

The first is Ethiopia, which is set to hold elections in May. In his testimony, the Director of National Intelligence stated:

In Ethiopia, Prime Minister Meles and his party appear intent on preventing a repeat of the relatively open 2005 election which produced a strong opposition showing.

Indeed, in Ethiopia, democratic space has been diminishing steadily since 2005. Over the last 2 years, the Ethiopian Parliament has passed several new laws granting broad discretionary powers to the government to arrest opponents. One such law, the Charities and Societies Proclamation, imposes direct government controls over civil society and bars any civil society group receiving more than 10 percent of its funding from international sources to do work related to human rights, gender equality, the rights, of the disabled, children's rights, or conflict resolution. Another law, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, defines terrorism-related crimes so broadly that they could extend to nonviolent forms of political dissent and protest.

Ethiopia is an important partner of the United States and we share many interests. We currently provide hundreds of millions of dollars in aid annually to Ethiopia. That is why I have been so concerned and outspoken about these repressive measures, and that is why I believe we have a stake in ensuring that Ethiopia's democratic process moves forward, not backward. With the elections just 3 months away, several key opposition leaders remain imprisoned, most notably Birtukan Mideksa, the head of the Unity for Democracy and Justice Party. There is no way that elections can be fair, let alone credible, with opposition leaders in jail or unable to campaign freely. At the bare minimum, the international community should push for the release of these political prisoners ahead of the elections. If nothing changes, we should not be afraid to stand with the Ethiopian people and state clearly that an election in name only is an affront to their country's democratic aspirations.

The second country I want to highlight is Burundi. As many people will recall, Burundi was devastated by political violence throughout the 1990s, leaving over 100,000 people dead. Yet the country has made tremendous strides in recent years to recover and rebuild from its civil war. In 2005, it held multiparty national and local elections, a major milestone on its transition to peace. Burundians are set to head to the polls again this year. If these elections are fair, free, and peaceful, they have the potential to be another milestone along the path toward reconciliation, lasting stability, and democratic institutions. This would be good not only for Burundi but also for the whole of Central Africa. Burundians deserve international support and encouragement as they strive for that goal.

Still, many challenges remain. The tensions that fed and were fueled by

Burundi's civil war have not entirely gone away. And there is some evidence that the parties continue to use the tools of war to pursue their political goals. According to a report by the International Crisis Group last month, "opposition parties are facing harassment and intimidation from police and the ruling party's youth wing and appear to be choosing to respond to violence with violence." Furthermore, there continue to be reports that the National Intelligence Service is being used by the ruling party to destabilize the opposition. If these trends continue, they could taint Burundi's elections and set back its peace process. The international community, which has played a big role in Burundi's peace process, cannot wait until a month before the election to speak out and engage the parties these issues. We need to do it now.

Burundi's neighbor to the north, Rwanda, is also slated to hold important elections this summer. Rwanda is another country that has come a long way. Since the genocide in 1994, the government and people of Rwanda have made impressive accomplishments in rebuilding the country and improving basic services. It is notable that Rwanda was the top reformer worldwide in the 2010 World Bank's "Doing Business Report." President Kagame has shown commendable and creative leadership in this respect. On the democratic front, however, Rwanda still has a long way to go.

Understandably there are real challenges to fostering democracy some 15 years after the genocide, but it is troubling that there is not more space within Rwanda for criticism and opposition voices. The State Department's 2008 Human Rights Report for Rwanda stated, "There continued to be limits on freedom of speech and of association, and restrictions on the press increased." With elections looming, there are now some reports that opposition party members in Rwanda are facing increasing threats and harassment. The international community should not shy away from pushing for greater democratic space in Rwanda, which is critical for the country's lasting stability. We fail to be true friends to the Rwandan people if we do not stand with them in the fight against renewed abuse of civil and political rights. In the next few months in the runup to the elections, it is a key time for international donors to raise these issues with Kigali.

