiopian women working in domestic service in the Middle East endure severe abuse, including physical and sexual assault, denial of salary, sleep deprivation, passport confiscation, and confinement. Ethiopian women who migrate for work or after fleeing abusive employers in the Middle East are also vulnerable to sex trafficking. Ethiopian men and boys migrate to the Gulf States and other African nations, where some are subjected to forced labor, a modern version of slavery. Saudi Arabia remains the primary destination for irregular migrants; reportedly, over 400,000 Ethiopians reside there, including some trafficking victims. Previous reports suggest district-level officials accepted bribes to alter ages on identification cards, allowing children to acquire passports without parental consent and enabling minors to leave the country for work. Ethiopian girls as young as 8 years old are exploited in prostitution or domestic servitude.

12. State of Emergency: The European Parliament (2016) report indicated that Ethiopia has declared a six-month state of emergency in light of the deadly protests that have rocked the country in the past few months. These protests stem from the grievances of Ethiopians of various ethnicities that have been subject to a system of governance whereby the Tigrai People's Liberation Front (TPLF) controls all key levers of economic and political power. Key political institutions are owned and operated by, and for the benefit of, the ruling ethnic group.

"The Fierce Urgency Of Now" for Ethiopia

1. Immediate halt of direct foreign aid to the Ethiopian government. All essential humanitarian aid should be redirected to international agencies on the ground.
2. The lifting of the State of Emergency
3. Immediate session of killing, torture and imprisonment
4. The immediate release all political prisoners without any precondition including:
   - Mr. Eskinder Nega
   - Dr. Merera Gudina
   - Col. Demeke Zewdu
   - Professor Bekele Gerba
   - Mr. Ahmedin Jebel
   - Mr. Andualem Aragie
   - Mr. Andargatchew Tsegie
5. Allow independent investigations of the violence by a team of UN Human Rights Council and hold those responsible fully accountable.
6. Demand the presence of independent and international media in Ethiopia

Summary Conclusion

Ethiopia has been gripped by Apartheid like system of governess affecting 100 million of its citizens. The regime has repeatedly showed the world that it operates much as an underground criminal enterprise than ruling body with mandate to govern an ancient country like Ethiopia. All its activity and shear existence is for monetary gain from the nation which has made few individuals of the inner circle fabulously wealthy. To these individuals Ethiopia is for sale and the asset of the nation is to be monetized in every turn. By providing material assistance it receives under the pretext of "ally against terror' the regime should never be given the license to terrorize its own people. In short the regime is not an ally in the war against global terrorism; instead it is the most destabilizing political force in the entire Horn of Africa. The United States need to take into account that dictatorship based on the sole interest of minority ethnic group can be the most ruthless force as the world is just witnessing the humanitarian crisis unfolding in present day Syria. The primordial fear of retribution becomes a self-fulfilling cycle of suppression and Human right violation by minority ethic dictatorship.

Last, we can find example within the same continent a much better political solution in which the US played a major role in bring to historical outcome. This fine example is non other than the end of Apartheid system in South Africa. In both instances the culprit for the suffering of the people of Ethiopia and South Africa is MINORITY RULING DICTATORSHIP. Intrinsic to its core belief such system can only function by forceful suppression of the will of the majority. As a result, both TPLF of Ethiopia and The Apartheid System of South Africa are the perfect example of unsustainable political status quo. As in the case of South Africa the gallant struggle of the majority combined with world economic embargo forced the dictatorship to come to the table for peaceful

transition thereby creating a more perfect union. In my opinion that is "The Fierce Urgency Of Now" for Ethiopia today.

I call upon the United States of America, the beacon of Hope and Democracy to reexamine its failed policy towards Ethiopia and to seek a lasting framework of dialog, transition for true democratic governance where all the stakeholder can fully participate in determining Ethiopia's future. Until the TPLF regime agrees in lifting the State of Emergency and come to the table with verifiable steps for transitional reform, I ask the US to stop funding and providing military assistance to the regime. I urge this measure so that the window for dialogue and peaceful transfer can build the permanent barrier for the country from cascading into becoming the Syria of Africa.

Thank you and look forward for your questions.

May God Bless the United States of America!
May God Bless Ethiopia, Amen

.Deacon Yoseph R Tafari

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you very much. I have to go on. Mr. Deki.

STATEMENT OF MR. GUYA ABAGUYA DEKI, REPRESENTATIVE, TORTURE ABOLITION AND SURVIVORS SUPPORT COALITION

Mr. DEKI. Thank you. My name is Abaguya Ayele Deki, I am a survivor of torture from Ethiopia. I would like to thank this subcommittee for inviting me to testify at this important hearing, and Congressman Chris Smith and Congressmember Karen Bass for introducing House Resolution 128 on Ethiopia.

I am here today representing the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition, TASSC. TASSC is a small organization in Washington DC that services to more than 300 torture survivors a year, mostly from Africa. Two-thirds of TASSC survivors are from Ethiopia. They were brutally tortured and raped for criticizing the government, refusing to join the ruling party, exposing government corruption, or participating in a peaceful demonstration.

This is my story. After I contracted polio at age three, my father decided I needed an education to survive. He sent me to an orphanage in Addis Ababa where I completed high school. I graduated at the top of my class and then became the first student in a wheelchair to enroll at Addis Ababa University. The students used to call me the "wheelchair man."

There was and still is lots of prejudice against disabled people in Ethiopia. But since I was very young, I decided to fight for my rights instead of feeling sorry for myself. I became an activist for disability rights and then general manager of the National Association of the Physically Handicapped, a job I held for 7 years. Because I was a leader of such a large independent organization, the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, or EPRDF, wanted to control and manipulate me. It tried to force me to tell the media and the community what a great job the party was doing for disabled people. But this was not true.

I remember one time before the 2005 election, government cadres took wheelchairs donated by the United States, Sweden, and The Netherlands had donated and put them on a truck. They drove the truck through the city telling people the wheelchairs were a "gift" from the ruling party and about how the party helped disabled people. But it was all a big lie. The government did nothing for us. It was America and the other foreign donors who helped us.

The government became much more repressive, especially in Addis Ababa, after losing the 2005 election. Cadres started attacking anyone who criticized the government. In many neighborhoods, commandos called the Agazi invaded people's homes and dragged the men to hidden prisons. The Agazi threatened the women, saying their husbands and children would be killed if the women did not have sex with the Agazi. These Agazi are not part of the police or army, they are special forces trained to be killing machines.

I was detained a total of nine times for refusing to participate in activities to promote the ruling party. In 2007, security forces abducted me in a van and took me to a jungle about 25 kilometers from Addis Ababa. They threw me and my wheelchair out of the van, breaking one of my fingers and badly bruising my shoulders. They thought I would be killed and eaten by hyenas, since they threw me in a place with lots of hyenas. I made a fire from dry

grass using my lighter, local families from the Oromo ethnic group found and rescued me.

In 2010, I was arrested again by security forces in a taxi. The driver punched me in my mouth with his pistol and I lost my two lower teeth. They kept me for 3 days in solitary confinement in a tiny dark cell. My hands were tied to a chair and my mouth was wrapped up with dirty wet socks and I had to crawl on the ground outside to get to the toilet outside my cell. Friends and board members of my association convinced them to finally release me.

The government wanted me to go into exile instead of killing me because then I would have become a martyr for people with disabilities.

In 2013, I did leave Ethiopia to save my life and then in 2014, I was granted asylum. I am now living in Joseph's House in Washington, DC, and hope to study computer science at the university. I would like to conclude my testimony with some recommendations.

First, House Resolution 128 refers to the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act which calls on the United States Government to punish individuals or entities responsible for killings, torture, and other gross violations of human rights. The Magnitsky Act should be applied to leaders of the Agazi killing machine and the security forces guilty of terrible human rights abuses.

Second, House Resolution 128 also calls for better oversight and accountability of U.S. assistance to Ethiopia. People need this aid, especially to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS and other diseases, improve education, and combat food insecurity. But the government divers far too much of this aid for political purposes, to promote the ruling party and to pay off government supporters. There needs to be a stronger monitoring mechanism to ensure American funds are used wisely, not to strengthen Ethiopia's one party ethnic dictatorship. Also, in certain regions, women from the Amhara ethnic group are being possibly sterilized in government hospitals to reduce the Amhara population. USAID should investigate to see if any of these forced sterilizations are being carried out in hospitals supported by the U.S. assistance.

Third, please, ask Mr. Girma Birru, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the United States, to tell his government to immediately stop harassing the families of tortured survivors and the other Ethiopians in the United States. Many TASSC survivors are upset because the government began harassing their families in Ethiopia after they fled the country.

Thank you for listening to my testimony. I hope the Ethiopian Government will pay attention to this hearing and change its policies and that the U.S. Congress will be watching closely to see whether Ethiopia makes any specific and concrete changes after this hearing. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Deki follows:]

Congressional Testimony

Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia

Abaguya Ayele Deki
Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) International, Member and Volunteer

Hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

March 9, 2017

My name is Abaguya Ayele Deki, I am a survivor of torture from Ethiopia. I would like to first thank the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify at this important hearing. After arriving in the United States in 2013 to save my life, I never imagined I would be speaking before members of Congress on what the Ethiopian government has done to me. I also want to thank Congressman Chris Smith and Congresswoman Karen Bass for introducing House Resolution 128 on human rights and inclusive governance in Ethiopia.

I am here today representing the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition, TASSC International. TASSC is a small organization located here in Washington DC that provides services to more than 300 torture survivors a year, mostly from Africa. Two-thirds of TASSC survivors are from Ethiopia—they are journalists, accountants, medical doctors, nurses, priests, engineers and marathon runners, people who were brutally tortured and raped for criticizing the government, refusing to join the ruling party, exposing government corruption, or participating in a peaceful demonstration.

This is my story. I was born 50 years ago in a town in northwestern Ethiopia, near the Sudanese border. After I contracted polio at age 3, my father decided I needed an education to survive. He sent me to an orphanage in Addis Ababa where I completed high school. I did very well in school, especially in physics, and graduated at the top of my class. When I was 17, I became the first student in a wheelchair to enroll at Addis Ababa University when —students used to call me "wheelchair man."

