

Washington Update - January 31, 2018

House leadership was briefed on Tuesday about the situation in Ethiopia by Ethiopian /Americans activists.

The meeting was organized by Congressman Chris Smith's office for the House leadership including the Majority leader Kevin McCarthy, CA, Congressman Chris Smith NJ and Congressman Mike Coffman, CO to hear from the Ethiopian Diaspora including from The Amhara organization, the Oromo organization and civic group including Dekon Yoseph from Colorado who attended the hearing of Africa sub committee on Ethiopia present situation last year. According to the Congressional staff the leadership seems convinced that the groups had informed the leadership about the situation and the reality on the ground in Ethiopia.

The US Congress has been waiting for the Ethiopian regime to make reform and to release all political and journalists prisoners.

One of the conditions in discussion was to have the regime in Ethiopia let the United Nations who is present in Ethiopia to do the human rights assessment in Ethiopia affected regions and report back to Congress soon.

According to the Congressional Sr. staff, the legislation will move forward in early march.

H. Res. 128, entitled “Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia,” condemns the human rights abuses of Ethiopia and calls on the Ethiopian government to:

- * **end the use of excessive force by security forces;**
- * **investigate the killings and excessive use of force that took place as a result of protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions;**
- * **release dissidents, activists, and journalists who have been imprisoned for exercising constitutional rights;**
- * **respect the right to peaceful assembly and guarantee freedom of the press;**
- * **engage in open consultations with citizens regarding its development strategy;**
- * **allow a United Nations rapporteur to conduct an independent examination of the state of human rights in Ethiopia;**
- * **address the grievances brought forward by representatives of registered opposition parties;**
- * **hold accountable those responsible for killing, torturing and detaining innocent civilians who exercised their constitutional rights; and**
- * **investigate and report on the circumstances surrounding the September 3, 2016, shootings and fire at Qilinto Prison, the deaths of persons in attendance at the annual Irreecha festivities at Lake Hora near Bishoftu on October 2, 2016, and the ongoing killings of civilians over several years in the Somali Regional State by police.**

“It is important to note that this resolution does not call for sanctions on the Government of Ethiopia, but it does call for the use of existing mechanisms to sanction individuals who torture or otherwise deny their countrymen their human and civil rights,” said Smith.

On April 20, 2016 Senator Ben Cardin (D-Maryland) introduced Senate Resolution 432, "A resolution supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia." 11 other Senators have co-sponsored the resolution, including one Republican, Marco Rubio (Florida), and Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Christopher Coons (D-Del.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Al Franken (D-Minn.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio). We need to push for this resolution by contacting Senator Cardin of Maryland as soon as the HR 128 passed. We have not gotten there yet. Although the road to democracy is a long one, we will prevail someday.

The resolution condemns the lethal violence used by the government of Ethiopia against protestors, journalists, and others in civil society for exercising their rights under Ethiopia's constitution. It calls for the Secretary of State to conduct a review of U.S. security assistance to Ethiopia in light of allegations that Ethiopian security forces have killed civilians. It also calls upon the government of Ethiopia to halt violent crackdowns, conduct a credible investigation into the killing of protesters, and hold perpetrators of such violence accountable.

The resolution specifically condemns: "the arrest and detention of journalists, students, activists and political leaders who exercise their constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and expression through peaceful protests; and abuse of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation to stifle political and civil dissent and journalistic freedoms."

The resolution also calls on the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to "immediately lead efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy to support improved democracy and governance in Ethiopia."

It is also important to call Inhofe's office and respectfully ask to support on SR 432. Explain why the bill is important, that the Ethiopian regime is violating the human rights of Ethiopians, killing and imprisoning innocent people and suppressing democracy. Request meetings with him and his staff. His telephone number in Washington is (202) 224-4721.

It is imperative that this legislation be passed in the Senate to send a message to the Ethiopian people and all of Africa that the people of the United states will not tolerate torture, human rights abuses, and imprisoning people without due process.

Mesfin Mekonen

Below is a link to an article from Fenacial Times:

<https://www.ft.com/content/51b0b940-0678-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>