Finally, I would like to talk about Uganda, which is set to hold elections in February 2011. Uganda, like Rwanda, is a close friend of the United States, and we have worked together on many joint initiatives over recent years. President Museveni deserves credit for his leadership on many issues both within the country and the wider region. However, at the same time, Museveni's legacy has been tainted by his failure to allow democracy to take hold in Uganda. Uganda's most recent

elections have been hurt by reports of fraud, intimidation, and politically motivated prosecutions of opposition candidates. The Director of National Intelligence stated in his testimony that Uganda remains essentially a "one-party state" and said the government "is not undertaking democratic reforms in advance of the elections scheduled for 2011."

Uganda's elections next year could be a defining moment for the country and will have ramifications for the country's long-term stability. The riots in Buganda last September showed that regional and ethnic tensions remain strong in many parts of the country. Therefore, it is important that the United States and other friends of Uganda work with that country's leaders to ensure critical electoral reforms are enacted. In the consolidated appropriations act that passed in December, Congress provided significant assistance for Uganda but also specifically directed the Secretary of State "to closely monitor preparations for the 2011 elections in Uganda and to actively promote . . . the independence of the election commission; the need for an accurate and verifiable voter registry; the announcement and posting of results at the polling stations; the freedom of movement and assembly and a process free of intimidation; freedom of the media; and the security and protection of candidates."

Madam President, again these challenges are not unique to Africa. Here in the United States, we too have to work constantly to ensure the integrity of our elections and our democratic processes. But I believe these upcoming elections in a number of African states could have major ramifications for the overall trajectory of democracy on the continent as well as for issues of regional security. I also believe several of these elections could significantly impact U.S. policy and strategic partnerships on the continent. For that reason, I do not believe we can wait until weeks or days before these elections to start focusing on them. We need to start engaging well in advance and helping to pave the way for truly democratic institutions and the consolidation of democracy. This includes aligning with democratic actors that speak out against repressive measures that erode political and civil rights. The Obama administration has done this well in some cases, but we need to do it more consistently and effectively. In the coming months, I hope to work with the administration to ensure we have a clear policy and the resources to that end.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, although I know the Obama administration strongly supports human rights and adherence to the rule of law around the world, I have been struck by several very public examples where this important issue has gotten short

shrift—most notably in senior State Department meetings with foreign governments. Perhaps the starkest example was the Secretary of State's visit to China last year, where she said that U.S. efforts to advance human rights "can't interfere on the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis and the security crisis."

Since joining Congress in 1993, I have emphasized that human rights must be at the center of our foreign policy. The Obama administration shares this view, but I remain troubled that in certain instances human rights continue to take a back seat to other competing concerns deemed more pressing. As we seek to address the many crises we face both at home and around the world, we cannot afford to miss—or avoid—opportunities to raise human rights concerns. I do not believe quiet tradeoffs are necessary or consistent with the principles for which the United States stands. Moreover, whatever the perceived short-term benefit of remaining quiet when human rights are being undermined, there is often a long-term cost to us. Our commitment to and enforcement of international human rights standards is part of our strength—when they are called into question, our own national security is undermined.

Human rights, good governance and the rule of law are important not only in their own right, but also for the positive contributions they can provide to our efforts on counterterrorism, stability, and development. As we continue the fight against al-Qaeda and its affiliates, a robust human rights agenda that is deeply intertwined with our broader national security goals will help us achieve our counterterrorism objectives. At the same time, our counterterrorism policies and those of our partners must respect basic, fundamental rights in order to be truly effective.

Developing a coherent and effective foreign policy that successfully incorporates trade, security, and human rights concerns is no easy task. But we cannot further perpetuate the current imbalance by remaining silent on critical human rights concerns. Silence speaks volumes and gives a free pass to those who commit such abuses, as well as those who might commit them in the future. We must voice our concerns loudly and consistently as we seek to build global partnerships rooted in policies that incorporate good governance, the rule of law, and human rights alongside our economic and security priorities. By downplaying the former in order to focus on the latter, the administration risks weakening a key pillar of American strength.