There was and still is lots of prejudice against people with disabilities in Ethiopia. But since I was very young, I decided to fight for my rights instead of feeling sorry for myself. I became an activist for disability rights when I was at the university, I remember having to crawl up the stairs to get to my classes. I started demanding more accessibility to the dining room and bathrooms. After the United Nations declared a Decade of People with Disabilities in 1982, I helped found the disability rights movement in Ethiopia. We pressured the government to

provide more educational and employment opportunities for disabled people and equal access to public transportation and housing.

Ethiopia has one organization for the blind, another for the deaf, and one for the physically handicapped like me. When I was in my twenties, I became *General Manager of the National Association of the Physically Handicapped.* The organization had almost half a million members— mostly people who contracted polio and also those who were injured by exploding land mines; we still have land mines because of all the wars in Ethiopia. I was chosen to be General Manager by the members of Ethiopia's nine regions. Because I was the leader of such a large independent organization, the ruling party—the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front or EPRDF -- wanted to control and manipulate me.

Ethiopia is a one-party ethnic dictatorship ruled by cadres from the Tigray ethnic group, which makes up only six percent of Ethiopia's population; Ethiopia's largest ethnic groups are the Oromo and the Amhara. The EPRDF has held power since 1991 and wants control over the entire civilian population to solidify and maintain power. They want to control women's associations, youth associations and all the associations representing people with disabilities. They will not allow any independent organization in the country. Because I was the leader of a disability rights organization, the government tried to force me to join the ruling party. They wanted me tell the media and my community what a great job the ruling party was doing for disabled people. But none of this was true. I wanted to serve physically handicapped people and not be forced to tell lies that would benefit the ruling party. This is why I refused to join the party. The government punished me by detaining me nine times, torturing me and forcing me to flee Ethiopia in 2013.

I hated how the government manipulated and used disabled people for propaganda. I remember a time in 2005, right before elections, when government cadres took wheelchairs that the United States, Sweden and the Netherlands had donated and put them on a truck. They drove the truck through the city telling people the wheelchairs were a "gift" from the ruling party and about how the party helped disabled people. But it was all a big lie—the government did nothing for us, it was America and the other foreign donors who helped us.

The government became much more repressive, especially in Addis Ababa, after losing the 2005 election in the capital city. They changed the results to stay in power, and then started attacking people who supported peaceful opposition parties. I remember what happened in my neighborhood. These commandos called the Agazi invaded my neighbors' homes and dragged the men to hidden prisons. Then Agazi threatened the women, saying their husbands and children would be killed if the women did not have sex with the Agazi. These Agazi are not part of the police or army, they are special forces trained to be killing machines. They speak only the Tigray language, so they cannot communicate to the Oromos or Amharas. I saw with my own eyes what the Agazi did in 2005 because they allowed me circulate outside in my wheelchair. They thought I was harmless, but I watched everything they did. And now I am telling the U.S. Congress what they did.

I was continually harassed and intimidated by the government because I refused to participate in activities to promote the ruling party. The security forces kept warning me: "You are defaming the ruling party. You are agitating people with disabilities against the government." In 2007, security forces abducted me in a van and took me to a forest called Ashewa meda, in the Burayu area, about 25 kilometers from Addis Ababa. They threw me and my wheelchair out of the van, breaking one of my fingers and badly bruising my shoulders. They thought I would be killed and eaten by hyenas, the area where they threw me was known as a forest with lots of hyenas. But I made a fire from the dry grass using my lighter—I was a smoker at that time and luckily had a lighter with me. Local families from the Oromo ethnic group found and rescued me. After that I returned to Addis and continued working with the disability association but on an informal basis instead of the as the official General Manager.

But the EPRDF knew I was still volunteering with the National Association of the Physically Handicapped and in 2010 they arrested me again. They picked me up in a taxi. The driver punched me in my mouth with his pistol, and I lost my two lower teeth. They kept me for three days in solitary confinement in a tiny dark cell. I had to crawl on the ground outside the cell to lift myself up to get to the toilet. And I was only allowed to go to the toilet twice a day. My hands were tied to a chair and my mouth was wrapped up with dirty wet socks. Friends and Board Members of my Association visited me, brought me food and negotiated with the police to release me.

Finally I got released, the government wanted me to go into exile instead of killing me, because then I would have become a martyr for people with disabilities. My supporters would have become even angrier at the government.

The government wanted to force me out of the country. Finally I decided I had to leave Ethiopia, I had no choice. So I got an invitation from the American Embassy to visit American cities and learn how they made their subway systems accessible to disabled people. That is how I came to the United States, where I found TASSC, the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition. TASSC found a lawyer for me, who helped me prepare my application for political asylum. I was granted asylum in 2014, so I could begin a new life in the United States. Last year I was certified as a Computer Support Specialist, and I hope to enter university to study computer science. At the same time, I plan to continue volunteering with TASSC by speaking out against the atrocities the Ethiopian government is committing against its own people.

I would like to conclude by making some recommendations.

1.House Resolution 128 calls on the U.S. government to punish individuals or entities responsible for killings, torture and other gross violations of human rights committed by Ethiopians according to the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. I hope that House Resolution 128 passes Congress. But even if it does not, the Magnitsky Act should be applied to leaders of the Agazi killing machine, and to leaders of the security forces such as Wondatir Hiluff. He is one of the leaders who occupied my home for one week, threatened me

and warned me repeatedly to "appreciate and support the ruling party." He did not actually carry out the torture, but he was behind it.

2.House Resolution 128 also calls on the Secretary of State and the Administrator of USAID to improve oversight and accountability of United States assistance to Ethiopia. Ethiopia is still one of the poorest countries in the world – the people need the assistance provided by the United States especially preventing and treating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, to improve education and combat food insecurity. This aid is essential to people like me. But the government diverts far too much of this aid for political purposes, to promote the ruling party, pay off government supporters. There needs to be a stronger monitoring mechanism to ensure American funds are used wisely, and not to strengthen Ethiopia's one-party ethnic dictatorship.

3.Finally, ask Mr. Girma Birru, Ethiopia's ambassador to the United States, to tell his government to immediately stop harassing the families of asylum applicants in the United States. Many torture survivors from TASSC are very worried that representatives from the government may punish them for seeking asylum in the United States by attacking their families now in Ethiopia. I hope you will protect me if the government goes after my family members once they hear about my testimony today. So many Ethiopian torture survivors and Ethiopian activists in the Washington DC area and all over the United States are frightened about how their families could be harmed because they criticized the Ethiopian government.

Thank you very much for listening to my testimony today, and to the other people who testified. I hope that the Ethiopian government will pay attention to this hearing and change its policies, and that the U.S. Congress will be watching closely to see what happens after this hearing.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you for sharing your experience with us, Mr. Deki.

Each member of the subcommittee will be allowed 5 minutes to ask questions. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes. I would like to begin by congratulating and recognizing the great work of Chairman Chris Smith and my good friend, Karen Bass from California, on House Resolution 128. That is a starting point.

What I would like to use my 5 minutes up with is to ask you each just to describe for 1 minute aside from the House Resolution, what do you think the United States can do to help Ethiopia and their efforts for a better democracy?

Ms. JIMJIMO. First, the U.S. has a lot of opportunity to negotiate and talk to the Ethiopian Government because they receive millions of aid from the U.S. and not only the aid that comes from here, but the influence of other governments whether the European Government or Asian, other governments. But they have a leverage to influence the whole entire world, how they operate with the Ethiopian Government.

So what they need to do, I think, is the U.S. can, should pressure the Ethiopian Government to open up—first they should release all political prisoners without any precondition. Lift the state of emergency because what is happening under the state of emergency that people cannot record any video. People cannot be seen walking together. So they go house to house killing people and lift the state of emergency and allow journalists, not just even Ethiopian journalists, but international community, such as what the U.N. asked last year for independent investigation. For that to happen, they need to force and allow, actually, demand that they do a lot of those independent investigations to take place of all those killings. The killing is not being reported.

And another thing is the U.S. does give a lot of money. That money should come with a lot of accountability. For example, the question that was asked earlier, U.S. gives millions of dollars and is that money going to certain people even if it is going to a small amount of people. The vast majority of that money is being used even if it goes to the people, it goes to the people through only government channel with you support me, you do this, or you vote for me or you do something for me, then you get this fertilizer, you get this kind of aid. So make sure those civic organizations actually do exist and the new proclamation system they have is like everything is through government. There is no NGO or independent organization that is operating independently outside of Ethiopia, even the international organizations.

So the U.S. has huge leverage. They should use this leverage to open up the political space, request the release of political prisoners, lift the state of emergency and above all, I think it is time that Ethiopia should not continue to be ruled with the one party, even though they fake federalism, that does not actually exist. But that is what I think should happen.

[Additional information follows:]

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MS. SEENAA JIMJIMO TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE DANIEL DONOVAN

The Ethiopian regime is a one-party state that has been in power for the past 26 years. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) controls

100% of the political space at all levels—local, regional and state, plus the legislative, executive, judiciary and security apparatus of the country while the majority of the people of Ethiopia, particularly in Oromia and Amhara states, which add up to at least 60% the entire population, has rejected the regime. Hence, the State of Emergency to control a large swath of the country by direct military command posts.

Lack of tolerance by the EPRDF for multiparty democracy is the leading obstacle to the opportunity for democratic tradition taking root in Ethiopia. EPRDF on its owe will never open up the political space in Ethiopia without either outside pressure or inside turmoil. We have seen this since the 2005 election, at which point the EPRDF experimented with democracy and seen the outcome, which was not favorable to EPRDF, and since closed the democratic avenues firmly, by passing laws that effectively bans civic societies and independent political parties.

The current situation in Ethiopia is a clear recipe for a devastating instability in the Horn of Africa unless stopped—a region already troubled by civil wars, failed states, famine, extremism and other natural disasters. Therefore, in addition to already introduced H. Res. 128, the United States government should consider the following options in order to give democracy a chance in Ethiopia:

A. Since, the second largest regional state—Amhara regional state has joined Oromia in resisting EPRDF rule, the United States policy towards Ethiopia has to show a paradigm shift i.e. recognize Oromia political actors as the future of Ethiopia in regards to betterment of the efforts of the people of Ethiopia for democracy.

