

Washington update, November 5, 2017

The Ethiopian government has launched a lobbying campaign to persuade Ethiopian-Americans to oppose House Resolution 128. Enactment of HR 128 would do no more than put the U.S. government on record as supporting human rights and democracy in Ethiopia.

As part of its lobbying effort, the Ethiopian government is paying for form letters to be sent to Ethiopian-Americans. They are trying to persuade Ethiopian-Americans to sign the letters which contain lies about hR 128 and the Ethiopian opposition movement.

The form letter falsely claims that the Ethiopian government allows peaceful protests. In fact, the U.S. State Department, the authors of HR 128 and a similar Senate resolution, Amnesty International and other organizations have documented the Ethiopian government's jailing of political opponents, violent suppression of protests, and violations of basic human rights.

The Ethiopian government claims in the letter that it is battling against a "well organized and well funded" Ethiopian opposition. In fact, the Ethiopian opposition consists entirely of volunteers who care deeply about Ethiopia. It is the Ethiopian government, not the opposition that is mounting a "well funded" campaign using professional lobbyists.

According to public records, the Ethiopian government is paying S.G.R. LLC, a scandal-tainted lobbying firm, \$150,000 a month to influence American policy. S.G.R. worked for disgraced former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. After President Trump fired Flynn, Flynn revealed that he had failed to report his lobbying for Turkish President Erdogan. As part of his secret work to help Erdogan crush democratic opposition and gain dictatorial power, Flynn paid S.G.R. hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Now S.G.R. is pressuring Congressmen/Women to withdraw their support for HR 128.

To keep the legislation moving forward, Ethiopian Americans should contact members of Congress especially the Majority leader Kevin McCarthy

to encourage leadership to schedule a vote as soon as possible.

Kevin McCarthy
CALIFORNIA'S 23RD DISTRICT

2421 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone [202-225-2915](tel:202-225-2915)
Fax [202-225-2908](tel:202-225-2908)
kevinmccarthy.house.gov

Last week Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO) gave a powerful speech describing human rights abuses in Ethiopia and urging his colleagues to vote for House Resolution 128.

Coffman's speech, copied below, should be mandatory reading for every member of Congress. To watch a video of the meeting, visit https://coffman.house.gov/videos/?VideoID=Nn_zrw45ocY.

HON. MIKE COFFMAN of colorado

in the house of representatives

Friday, November 3, 2017

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the Government of Ethiopia's continued pattern of repression and violence against its own people, and I urge the House of Representatives to vote on [House Resolution 128](#), the "Supporting Respect for Human Rights and Encouraging Inclusive Governance in Ethiopia Resolution." This resolution calls on the Government of Ethiopia to take clear, decisive, steps toward becoming more inclusive, more democratic, and more respectful of the basic human rights of its own people.

This resolution has overwhelming bipartisan support with more than 70 cosponsors, and it passed out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously on July 27.

The ongoing human rights crisis in Ethiopia is extremely troubling to me, to the resolution's other co-sponsors, the many Americans of Ethiopian heritage, and to numerous human rights groups. I firmly believe that the passage of this resolution will encourage the Ethiopian government to end its practice of violence and repression and provide a strong basis of an inclusive government.

Specifically, this resolution condemns: the excessive use of force by Ethiopian security forces; the killing of peaceful protestors; the arrest and detention of journalists, students, activists, and political leaders, and; the Ethiopian government's abuse of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation to stifle political and civil dissent.

The resolution does not simply highlight the Ethiopian government's increasingly authoritarian acts, but it also encourages the United States to support efforts to improve democracy and governance in Ethiopia. I believe that the United States can take actions that will positively influence the Ethiopian

government and use our existing institutions to further democracy and effective governance in Ethiopia. Critically, the resolution calls on the Ethiopian government to admit UN human rights observers so they can conduct an independent and thorough examination of the current state of human rights in Ethiopia.

On March 9 of this year, the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, held a hearing to discuss specific steps the United States can take to bring about positive changes for the Ethiopian government and their people. Among those who testified was Deacon Yoseph Tafari, of the St. Mary's Ethiopian Orthodox Church located in Aurora, Colorado. Deacon Yoseph was raised in Ethiopia and has experienced the daily struggles too many Ethiopians have faced living in abject poverty under an oppressive government.

Deacon Yoseph fled from Ethiopia in 1976, and came to the United States as a refugee. He and many of the members of the Ethiopian community in my Congressional district in Colorado--including the Oromo and Amharas--have worked diligently to organize and assist those still suffering from repression in their home country.

Oromo Community President of Colorado, Jamal Said, has also shared his concerns with me, and both of these gentlemen have no motives other than a concern about the safety and state of democracy in Ethiopia. I appreciate their leadership in the community as they continue to fight for democracy in their homeland.

Unfortunately, stories like this are not uncommon in my district and I am disappointed that the House has not yet scheduled a floor vote on [House Resolution 128](#). I note that on two prior occasions a vote was tentatively scheduled. In both of these instances it is my understanding that the vote was postponed due to pressure from the Ethiopian government who continues to make promises to curb human rights abuses against their own people but fail to deliver. Additionally, it has been brought to my attention that the Ethiopian Government has threatened to cut off security cooperation with the United States should we proceed with [House Resolution 128](#).

I am particularly dismayed that rather than solving their problems and moving towards becoming a more democratic country, the Ethiopian government has chosen instead to hire a D.C. lobbying firm, at a cost of \$150,000 a month, to ``work with the [Ethiopian Government] to develop and execute a public affairs plan to enhance the dialogue and relationships with policymakers, media, opinion leaders and business leaders . . .'' in addition to ``meetings with members of Congress, their staffs, and executive branch officials.''

The issue the Ethiopian government needs to address is the repression of democracy and its citizens in Ethiopia. The solution to whatever negative perception it has in the halls of the U.S. Congress is not a public affairs one, but rather what concrete steps are being taken against democracy in Ethiopia. That is why I remain committed to working with House leadership to have a vote scheduled on [House Resolution 128](#).

Mr. Speaker, I encourage leadership to schedule a vote and I call on my colleagues to vote in favor and pass [House Resolution 128](#). I will continue working with local Ethiopian community leaders in Colorado and across the country to raise awareness of the human rights abuses occurring in Ethiopia and to bring relief from oppression to the Ethiopian people.