#### RECOGNIZING THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, today I wish to commend and congratulate the League of Women Voters, in honor of the league's 90th anniversary.

This nonpartisan political organization encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters was founded by Carrie Chapman Catt in 1920—just 6 months before the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, giving women the right to vote after a 72-year struggle. It was designed to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters. It encouraged them to use their new power to participate in shaping public policy. Today, there are 900 State and local Leagues in all 50 States.

While the league neither supports nor opposes candidates for office at any level of government, it works to influence policy through advocacy on issues such as voting rights, health care reform, global climate change, and election administration. This grassroots citizen network is directed by the consensus of its members nationwide.

In honoring the league, we commemorate the past achievements of women and highlight the successes of women today. From the suffragists who founded the league 90 years ago to the incredible women who work today to improve our communities and our country as elected officials and as volunteers, the league's women are making a profound and lasting civic impact. I wish the League of Women Voters continued success as they bring more women into the political arena as candidates, informed voters and advocates.

#### RECOGNIZING VIRGINIA TASK FORCES ONE AND TWO

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I rise today to commend the efforts of Virginia Task Forces One and Two on their recent deployment to Haiti. Their combined efforts in the immediate aftermath of the devastating earthquake resulted in the successful rescue of 19 men, women, and children.

These teams are made up of over 150 firefighters, physicians, and structural engineers from Fairfax and Virginia Beach, VA.

Both teams were manned and ready within 24 hours of the call for help. That included preparing and staging over 100 tons of cargo and gear for airlift to Haiti.

One of the rescues involved Jens Christensen, a United Nations worker from Denmark who was trapped in the United Nations compound. The teams worked for over 8 hours to free him, and kept him alive by inserting a feeding tube through the rubble to provide him water during the rescue.

Acting on a tip from local residents, the team also rescued two children, "Kiki and Sabrina," almost a full week after the earthquake. These two Haitian girls were still alive in a building no one had previously searched.

Another woman was rescued from the rubble of a collapsed market, and the

team was able to provide paramedics and physicians to treat her on site and stabilize the woman for transport to a local hospital.

These teams leveraged their countless hours of training to hit the ground running at full speed. They have extensive international and domestic disaster response experience, and are recognized throughout the United States and the world as leaders in readiness, response and recovery techniques.

This is an important capability—and just yesterday I understand the teams were put on ready alert to potentially deploy again, this time to Chile to help with search and rescue efforts.

Please join me in commending the heroic and humanitarian efforts of Virginia Task Force One and Virginia Task Force Two.

I offer sincere thanks to all the team members, support personnel, and the families of these brave men and women.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO MARY SCOTT

• Mr. CARPER. Madam President, today I wish to recognize Mrs. Mary Scott, former Smyrna School District superintendent, whom I have been privileged to know for the past two decades. A role model of integrity, Mrs. Scott served the Smyrna School District in a series of roles of increasing responsibility from 1965 until July 1998, when she retired as the district's superintendent.

Born and in Wilmington, DE, Mrs. Scott attended public school until she was 10. When her family moved to Smyrna, a town some 40 miles south of Wilmington, she attended a two-room school there that housed grades 1 through 8 before attending the Booker T. Washington Elementary School in Dover for grades 9 and 10. Mary Scott graduated from the laboratory high school for students in grades 11 and 12 that was located on the campus of Delaware State College, now Delaware State University. Four years later, Mrs. Scott graduated from Delaware State College with a bachelor of arts degree in English and a minor in biology, after which she went on to receive her masters of arts degree in psychology from Washington College in Chestertown, MD.

The first minority educator to join faculty of the Smyrna District, Mrs. Scott began her career as an English teacher at Smyrna High School, the home of the Eagles. Later, she served the district as assistant to the president and as human relations counselor at the high school until 1978 when she became director of the Title 1 Program and supervisor of the Early Childhood Education Center, serving in that capacity until 1985. Next, she was appointed principal of North Elementary School and held that position until her promotion to the district's supervisor