B. The United States should provide tangible efforts such as training, diplomatic, financial and other support to start dialog with opposition party that represent constituent not the one the government creates at free will when they deem necessary to confuse/manipulate the international community.

C. Insist for immediate access to Ethiopia by the UN human rights rapporteur to conduct an independent investigation into the Ethiopian state brutality against peaceful demonstration in Oromia, Amhara, Gambela and other regional states.

D. Demand the immediate release of tens of thousands of political prisons in Ethiopia, including prominent democratic leaders such as Mr.Bekle Gerba, Dr. Merera Gudina, federal judge Wabe Jarso, highly respected elder and lawyer Mr. Dekeba Wario and highly respected historian, thinker and cultural guru Dabasa Guyo, journalist, and all other political prisoners in the country.

E. Accept the fact that EPRDF had 26 long years to improve democracy in Ethiopia and failed or has shown no interest in listening to the United States in this regards. So, the United States should consider a new policy vis-a-vis the democratic transition of power in Ethiopia. In this regards, it may pay off to sponsor a research project that can objectively study the possibilities for nurturing effective opposition or alternative political force/s that is/are able to replace the EPRDF and make recommendations to the United States government who should be supported.

F. The United States remains among the largest donors to Ethiopia. The United State development assistance to Ethiopia focuses on reducing famine vulnerability, hunger, and poverty and emphasizes economic, governance, and social sector policy reforms. Moreover, as a strategic United States alliance in war against terrorism, Ethiopia also receives large sums of money and technical aid towards its military and intelligence capability. The EPRDF uses money from aid given to the Ethiopian regime for total domination and favoring its own supporters as a means to remain in power. Hence, the United States must give aid money and assistance directly to local and international non-governmental organizations to deliver to the people in need of assistance rather than funding a corrupt regime.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you very much. Mr. Tirfe, I know you said you had 14 points. If you could just summarize what they are. You didn't think I was listening, did you?

Mr. TIRFE. I guess you did listen. Thank you for that. And thank you for your question. I won't repeat what Seenaa said, so to echo what she said, the U.S. does have a lot of leverage.

Ethiopian Government, the TPLF government mainly is heavily dependent on foreign aid. So that foreign aid can be used to open up some things within Ethiopia to allow the political space and other civic organizations to operate. So not just the foreign aid that comes from America, but also from our allies. But America can lead that effort.

One of the things that is really concerning to us is to allow for an international, independent and transparent investigation into the cost of 2½ million to 5 million missing Amharas. As he has just stated, that there is a belief that there is a forced sterilization effort of Amhara women that has been taken place to depopulate the Amhara population. We cannot know that unless there is an independent investigation that happens there. And there is a belief that there is a silent genocide that is occurring now amongst the Amhara population.

Also, we need a push to allow for international independent transparent investigation into all the deaths caused by the Ethiopian security forces and other human rights violations and hold those responsible accountable.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you. I only have 30 seconds left. I need to let these two gentlemen speak. Thank you.

Mr. TIRFE. Sure.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you and we will review every one of those 14 points. I promise you.

Mr. TIRFE. And I will follow up.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you. Mr. Tafari.

Mr. TAFARI. How many seconds do I have?

Mr. DONOVAN. Fourteen now, but go ahead.

Mr. TAFARI. Well, in that case, I will just state one. Immediate hold of direct foreign aid to the Ethiopian Government, especially direct budgetary assistance, and all humanitarian assistance should be applied to a direct humanitarian organization on the ground, preferably the United Nations' World Food Programme.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, sir. Mr. Deki, do you have any recommendations to the United States?

Mr. DEKI. I would say if United States doesn't give due recognition for this dictatorship as elected government so that they cannot use this political support or recognition to harm the people back home. So United States should scrutinize that. The minority represented party cannot be elected 100 percent. Therefore, the United States, the first and most important to just denying political recognition. Thank you.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, sir. And thank you again for sharing your story with us. And best of luck with your studies.

The chair now recognizes my friend from California, the ranking member of the subcommittee, Karen Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So I wanted to ask a few questions. I mentioned in the first panel that a reference was made to a letter from the Embassy of Ethiopia, but Chairman Smith says it is a from a consulting firm that was paid a hefty amount of money, $1.8 million, he presumes. But I want to raise several of the things that are mentioned in their letter.

If I cut you off, it is only because I have limited time and so I want everybody to have an opportunity to respond.

So one of the things it is said in this letter is that it is not that the EPRDF controls all of the seats in Parliament. They control 500 out of 546. And that there are 46 seats that are controlled by other parties. So I want to know is that true, yes or no?

Ms. JIMJIMO. The short is that is not true because even if those 46 persons, these people are 100 percent controlled by EPRDF in every aspect of the government.

[Additional information follows:]

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MS. SEENAA JIMJIMO TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE KAREN BASS

In order to answer this question one needs to understand what EPRDF is. The EPRDF is an alliance of four parties: the TPLF based in the Tigray Region; the OPDO, which is based in the Oromia Region; the ANDM based in the Amhara Region; and the SEPDF based in the Southern Nations. Nationalities, and People's Region. This alliance won 500 seats in the national parliament.

The OPDO, ANDM, and SEPDF are surrogate organizations controlling their respective regions for the TPLF. Now, the TPLF has also created surrogate organizations (although not formally part of the EPRDF alliance) for the rest of the regions: SPDP in Somali Region; BGPDP in Benishangul Gumuz Region; ANDP in Afar Region, GPDM in Gambela Region; APDO in Argoba Region; and HNL in Hareri Region. These surrogate organisations created by TPLF won 47 seats.

Map of Ethiopia's regional states

Although the EPRDF alleges that it won 500 out of 547 seats, I reality the EPRDF controls 100% the seats through its surrogate parties.

Time and again they have openly and proudly have bragged about winning 100% of the seats. In addition, United State national security advisory Susan Rice said they won by 100% at press statement on July 22, 2015. In fact, whether EPRDF controls 100% or 90% of the so-called parliamentary seats is academic as on the ground the EPRDF controls the entire economic, social and political lives of people in Ethiopia.

Ms. BASS. Okay, the second question is that there has been a halt to the moving of people off the land, that that has been halted; that the plans to incorporate farm land around Addis Ababa were on hold. Is this still the case? Has there been any seizure of land taking place elsewhere in the country? Mr. Tirfe?

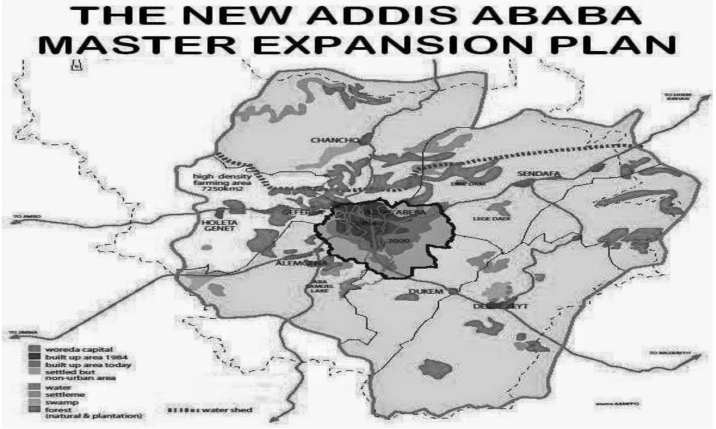
Mr. TIRFE. I mean right now, Representative Bass, Ethiopia is under a state of emergency and so to know what is going on in terms of moving people outside of their land is very difficult. But one thing that we do know, the Amharas in the Wolkite region are being moved out of their land and in fact, because out of fear, their own, themselves, they are moving. They are leaving that area into safer regions and many are escaping to neighboring countries.

[A written response follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MS. SEENAA JIMJIMO TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE KAREN BASS

No, the expansion of the capital and displacing Oromo farmers is not halted. It is true that the Ethiopian regime was forced to announce that it will abandon the plan for the expansion of the capital in January 2016, after two months of protests by the Oromo people who have complained about the handling of the expansion into their land. However, the regime has announced a renewal of the expansion known as the 'Master Plan' and the formation of a special committee that will have an oversight of the removal of 20,000 Oromo households (estimated 100,000 people) from areas surrounding the capital, according to a special broadcast on Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) television, on 13 December 2016. After this was announced, the Oromo people would have been back on the streets demonstrating against the renewed expansion of the capital had it not been for the State of Emergency and the military command posts all over Oromia.

The scale of the so called 'integrated zone' covered in the plan for the expansion of the capital ('Master Plan') needs to be understood. The plan for expansion in the plan includes a 1.1m hectare strip of land around the city, outside the current municipal boundaries. A glance at the map shows the expansion of Addis Ababa would have neatly bisect Oromia.



It is my understanding that the regime is determined to implement the expansion of the capital into Oromo land for the purpose of ethnic cleansing rather than a natural development of the capital. In so many town planning experts' opinions the capital must grow upwards rather than into the villages and small towns in the vicinity with all its disastrous consequences for human life and the environment.

Furthermore, it is important to remember the behavior of this government. Like other policies they announce time and again they will only change the name and tactic not actually address the root issue. In the case of 'Master Plan', not only did they made the same statement of halt in 2014 but also the party leaders like Abay Tsahaye have said it out in open on the national TV that the plan will be implement one way or the others. Therefore, they cannot be trusted or their word cannot be taken literally because of ...

EBC TV programme 13 Dec 2016 (screenshot)

Ms. BASS. Okay, the ruling party has said that they are embarking on a dialogue and a negotiation with 22 opposition parties. The dialogue and consultations will include a discussion on amending the election laws and encouraging the participation on different voices in Parliament. Mr. Tafari?

Mr. TAFARI. The history of TPLF, the EPRDF is woeful in terms of having to cooperate and work with any opposition group, with anyone.

