

Washington update - by Mesfin Mekonen
March 6, 2023

1. Continued repression

The Ethiopian people are experiencing continued repression from the government of Abiy Ahmed, including imprisonment of individuals who peacefully oppose the government, attacks on churches, tolerance for and encouragement of ethnic cleansing, and suppression of independent media. The U.S. government must exert its influence in support of fundamental human rights in Ethiopia, the rule of law, and democracy. The Biden administration's failure to condemn crimes committed on a daily basis by an autocratic regime is encouraging the Abiy government to continue its war on the Ethiopian people, causing needless suffering and creating a risk of violence that could destabilize the horn of Africa.

2. Adwa Day

Ethiopian security forces attacked the people they are charged with defending on March 2 during Adwa Day celebrations, beating and tear gassing people, shooting into crowds that included senior citizens and children. One person was killed and many seriously injured. Journalist & human rights defender Eskinder Nega called on the greater Ethiopian people and the international community to join him in condemning the fascist acts committed by the regime during Adwa celebrations in Addis

Ababa, Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission called for an investigation and for responsible government officials to be held accountable.

3. Tamerat Negera, a journalist who was unjustly imprisoned by the government of Abiy Ahmed, has written a letter to the National Press Club expressing appreciation for its support. He wrote that a statement the Press Club issued in March 2022 (<https://www.press.org/newsroom/press-leaders-call-immediate-release-detained-journalists-ethiopia>) protesting his arrest resulted in radio reports by Voice of America's Amhara and Affan Oromo news programs. The spotlight came at a critical time, when he was being transferred to a dangerous prison. The publicity helped protect him. "I am sending this email just to thank you very much for your statements and its contribution for my safety," Tamerat Negara wrote. "I also want to encourage you that no matter how insignificant your statements might feel, when you publish them, they mean a lot for those of us who were in the dungeons and gulags of dictators. I really want to not give up speaking on behalf of those who are persecuted for freedom of speech even when you don't see any result immediately or see the exact outcome you planned for. My story is one example on how press releases and statements can help imprisoned journalists even if they didn't

result in the immediate release of an imprisoned journalist.”

4. Amnesty International

Amnesty International has called on the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to reject efforts by the Ethiopian government to prematurely terminate the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) which is looking into war crimes and other abuses in the country. “The Ethiopian government’s efforts demonstrate its lack of commitment to delivering justice for the millions who have suffered gross human rights violations, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, during the conflict in northern Ethiopia,” said Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, Flavia Mwangovya.

5. Amhara people displaced

Ethiopian media report that local officials have demolished the homes of Amhara people living in houses they legally built on the outskirts of Addis Ababa in Legedadi and Legetaffo areas. The task force that destroyed their homes told the residents to flee the area and settle in a place that has a majority Amhara population.