[A written response follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MS. SEENAA JIMJIMO TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE KAREN BASS

To begin with only three are truly opposition groups while 19 others are simply created by government. Second, as of now the single largest opposition party, Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) have formal withdrawn. Third, if the opposition parties' leaders are in jail who are they negotiating with? In fact, on the latest interview by the largest option party, MEDREK leader Prof. Beyene Petros (an umbra organization that represent several different option, Oromo Federalist Congress, Sidama Liberation Front, Union of Tigreans for Democracy and Sovereignty and the Ethiopian Social Democracy—Southern Ethiopian people Democratic Union) said there is no point without of staying on table if our demand were not met. According to him the PM . . . seem to walk back on something he promised the party leader. To be frank to expect this negotiation will be fruitful is totally absurd because these so-called opposition parties know if they do not accept they will be arrested or worse killed or pushed to exile.

Ms. BASS. Is there a dialogue that is taking place?

Mr. TAFARI. There is, but all we have to do is go back 40 years of their history to see how we see these type of dialogues would come to a real fruition.

Ms. BASS. Okay. Measures were taken on the government officials who were engaged in corrupt practices and some were removed from office and the legal process is underway. Mr. Deki?

Mr. DEKI. This is a big lie. The TPLF is known by its big lie.

Ms. BASS. Go ahead.

Mr. DEKI. I would like to remember the past history of TPLF which says we can negotiate just below the sun. Everything then after just starting the negotiation and the opposition parties came

to the table, then the facilitator is changed from the Prime Minister and then it is forgotten. They are killing people like that. They are very much well versed in this manipulation.

[A written response follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MS. SEENAA JIMJIMO TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE KAREN BASS

Nothing is far from this or the truth in this regard. This sort of shenanigan by the regime is not new. They regime has been engaged in 'removing corrupt officials' since the mid 1990 starting from the removal of the then prime minister Mr. Tamrat Layne (removed from office on charge of corruption in 1995). The fact is the real corrupt inner TPLF circle is never removed. The ruling elite uses corruption as a pretext to get rid of opponents and non-loyal officials. They had two decades to stump out corruption, but nothing seems working. If anything, corruption is getting worse by the day. For instance, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Ethiopia ranks 103 out of 168 countries and territories included in 2015 index [https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015].

Moreover, in the case of recent 2016 Oromo Protests, there is no single individual brought to court or announced to public they were removed from office either for corruption or violating/ excessive use of force that killed hundreds by government admission. If the rotation or reshuffling of the Oromia president or few high officials is/can be considered the government is addressing corruption than these people are only placed in different position. How is rotating or reshuffling can be/should be considered as addressing corruption? If not government need to show or name a single individual who lost his/her job because of corruption or killing hundreds of unarmed protests.

Ms. BASS. So going back to what I was referring to in the past about the elections in 2015, there were a number of televised debates during which all sorts of political issues were voiced and argued between the candidates. Back to Ms. Jimjimo.

Mr. TIRFE. Can you repeat the question, Representative Bass?

Ms. BASS. Sure. In the last election, there were numerous televised debates during which all sorts of political issues were voiced and argued between the candidates. This is in contrast to the notion that there has been diminished political space.

[A written response follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MS. SEENAA JIMJIMO TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE KAREN BASS

First, even during televised debate the opposition parties were given only limited time whereas the EPRDF was given as much time as it liked. Second, right after televised debate where Mr. Bekele Gerba gave influential statement he was given ultimatum, warning and physical abuse by the EPRDF security agents for speaking what he believed and forthright. Hence, the debate was nothing more than a façade that the EPRDF used for tricking donors and the international community. The people of Ethiopia are forced to vote for the EPRDF not because the EPRDF was better at debate but rather uses underhand techniques of controlling the population for people voting for the opposition parties are not entitled to employment, food aid, land or any rights that the people who grudgingly vote for EPRDF.

Therefore, what is the purpose of televised debate when there is no fair or free election where international observers are not present?

Moreover, could quasi debate whereby individuals know what they say on that stage will be used against them as 'plan to terrorize or overthrow government' be a real indicator for open and free debate let alone ground for fair election? How come those who spoke against the policy of the government are relinquishing in jail? How come opposition leader Mr. Gerba sits in jail with terrorism charge while his party is not labeled as such or sits in jail for over 14 months without government haven to provide his link or action to terrorism? To governments' admission over 28,000 people were arrested since the State of Emergency" and what are the crimes of those individuals beside taken part in peaceful rally to express their grievance? In what nation, can a government impose such restriction in social media, arrested thousands of people without justification, implement state of martial law simply to control dissent and continue to intimidate citizen while receiving unconditional sup-

port to which millions end up in military training to kill, arrest and abuse citizen? When should the international community say enough that a country that received 30 billion in aid and stole 30 billion (Steinan) https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2017/03/03/ethiopias-cruel-con-game/#17e5352b29d0, refused UN request and ignore US continues concern statement? When or where is the red line for Ethiopian government?

Mr. TIRFE. Representative Bass, the TPLF-led political party won 100 percent of all parliamentarian seats in 2015.

Ms. BASS. They won 500 out of 546.

Mr. TIRFE. One hundred percent and the regional seats, 100 percent also. So imagine the Democratic or Republican party winning all of Congress, as well as the governors and——

Ms. BASS. Depending on which party you are in.

Mr. TIRFE. Right. I know many of us refer to 2015, but if we go back to the 2005 election, they won 99.99 percent of all the parliamentarian seats.

Ms. BASS. I think the point of the letter was to show that some progress had been made and so that was the question.

Mr. TIRFE. No, because we went from 2005 election where there was one opposing member in Parliament to in 2015, there is none. They won 100 percent.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Ms. JIMJIMO. I would like to just answer that. The thing is they have arrested all liable, all actual opposition parties. They are in jail. So they create their own party and they bring 22 parties. There is no dominant or a voice that is talking to them. They created, they make up and then they call is a negotiation. I just wanted to add that.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. I yield back my time.

Mr. DONOVAN. The chair recognizes for 10 seconds because he has to leave for somewhere else. Actually, it is Mr. Rohrabacher's time, but the chair is going to recognize Mr. Suozzi for 10 seconds.

Mr. SUOZZI. I just want to thank all of you because I know how difficult it was for you to get here and prepare for this today. I apologize that I can't stay, but thank you very much. [Speaking foreign language.] Thank you very much.

Mr. DONOVAN. We had to allow him to show you that he studied before the hearing. The chair now recognizes my friend from California, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. First and foremost, I would like to thank the witnesses for coming here and to putting yourselves in a public place on the record, when you were dealing with a brutal regime that you have no idea whether or not you will face retaliation. So thank you for having the courage and thank you for your patriotism to your country of Ethiopia.

And frankly, I believe all those people who believe in honest government, all those people who believe in honest elections and representative government are all basically Americans at heart. So your fellow Americans who share those values wish you well.

I want to thank Chris Smith as the chairman of this subcommittee. I believe the fact that he has put this hearing together, he has been unrelenting in his efforts to expand freedom and respect for the dignity of individuals around this world. And nowhere is that message of Chris Smith more important than in Ethiopia.

And let me just say that I think it is disgraceful, especially after the election of 2005 where it was clearly a loss of ruling party and then we end up with understanding that a—I don't know what I want to describe it as—an offensive after the election with military equipment spreads out throughout the country of Ethiopia and the people of Ethiopia begin feeling oppression immediately after a supposed free election. And the worst part of that is that these people who were out there in their uniforms have American weapons that they were using to repress their own people.

I believe there has to be some level that we Americans have, if indeed we do share, if we really are soul mates with people who love freedom around the world, at the very least, we should say that corrupt regimes that utilize weapon systems from the United States to repress their own people will be not be provided those weapons. So I would renew that today. It is time to eliminate Ethiopia from its ability to purchase and to obtain United States weapons.

Okay, so what is the result of all of this? What is going on? The result of this is you have repression, political repression. How does it manifest itself? Twenty percent of the people of Ethiopia are hungry. They are starving. This is outrageous. This is a country that has every ability to feed itself if it had honest government and instead, you have a small clique running Ethiopia and we have heard the testimony today. A small clique that is corrupt and brutal and the product of that raping of that country, the product of that is not only repression, but misery and hunger for a larger percentage of its people.

It is disgraceful and it is time for the United States—I understand during this whole war against radical Islam and we have been at war with radical Islam because they are at war with us, radical Islamist terrorists want to hurt the United States. We have used that as an excuse to form a relationship with a horrible regime.

I have to ask you now if we didn't support this government in Ethiopia that says it is helping us with radical Islamic terrorists, wouldn't just regular people and a really honestly elected government be against radical Islamist terrorism? There you go.

Now let me let you know how I understand, how I came to understand this issue. I am a surfer out in California. That is what I do. I am a surfer. I couldn't help but notice that there was a black surfer who was with me out in the water. So one of the few black surfers in California is Petros Berhane who comes from Ethiopia and became one of my best friends. And his family owned a major distillery in Addis Ababa and when the communists took over, they left, they fled and his family are now U.S. citizens, proud U.S. citizens.

Anyway, he told me about the plight of his family. And after the communists left, they were supposed to get back the distillery. All of the property that was illegally confiscated was supposed to be given back by the current ruling clique. But instead the current ruling clique found out that his distillery had actually been making money and so they are not getting back their distillery.

And the reason I am telling you this is because I have been a Member of Congress here for a number of years. I am a senior

member, so I have been working for my—he is my surfing buddy, but he is also my constituent who I am watching out for his needs. And I was demanding that the Ethiopian Government, if they are not going to give back that distillery at least give him some compensation for taking the distillery. Well, the government there has been so arrogant they refused to even consider any type of compensation.

I had the Overseas Private Investment Corporation do an analysis to make sure that that claim was a legitimate claim. And they came back and they said yes, we find the fact that the Berhane family honestly owns that and they should be given some compensation for it. Well, I said okay. There is going to be no loans guaranteed through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation to Ethiopia until they treat this American citizen right and do justice by him. All of these years now, it has been over 10 years, maybe 15 years. The Government of Ethiopia is so arrogant, or also may be making money from the distillery themselves, that they were willing to sacrifice the well-being of the people of Ethiopia in order not to pay any just compensation to a man whose distillery had been illegally confiscated.

Now if you just take Petros out of the picture and you just say these people who are heading that government do not care anything enough about their people because all these investments which we would have been involved with helping bringing jobs and money and wealth to the people, they rejected that because they themselves were not going to necessarily benefit from it as compared to owning that distillery or whatever they are getting from that distillery. So if we have a government that cares that little about their own people, a government that basically represents a very small minority of people in Ethiopia and we are providing that small clique, that corrupt and brutal clique, it is time for the United States to step up and say we made a mistake by going down the road with that clique of people. We should be friends with the overall population of Ethiopia and not just that clique. That would serve America's interests as well as the people of Ethiopia.

Mr. DONOVAN. I would like to ask our guests to respect to decorum of the chamber. Thank you, Member Rohrabacher.

This concludes the testimony and the questions of the members of the hearing. I remind everyone that the record of the hearing will remain open for 10 days. Many of the members may have other questions they may want to submit during that 10-day period. We that all of you submit your answers to those questions in writing. I thank you all for appearing today. I thank you for your testimony.

Again, Mr. Deki, I thank you for sharing your experiences with all of us.

The Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:40 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the 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

March 9, 2017

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 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 http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Thursday, March 9, 2017

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia

WITNESSES:

Panel I
Terrence Lyons, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
George Mason University

Mr. Felix Horne
Senior Researcher
Horn of Africa
Human Rights Watch

Panel II
Ms. Seenaa Jimjimo
President
Coalition of Oromo Advocates for Human Rights and Democracy

Mr. Tewodrose Tirfe
Co-Founder
Amhara Association of America

Mr. Guya Abaguya Deki
Representative
Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition

Mr. Yoseph Tafari
Co-Founder
Ethiopian Drought Relief Aid of Colorado

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 *March 9, 2017* Room *2172 Rayburn HOB*

Starting Time *2:02 p.m.* Ending Time *4:40 p.m.*

Recesses [1] (*2:26* to *2:56*) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Chris Smith, Rep. Dan Donovan

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Karen Bass, Rep. Tom Suozzi, Rep. Tom Garrett

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

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher

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 for Dr. Terrence Lyons from Rep. Chris Smith
Questions for the record for Mr. Felix Horne from Rep. Chris Smith
Questions for the record for Ms. Seenaa Jimjimo from Rep. Chris Smith
Questions for the record for Mr. Yoseph Tafari from Rep. Chris Smith
Statement of a coalition of groups, submitted by Rep. Chris Smith
Statement of the Embassy of Ethiopia on H. Res. 128 submitted by Rep. Chris Smith

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *4:40 p.m.*

Subcommittee Staff Associate

Questions for the Record
Submitted to Dr. Terrence Lyons
by Rep. Chris Smith
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 9, 2017

Question: The Government of Ethiopia said the state of emergency would last only six months. Do you believe it will be lifted in April as promised?

Answer: The Government of Ethiopia announced in March that it had lifted some aspects of the State of Emergency. It is difficult to predict whether the remaining measures will be formally lifted in April. The larger context, however, is that the Ethiopian government often engaged in arrests of non-violent protestors before the State of Emergency. It is not clear that the formal lifting of the State of Emergency will alter the government's behavior in this regard.

Question: The Oromia and Amhara regions certainly have expressed great discontent over how their people and their regions have been treated, but what about the Somalis in the Ogaden region, the Anuak and Nuer in the Gambella region or the southern minorities?

Answer: There have been violent protests not only in the Oromo and Amhara regions but also in other regions of Ethiopia. Demonstrations in the Konso zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region in 2016 ended with arrests and fatalities. The Ethiopian Somali Regional State saw a sharp upsurge in violence in 2007 as the insurgent Ogaden National Liberation Front escalated its military campaign and faced a brutal counter-insurgency campaign. In recent years the Somali Regional State police – the so-called Liyu police – reportedly have engaged in significant acts of violence against civilians. Regional administration is highly militarized.

In the Gambella Peoples' Regional State, an uneasy and often contentious balance between Anuak and Nuer populations has been further complicated by the significant presence of resettled "highlanders" and by the demographic implications of a large number of South Sudanese Nuer fleeing to the region. There have been intermittent inter-ethnic conflicts and border skirmishes over the years, with a particular violent episode in 2003 during when Ethiopian military forces reportedly joined with highlanders to attack Anuak civilians.

The importance of the 2016 protests in the Oromo and Amhara Regional States is that these two regions represent approximately half of Ethiopia's population and the demonstrations suggest potentially destabilizing cleavages within the ruling party. But the Oromo and Amhara regions are not the only places in Ethiopia where discontent has been expressed.

Question: You stated that resources are distributed from the central government, but local authorities in Gambella told congressional staff during a visit three years ago that the central government was not keeping their promise on services from villages that moved or merged with other villages. Does this represent a lack of will on the part of the authorities in Addis Ababa or a lack of will to follow through?

Answer: Without knowing more about the context of the information gathered by the congressional staff it is difficult to say precisely what is being referenced. The Government of

Ethiopia has offered compensation to people who have been displaced by development project in places like Gambella. Many of those displaced feel that the compensation is insufficient or that not all promises have been met in a timely manner. Furthermore, there are often complaints that remote places such as Gambella and the other Developing Regional States do not receive their fair share of centrally controlled resources.

Questions for the Record
Submitted to Mr. Felix Horne
by Rep. Chris Smith
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 9, 2017

Question: The Government of Ethiopia said the state of emergency would last only six months. Do you believe it will be lifted in April as promised?

Answer: On March 30, 2017, the government announced a four-month extension to the state of emergency. Previously, on March 15, 2017, some state of emergency restrictions were relaxed including those permitting arbitrary detention, curfews, and some restrictions on media. While six months is the maximum length of time permitted under Ethiopian law, the state of emergency can be extended by up to four months an indefinite number of times. Restrictions under the state of emergency go far beyond what is permitted under international law. For example, the state of emergency has been imposed throughout the country despite unrest being largely confined to Oromia and Amhara regions. It is important to reiterate that gross abuses were committed by security forces during the protests prior to the state of emergency, and that some of the restrictions under the state of emergency merely codified what was already happening in practice, particularly arbitrary detention in Oromia and Amhara regions.

Question: You criticize the effectiveness of quiet diplomacy. We have learned that Ethiopian government official acknowledge the role their behavior has played in creating the current crisis, but seem unwilling or unable to follow through on promises of reform. Do you really believe more public criticism will move that government to keep its private promises of reform?

Answer:

All public advocacy strategies have a private component. But there is no evidence that private or quiet diplomacy alone has been a successful strategy to improve human rights protections in Ethiopia. The engagement by the US and other key international partners has for many years been quiet, but Ethiopia's human rights record has continued to deteriorate. A different and more robust approach is urgently needed before both the human rights of Ethiopians and US strategic interests in Ethiopia are further jeopardized. It's hard to determine how effective a more robust public approach would be since no state or intergovernmental organization has consistently and persistently tried. But states that have spoken publicly and critically since 2015 have not had strategic relationships damaged. The Ethiopian government cares deeply about its international reputation and its relationships with its allies. As a result, any public condemnation, particularly that which could impact its international reputation, gets their attention and ensures that the Ethiopian government understands international partners are concerned for the rights of all Ethiopians and do not seek to be complicit in abuse.

Question: You contend that citizens vote for the Ethiopian government because they are dependent on supplies provided to them. What conclusion have you come to as to the genuine support for the ruling coalition in Ethiopia?

Answer:

It is difficult to say and not the direct focus of our research as a human rights organization mandated to document violations of international human rights law. The government effectively silences its citizens, media, opposition political parties, and civil society groups that would make such determinations all the more difficult. The ruling party is dominant in everyday life and there is a well-founded fear of critiquing government because of arrest, reprisals, or lack of development assistance. Given these factors, it is impossible to know how much popular support the ruling coalition would have should restrictions be lifted. What is clear is that protests in Ethiopia's two largest regions of Oromia and Amhara regions were widespread and sustained, and that the disillusionment, as expressed in the protests is growing, particularly among young people.

Questions for the Record
Submitted to Ms. Seenaa Jimjimo
by Rep. Chris Smith
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 9, 2017

Question 1: The Government of Ethiopia routinely accuses Oromo critics of being allied with the Oromo Liberation Front and therefore part of terrorist group. How widespread is support for the OLF among the Oromo people and is this support for armed struggle against the Ethiopian government?

Answer: This question needs a serious attention as it continues to provide a *carte blanche* space for the Ethiopian government's counter-terrorism policy rationale. **First**, despite the government's cleverly mischaracterization, delegitimization and securitization of the Oromo people and their just cause, it is imperative to mention that Oromo critics has always been a pro-democratic movement for a positive social and political transformation in the country. **Second**, in securitizing the people's legitimate quest for democracy and respect for human rights, the government adopted strategy under which it effectively quashes and demonize all political critics and dissents. This strategy of the government was to enact the law in 2009 of Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. **Third**, by portraying OLF as a terrorist and also as inseparable with Oromo people, the government is trying to generate a Collective guilt from the Oromo to artificially justify its disproportional state power against the Oromo critics. **Forth**, it is important to question what is in the name? While the ruling political party itself remains a "Front", i.e., the *Tigray People's Liberation Front* (TPLF)". So, it is disingenuous for the Ethiopian government, as primarily led by the TPLF to characterize the Oromo people as being allied with terrorist group.

Below, I will address the above major points in detail.

- Answer 1. Oromo critics is not allied with terrorist group nor is OLF a terrorist group.

Oromo critics is a pro-democratic liberal movement for greater equality, political autonomy, self-rule and respect for human rights for all Oromos in Ethiopians. Ever since Ethiopian State became apparent authoritarian regime, the Oromo people one way or another have chosen to mount an increased political activism and peaceful resistance with the ultimate goal of taking a leadership role to decide their destiny. The more the TPLF felt challenged by Oromo it decided to adopt political and legal strategy to demonize and securitize legitimate Oromo political demands. For example, despite being the majority **to Ethiopia**, the Oromo people are not allowed to use their language *(Afaan Oromoo)* in the federal government system, let alone get a job. This is one of the few legitimate demands of the people that the government sought to punish under the label of terrorism. It adopted repressive laws to govern the conduct of Oromo citizenries and all other ethnicities in resistance of the system. The numerical majority of the Oromo in the country has been another unique factor that helps explain why the Oromo were particularly targeted in the country.[1] Under the color of repressive laws, the government became successful in branding and labelling all Oromo dissenters, inside and outside of the country, as terrorists. Below, I will address about the laws and how it plays out in the government narrative.

[1] Demographic landscape of the country https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html

- Answer2.Anti-Terrorism Legislation as a repressive and securitization tool of Oromo Critics

The government securitized the legitimate political questions of the Oromo people. As a result, political organizations, civil societies, cultural groups, and political pluralism are outlawed. Ethiopian parliament became not the house of the people, but the ruling party, which took a 100% of all seats, without a single opposition. Laws are being enacted with no legislative scrutiny and political deliberations. With no independent and effective judicial body, the deep state (informal and intelligence groups) thousands of Oromo political critics remain invisible in several prisons in the country. Because of the anti-terrorism proclamation, accessing justice and substantive due process has become impossible for Oromo political critics.

In fact, the law as it is heavily criticized by numerous organizations including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and several branches of the UN. According Oakland Institute[2], "the anti-terrorism law is a tool of repression, designed and used by the Ethiopian government to stifle its critics and political opposition and criminalize the robust discussion of the matters of enormous public interest and importance."[3] Inter-governmental Agencies such as the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-terrorism and Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and People's Rights are some of the organizations that have condemned the broad reach of the law (Gordon et al).

The repressive nature of the anti-terrorism proclamation can be proved in how it is being used against the most legitimate political opposition figures in the country. For example, Professor Merera Gudina[4], who is one of most the respected Oromo opposition was arrested and charged under anti-terrorism proclamation upon his return from a conference with European Parliament. Another prominent opposition figure who was the deputy chair of Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), Mr. Bekele Gerba is in jail for the second time again charged under the terrorism promotion. Mr. Gerba was rearrested after his return from the United States where he was invited as a keynote speaker to address Oromo academic Conference (Oromo Studies Association) in 2015 that took place at Howard University, Washington D.C. The prosecutor recently brought the YouTube video of his keynote speech as the evidence of crime of terrorism.[5] In his speech, Mr. Gerba talked about his experience in prison and the possibility and challenges of democratization and transformation of the country.

These two opposition figures as revelations of how Oromo critics, no matter how peaceful and legitimate their demands and questions are, are quickly labelled as "terrorists" and punished under the draconian proclamation. Even though Gudina and Gerba are leaders of a legally registered and recognized political party (OFC), both are charged with terrorism for simply being vocal about the government's marginalization of the Oromo people. There are several thousands of their supporters, members, journalists and civil servants who spoke against the government are suffering in jail alongside Gudina and Gerba. That remains the reality and the truth of how

[2] Indipendent policy think tank https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/about
[3] Gordon el at. "Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorism Law." The Oakland Institute, 2015. <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/OI_Ethiopia_Legal_Brief_final_web.pdf>.
[4] Dr. Merera is former fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy
[5] See the YouTube video of Mr. Gerba in which he spoke about his experience in jail and the prospect of democratization in the country.

the Ethiopian government securitizes and dehumanizes Oromo oppositions and critics under the masquerade of terrorism.

- Answer 3. by portraying OLF as terrorist origination and also that it is inseparable from the Oromo people, the government is trying to generate a Collective guilt to artificially justify its disproportional state power against the Oromo critics.

The government's accusation of Oromo people as being allied with terrorism discourse is deep-rooted in the artificial narrative that indiscriminately and inseparably pigeon-hole all members of the Oromo ethnicity into a single political ideology. Even though no other country including United State government have designated OLF as a terrorist organization, the Ethiopia government's had establish OLF as terrorist organization and as being one and the same with Oromo critics have generated a collective guilt where all Oromo are perceived guilty until they prove themselves innocent in the political activism of the country. To achieve this, the first political strategy of the government was to use, unchallenged, its rubber-stamp parliament to declare the OLF and other resistance political groups as terrorist organizations. Once this was done, it became easy for the government to label whoever they want as a "terrorist" or "sympathizers."

It is also necessary to scrutinize major event that the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) relied on to establish the narrative to label OLF as a terrorist organization in the first place. For example, WikiLeaks files, citing US Embassy Cables from Addis Ababa, have exposed how Ethiopian security forces planted 3 bombs that went off in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on September 16, 2006 and then blamed Eritrea and the Oromo resistance (OLF). The files read that "an embassy source, as well as clandestine reporting, suggests that the bombing may have in fact been the work of the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) security forces."[6] (Cable reference id: #06ADDISABABA2708.) These are essential information that indicates that Ethiopian government had most likely fabricated a consistence narrative in which it mobilizes the tale or perception of terrorism against the OLF. I believe, this information alone should put major doubt how Ethiopian government have categorized OLF as terrorist organization and should perhaps be considered it is rather a politically motivation.

Conversely, it must be remembered that the ruling party has once declared to have eradicated OLF as an armed resistance group. If indeed they have eliminated OLF as armed resistance group, why people are being arrested or labeled as such? In my views, the Oromo people's support for the OLF is more of ideological instead of political or armed struggle against the Ethiopian government, which may change in the future depending on the brutality of the Ethiopian government against the Oromo people. Despite the unilateral decision of the Ethiopian ruling party to label OLF as a terrorist organization, OLF operates freely as organization with 501 c organization around the world including in the United State. It is important to add that the Ethiopian government's definition of crime of terrorism is completely at odds with the international community's definition. The government simply labels petty offenses and political oppositions from the realm of the material and material elements of the crime of terrorism and its Oromo critics as supporters of OLF as justification for its selective brutality

[6] See US Embassy in Addis Cable (Cable reference id: #06ADDISABABA2708.). See also https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2011/09/16/wikileaks-ethiopia-files-ethiopia-bombs-itself-blames-eritrea/

against the Oromo people. Amnesty International's report entitled: 'BECAUSE I AM OROMO' explains it perfectly.

- Answer 4. What is in the name: Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) Vs. Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) Vs. Eretria People's Liberation Front (EPLF?)

OLF was the early political organization of Oromo people that was established in 1960s to raise Oromo socioeconomic, political, cultural, environmental, and geographical consciousness among Oromo people. Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in med-late 1970s organized itself with guerilla fighters to liberate Tigray people from the then communist regime of Ethiopia. The collaboration efforts of OLF, TPLF, and EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front) overthrew the communist regime in 1991. Shortly after, in the process of formation of the transitional government, TPLF leaders kicked the OLF out of the transitional government and subsequently as "a terrorist organization" due to potential threat to its political power.

Inclusion, the Current Oromo protest is the results of TPLF socioeconomic, political, cultural, religion, environmental, and military discrimination against the Oromo people in Ethiopia. The discrimination is deeply systematic and institutional in that it takes place under the name of development and investment, making it difficult to detect. Discrimination and suppression of the Oromo people also comes in the form of labeling the mass movement with "terrorism" and hence, using excessive military forces under emergency law. For the last three years, evidences show that Oromo protest is a mass movement emerged among students of middle school, high school, colleges, and university, farmers and business group of people. The protest is nonviolent with a symbol of "X" as a sign to demonstrate 'my hands are tied' or as shown on this Opride[7] video. The government's response to these legitimate public demands have always been to create state of terror while throughout the protest, the Oromo people showed peaceful, disciplined and well-mannered resistance without resorting to further illegal acts. Also, while it is impossible to objectively estimate the level of support for OLF by Oromo due to restriction by Ethiopian government, judging by the level of support it receives diaspora Oromo communities, Oromo refugees who manage to leave the country, and listening to the songs, poems and slogans at public rallies during the 2015 -16 Oromo protests, and the fact that the TPLF (the main political party in power for the past 26 years) has failed to persuade the Oromo people to ally with the OPDO party and complains that the Oromo people support the OLF even 25 years after it successfully kicked the OLF out of the Transitional Government, and the vast majority of the protesters (i.e. the youth) were born during the TPLF era, it would be safe to conclude that the OLF remains popular among majority of the Oromo people.

Question 2: You mentioned particularly harsh treatment of women by the Ethiopian government and alleged that many women are raped, presumably by government forces. Has there been any organized attempt to document such treatment of women for the United Nations or donor countries?

Answer: In short, there have been no known investigations into the prevalence of rape by government security forces. There are numbers of reasons why no one has investigated, not the least of which is the government's complete disdain for any international scrutiny of its human rights record, including sexual violence. No United Nations special rapporteurs have been

[7] Video evidence of nonviolent protests: https://www.dropbox.com/s/zmv4ugl0i1l88r6/ocommunity.mp4?dl=0

allowed into the country since 2007. Efforts to hold Ethiopia's human rights record to international scrutiny have constantly and continually been rebuffed. Given this country's intolerance of international scrutiny, domestic investigations into rape could not be undertaken. The government's Human Rights Commission does not produce independent reports, and the 2009 NGO law made it virtually impossible for domestic human rights NGOs to operate. Combined with the current limits on independent media, it is almost impossible to investigate this topic. H. Res 128 call for a UN rapporteur to provide an independent investigation into all human rights violations including the prevalence of neglected rape incidents is certainly great start.

However, it is a fact that there are cases of rape, torture and abuse against women by Ethiopian military forces. I can personally testify to several cases; two women in America, dozens of women in my birth city, just only since November 2015, in three universities in Oromia, and dozens more girls in refugee camps. The safest example I can share without putting victims' lives at risk would be the story of Urgi who resides in America. But for security reasons, I am only using her first name. Urgi is currently 46 years old. She was arrested in 1993 in Hararge along with two of her cousins. They were all between the ages of 18-21 and were taken to nearest military camp called Genet Menfasha. She was one among 18 others girls at the military camp. She said she was raped continuously for 13 days by 15 different men until she passed out. When she woke up, there was a soldier standing over her with broken beer bottle. Because her body was swollen and half of her intestine or part of our stomach was out, he didn't want to touch her with his hands, so he used broken bottle to lift and see between her legs. Another one lit hot candle wax and let it drip on her skin. Urgi escaped prison after 12 long years. It took her many more years just to be able to stand straight or walk on her own. Today and every day, she is reminded of those monsters' faces, those who never faced justice. She is happy to share her story in hope of saving one live. She said, "they took away my youth, God's gift to bury children, my peace of mind to find happiness, and the chance to move on with lives as a normal human being."

I want to remind everyone who reads this statement, that the culture which Urgi and I come from places women as responsible to bear all the burden for the actions taken by men. This is especially true when it comes to rape. For a woman to stand in front of her family, let alone her community, and the entire world and tell her story, it would have been better to choose death over suffering as survivor of rape. Rape is the worst form of punishment that strips women of their dignity, womanhood, and identity. It leaves behind lifelong scares and a sense of no purpose to continue life even if it was beyond her control. While I applaud Urgi for sharing this story with me and us, I want to say that her story is neither unique to her nor a rare event that happens to only to few or in the past. Rather, it is the story of many in especially in recent times. Over 400 girls were arrested and 50 among those were tortured and raped, in one year and one small city.

Finally, even if a few rape victims would dare to speak up, the Ethiopian government will go after that person without mercy. Recently after my hearing, I interviewed a high ranking member of OFC and EPDRF who recently defected from the government. Both men said they know of such incidents taking place and have no doubt that it is true and happens often. However, they said documentation is nearly impossible for two reasons. First, women will not come forward and even if they do, there no is no agency that can help them pursue justice. Second, the

government will go after her and that person or agency if they find someone was recording such information. The high-ranking member of OFC said that it is impossible to even record those arrested or killed for Oromo Protests let alone rape victims. He added that those who tried to record these events have been arrested, harassed, beaten and, in some instances, killed. In short, it is safe to assume it is currently impossible to track such record information.

Questions for the Record
Submitted to Mr. Yoseph Tafari
by Rep. Chris Smith
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 9, 2017

Question: You have lived through the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, the Derg military junta and the EPRDF government. How would you compare the treatment of Ethiopians by these three governments?

Answer:

Emperor Haile Selassie 1930-1974: The Emperor enjoyed absolute Monarchy with supreme authority without any restriction by any laws or legislature. During World War 2, Italy occupied Ethiopia and removed the Emperor from power. The Italian occupation was a very difficult time in Ethiopia, as massive numbers of people were massacred or segregated into becoming 2nd class citizens.

Haile Selassie went into exile in Great Britain, where he used diplomacy to gather support from the West. The Emperor's success in getting global support from allied forces, the subsequent defeat of Italy and his return to the homeland was a symbolic triumph for Ethiopians of all ethnicities, the freedom fighters, and other African nations who were still fighting for independence. Haile Selassie's success in global diplomacy and maintaining the only independent African nation elevated his status in the world stage. This gave Haile Selassie a great deal of political capital in Ethiopia, allowing him to maintain his supreme authority for decades to come.

Subsequently Haile Selassie attempted to modernize the political system in Ethiopia. In 1955 a modern constitution was created, installing a parliament with two houses (for the first time allowing public participation and elections for representatives.) However, the elected representatives' allegiance was to the Emperor who maintained "Supreme authority in all affairs of the empire."

In terms of development and modernizing the country, Haile Selassie was viewed by many as a reformist. During his rule, modern schools, hospitals, dams, infrastructures and industries were built. This development in turn helped him to seek foreign assistance from western country primarily the United States, which much of it was misappropriated. The West, however, continued to back Haile Selassie, who they regarded as an ally for war against 'communism' in Africa.

The people of Ethiopia were considered the Emperor's subjects and his treatment was complex in that it exhibited fraternal custodianship combined with total indifference to the everyday suffering of the common people. It reached a critical point in 1973 when a drought and crop failure caused a widespread famine, while the emperor reportedly denied the existence of any famine. National protests spread across the country in defiance of the Emperor, seeking change. The Emperor failed to contain the protests and civil unrest, leading to his removal from power in 1974.

The Derg military junta (1974-1991): The Derg ruled by ruthless leader Megistu Hailemariam emerged from the downfall of the Emperor. Communism was declared as the great equalizer; private businesses and properties were seized and nationalized. Ethiopia cut ties from the United States, and became a major ally of the USSR with major influence in the Horn of Africa and beyond.

The Derg is generally credited for abolishing the legacy of feudalism, and in parallel expanding education for the masses to bring down the basic illiteracy rate, while maintaining relatively less corrupt administration. However, its brutality in implementing its hard line socialist policies soon led thousands of students, teachers, workers and ordinary Ethiopians into imprisonment without charge, torture and executions. In addition, the socialist policies led the country into a downward spiral of economic failures, and the great famine of 1984/5. The Derg was an equal opportunity human right violators regardless of ethnic, religious or gender classification. Subsequently, unspeakable human right violation, civil war and the start of the Ethiopian exodus to the west are a few living legacy of the Derg Military junta. With the fall of the USSR, the Derg was forced into surrender and power was transitioned to the TPLF guerilla fighters; which ultimately led into a far more catastrophic state of a nation: today's Ethiopia.

TPLF ("EPRDF") Reign: 1991-Present: Since taking power, the TPLF, re-established Ethiopia's relationship with the West, in particular the United States. This has allowed the government to regain the financial and strategic support of the United States that once was the norm during the Haile Selassie regime. While attempting to replicate Haile Selassie's tactic of global diplomacy and internal economic development as a means to gain political capital; the TPLF has failed to deliver meaningful and sustainable changes that are fair and equal to all Ethiopians.

While the hope was for the TPLF to serve as a transitional power to finally bring about democracy and stability to Ethiopia, 25 unfruitful years have passed while they continue the legacy of brutality and unspeakable human rights violation; while simultaneously introducing the catastrophic ethnic politics, leading up to the current state of Ethiopia, which I believe is at its boiling point with unimaginable consequences for regional stability.

Since 1991, Ethiopia has gone further than any other country in using ethnicity as the fundamental organizing principle of a federal system of government. In a nation with over 80 indigenous ethnic groups and multiple religions, TPLF's experiment with ethnic federalism has shaken the foundation of a united Ethiopia, elevating the risk of an all-out civil war and the potential disintegration of a country with a population that is greater than Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia combined.

In addition, what separates the TPLF from its predecessors is its obsession in controlling the narrative and its image in the west. While shutting down the free press and independent media within Ethiopia; it spends millions on lobbying firms and public relations consultants in the west. While the TPLF continues to spend millions in public relations campaign in the West, the fact on the ground remains that Ethiopia has entered

its dark ages and is approaching the point of no return. The time to act is now; or it will be too late.

Discrimination and ethnic identity have become the hallmark of present day of Ethiopia. Credible human right agencies and global institutions are increasingly providing an objective assessment of the current state of Ethiopia under TPLF rule. The regime has proved itself to be one of the most ruthless, self-obsessed regimes devoid of national interest to bring about a fair and democratic system. In extraordinary campaign bordering genocide against the Oromo, Amhara and other minority groups people which began in earnest shortly after taking power and continued to the present today. Currently the regime has more detention centers away from public sights to facilitate mass arrest without due process of the law, torture, rape and killing with impunity. The recent Emergency decree has made Ethiopia even more one of the worst human rights violating countries in the World.

The TPLF controls key government institutions and a significant portion of the economy. None of the private enterprises or property that was illegally ceased by the Communist Derg was returned to their rightful owners; nor was any compensation provided outside of the Tigray region. For over 25 years, they have used an organization called EFFORT (Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray) to channel public resources and funds to the coffers of the TPLF through illegal deals, contracts, tax evasion, kick-backs and all sorts of illegal operations thereby controlling over 50% of Ethiopia's economy.

Although Ethiopia has received more foreign aid than all the combined history of the country, at the same period the country has seen the largest illicit financial flow outside Ethiopia. What remains within the country, much of it has been catered to benefit a single ethnic group it claimed to represent. This brutal and corrupt system has made over 90% of the Ethiopia's population an alien in its own nation; thereby creating the most explosive social elements in the nation's history.

Conclusion: In three successive government the Ethiopian people have not fared well in all measures. However, by far the present Ethiopian regime standout as the most cruel and barbaric regime Ethiopia had ever faced in many centuries of existence.

Question: In your testimony, you describe a previously harmonious inter-religious situation among Christians, Muslims, and Jews and accuse the current government of provoking conflict among religions and ethnic groups. Do you feel that interreligious harmony can be reestablished in Ethiopia?

Answer:

For the first time in the nation's history, the extraordinary religious harmony of Ethiopia is being challenged by TPLF. The early manifesto of TPLF indicates two primary enemy for its core mission are identified as The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and The Amhara Ethnic group.

Embarking to weaken their influence, TPLF began in earnest of courting the Golf States and Saudi Arabia in building mosques and train new Imams on order to create a fertile condition for religious extremism and radicalization. According to La Stampa, "the Gulf monarchies wasted no time to embark in "Islamization" of the by building two mosques for every community. This was done by building mosques in Muslim-majority areas and spreading their version of the Sunni faith in Islamic schools. In 1991 Riyadh took 2,000 young Ethiopians to study the Koran in Saudi Arabia, sending them back as Imams two years later which was when burqas and minarets began to appear everywhere in the country.

This campaign is still continues to the present day, which in turn brought about a sustained opposition by the majority Ethiopian Muslims who for centuries have lived in peace sided by side with their majority Christian neighbors. Furthermore, the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 by the same element of Sunni extremists brought a new geopolitical challenge to the regime and swiftly moved to appease the west as an ally against extremism and terrorism all while adhering to its core mission.

If we are to take lessons from history, the unconditional support of the United States to Haile Selassie ultimately failed because the Ethiopian people have had enough and wanted real change. There is no escaping from the fact that this short sighted view did handed Ethiopia to the DERG; the Communists. In other word, the single mission policy of the United States from "ally for war against 'communism'" did metamorphose into "ally for war against terrorism". Today history is revisiting Ethio-US relations once more to determine if we have indeed learned from the errors of the past and work to create a peaceful transition towards inclusive government in order to preserve the greatest asset of Ethiopia.

Conclusion: I believe the long held unique virtue of Ethiopia as a beacon of hope for interreligious harmony will prevail provided genuine political reform takes place in Ethiopia. Since time is of the essence, the immediate implementation of pluralistic and democratic governance is the only anchoring force to make sure Ethiopia long held exemplary history spare the nation and the region from ethnic and religious disintegration.

Thank you,

Deacon Yoseph R Tafari

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

Coalition of NGO, Diaspora Groups Support Congressional Hearing on Human Rights in Ethiopia

March 9, 2017, Washington D.C.

The undersigned civil society organizations applaud Chairman Chris Smith, and Ranking Member Karen Bass of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations for holding a hearing on Ethiopia today entitled, "*Ethiopia: Democracy Under Threat.*"

The hearing draws much-needed attention to the deteriorating human rights and governance situation in Ethiopia. U.S policy makers should take due note of the alarming trend in the suppression of fundamental freedoms, targeting of political opponents and dwindling of political space in Ethiopia and take measures to avert a political crisis that could impact the entire Horn of Africa region.

We urge the House of Representatives to pass House Resolution 128, supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia, which was reintroduced in February 2017 by Representatives Chris Smith, Mike Coffman, Keith Ellison, Karen Bass, Robin Kelly and Marc Veasey. This resolution is a positive first step and sends a powerful message to the Ethiopian government that it cannot continue killing and arresting citizens that express their grievances through peaceful means. The resolution condemns the killing and arbitrary arrest of protestors and calls on the Ethiopian government to conduct a full, credible and transparent investigation into the killing and excessive use of force against protestors in the Amhara and Oromia regions. It also urges the Ethiopian government to lift the state of emergency and allow the UN to conduct an independent examination of the human rights situation in Ethiopia. The resolution also calls on the U.S. Government to conduct a review of its security assistance to Ethiopia in light of recent developments, develop a comprehensive strategy to improve good governance in Ethiopia, and consider imposing Global *Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act* sanctions on perpetrators of gross human rights violations.

Today's hearing will reiterate the concerns expressed in the resolution, further highlight the need for adopting it and put forward important recommendations for Congress and the administration. U.S. policy discussions with the Government of Ethiopia should promote national and international accountability for the egregious human rights abuses perpetrated by Ethiopian government security forces during recent protests in the Amhara and Oromia regions and the obligation of donor countries - including the U.S. - to ensure that aid given to the Government of Ethiopia is not used to suppress the legitimate demands of citizens for accountable government and inclusive representation at all levels of the political structure.

We once again express our support for this hearing and the resolution and the intent behind both, which is to focus attention on helping the Ethiopian people and the Ethiopian government find a path forward out of the deepening human rights crisis. We encourage members of the House to co-sponsor this resolution.

Ethiopia Human Rights Project

Freedom House

Freedom Now

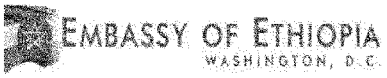
Human Rights Watch

Oromo Advocacy Alliance

Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia

Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC)

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



Explanatory Note

The Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in Washington D.C. is of the view that the new draft house resolution - H. RES 128 under the title "Respect for Human Rights and Encouraging Inclusive Governance in Ethiopia," which was introduced on 15 February 2017 is inappropriate and untimely. The draft resolution contains sweeping generalizations and is full of factual errors. Moreover, it is counterproductive setting the cordial relations between the United States and Ethiopia in the state of uneasiness.

The draft resolution makes a blanket assertion that "**democratic space in Ethiopia has steadily diminished since the general elections of 2005" and that the ruling party "claimed 100 percent of the parliamentary seats**" in the 2015 elections. Ethiopia has made numerous strides in enlarging universal suffrage. During the 2015 elections there were many opposition parties and candidates contested more than the 2005 elections. Anyone present in Ethiopia all the way through the pre-election season would have observed the numerous televised debates during which all sorts of political issues were vociferously voiced and argued between the candidates. Thus, the claim that the democratic space has diminished in Ethiopia since 2005 is a claim often repeated without any basis of proof whatsoever.

The assertion that the ruling party "claimed" to have won 100% of the parliamentary seats is factually incorrect for two reasons.

First, during the 2015 election, the Ethiopia Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic front (EPRDF) won only 500 seats out of the total number of seats in the House of people's Representative. One important point which is often ignored is that EPRDF is a coalition of four major political parties with proportional representation from four regions; namely from Oromia, Amhara, Southern nations and Tigray. Other regional independent parties, the Somali people's Democratic Party (SPDP) won 24, the Bensishangul Gumuz Peoples Democratic party(BGPDP) won 9; the Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP) won 8; the Gambela People's Unity Democratic Movement (GPUDM) won 3; the Harari N ational League and (HNL) the Argoba People Democratic Organization (APDO) won 1 each.

Second, Ethiopia's electoral system, has first-past-the-post system in which parliamentary seats are taken by those who win a majority of the popular vote in any electoral district. For instance in some districts, the EPRDF candidate actually obtained less votes than the other candidates combined. However, because of the fact that EPRDF's candidate received a majority vote compared to other would automatically won from an electoral district. The opposition candidates, had they formed unity, would have carried the electoral seats in those districts. This is the advantage of the ruling party across the country. As to the ruling party, both the House of Representatives and House of Federation could include members of the opposition parties if they win after forming unity at the polling stations.

After reviewing the Ethiopian political landscape and the pre-election process in 2015, the African Union observers concluded that the elections had been free, peaceful, and credible and had provided an opportunity for the Ethiopian People to express their choices at the poll. Overall, the AU Mission offered conclusions and recommendations to the Government, the Electoral Board, the Political Parties and the media to strengthen the electoral process encouraging all parties to participate actively.

Peaceful protests were often hijacked by violent elements

Last year, there were protest and demonstrations in parts of Oromia and Amhara region. This resulted from the fact that the government was able to build a demanding society. The youth in small towns raised their voice in quest of opportunities. The Embassy of Ethiopia would like to underscore that the militant opposition groups operating from a foreign countries including the United States have been trying to foment unrest and incite violence to advance their political agenda to dismantle the constitutional system. It is essential to note that the government has duty, like any other country, to ensure law and order in all situations, including in the context of protests, by ensuring accountability of those elements engaged in violence or committing illegal acts during the protests. The declaration of the provisional State of Emergency (SOE) on October 9, 2016 aimed at bringing peace and security in the country. The Government was forced to introduce this temporary measure to deal with an alarming threat to the country's peace and stability as well as extensive damage to public and private properties, including the torching of a significant number of factories which employed tens of thousands of people. Since, then there are no more protests and turmoil in the country. The Government listens to the call of many people in the cities who testify that the state of emergency enabled them to conduct their regular daily life peacefully by deterring those who were propagating to create ethnic tensions. Once the SOE realize this objective it will be lifted when law and order is fully restored. It is to be recalled that the government has released significant numbers of people among those who participated in illegal activities during the protests. Some of them who participated in criminal acts such as burning down investment ventures and attacking commercial farms will face justice.

Measures by the Government

The Government of Ethiopia duly acknowledges that the people have legitimate grievances and expressed its willingness to address those issues. The problems facing the country, including lack of basic social services, lack of good governance and corruption are handled at all levels by the leadership. Those who were engaged in corrupt practices were ousted from office and the legal process is underway. The political reform which begun with the reshuffling of the cabinet is an ongoing activity. The ruling party has embarked on a dialogue and negotiation with 22 opposition parties. The dialogue and consultations will include the discussion on amending the election laws and encouraging the participation of different voices in the parliament.

The House of Peoples Representatives (HPR) of the FDRE shoulders the responsibility to investigate the situation of the protests. In doing so, the government will facilitate the necessary conditions for all stakeholders and legal measures will be taken on those who violate human rights during the demonstration. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) started, in close consultations with all stakeholders involved in the matter, an independent and thorough investigation into the deaths and injuries caused during the protests. The government, as in similar situation in the past, will make sure that those responsible for violent or other illegal acts

during the protests will be brought to justice. The outcome of the investigations will be made public in due course. The Embassy will share the outcomes of the investigations and measures taken based on the outcomes with all interested institutions.

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The Government expressed its commitment to take measures to curtail corrupt practices and discriminatory treatment. The judicial authorities will conduct thorough investigation and those who incited violence will be held responsible for their illegal acts. The regional governments will address the genuine demands of good governance and those who are responsible for illegal acts will be made accountable in accordance with the law. The investors who lost their properties have received compensation and started operations. The government also allocated significant resources to create opportunities to the youth.

In light of the above and the various measures taken by the government in the past six months it is important to highlight the following points:

- Series of public dialogue and consultation in town hall meetings took place to involve the society at large in the resolution of the problems.
- The EHRC has started an independent and thorough investigation into deaths and injuries caused during the protests. The results of the investigation will be presented to the HPR.
- With the active participation of the people the SOE stopped the violence and ensured law and order in the country.
- The ruling party has embarked on a dialogue and negotiation with 22 opposition parties. The dialogue and consultation will include the discussion on amending the election laws and encouraging the participation of different voices in the parliament.
- The second National Human Rights Action Plan, which will enhance the promotion and protection of Human rights, has been adopted by the House of People's Representatives.
- Measures were taken on the Government officials who were engaged in corrupt practices, some were removed from office and the legal process is underway.
- The investors who lost their properties during the violence have received compensation and resumed operations with the support of the government.
- The Government has allocated over 500 Million USD to provide opportunities to the youth to engage in productive activities.

The reference in the preamble to regarding the weakness of Courts in Ethiopia, the prison conditions, the Zone 9 bloggers, the villagization and the CSO law are irrelevant and outdated. For instance, the annual report of the State Department acknowledged that the villagization program is called "accelerated development program" with a clear objective of providing people access to health care, education and water. International partners who visited the site concluded that the situation didn't corroborate the allegations. In September 2016, more than 230 prisoners including those convicted on terrorism were pardoned. Some of the substantive provisions outline measures that are uncalled for. In conclusion, the Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, while expressing its regrets on this approach taken to introduce a draft resolution, wishes to convey its readiness to update the progress made on the investigation against rights violation during the violence via appropriate channel. The Embassy, is ready to discuss the possibility for a positive engagement.

Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Washington D.C.

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