

Washington Update  
September 23, 2020

1. The present ethnic cleansing in the Benshangul, Afar and northern and southern parts of Ethiopia is the direct result of divide-and-rule ethnic federalism provisions placed in Ethiopia's Constitution by former Prime Minister Meles and the EPRDF party. These provisions were included in the Constitution without the consent of the Ethiopian population. It will be impossible to create a stable political or social environment until this is reformed. Ethnic divisions are artificial and do not have deep roots in Ethiopian history. It is also impossible to have free and fair elections until the constitution is reformed.

2. 1.6 million people were internally displaced in Ethiopia as of July; 66% of them due to armed conflicts, according to the International Organization for Migration.

3. Eskinder Nega and other peaceful opposition political leaders remain in prison under false charges.

4. Senator Ben Cardin (D-Mary.) and Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) have expressed concern about the situation in Ethiopia, especially the jailing of Eskinder Nega. We have been asked to submit official comments from the Ethiopian-American Community. Our statement is extensive. One of the points it will make is that the regime's policies – jailing the peaceful opposition leaders Eskinder Nega and his colleagues, suppressing legitimate political activities, censoring the media, corruption and especially intensifying ethnic divisions – are creating the conditions that breed terrorism. We expressed gratitude from Sen. Cardin for his very active interest in human rights and democracy in Ethiopia, and the hope that the human rights legislation he has sponsored becomes law so the entire world will know that the U.S. really supports democracy and human rights.

5. Laetitia Bader, Horn of Africa director at Human Rights Watch issued the following statement: "The actions of Ethiopia's investigative authorities raise concerns that they have not moved on from past practices of arresting first, and investigating later," said "The authorities should promptly bring credible charges based on clear facts and evidence against the detainees or ensure their release."

6. The government lead by Abiy has failed to stop violence, including bank robberies committed by the Shanne/Oromo Liberation Front, the abduction of University students, the killing of innocent Amhara and Gurages people by extremists, burnings Christian Orthodox churches and the destruction of

proprieties in Shashemne and other Ethiopia regions. Abiy has also failed to prevent the Tigray region from conducting an unsanctioned and illegal election

To avoid tragedy, the Ethiopian government and international community must support the creation of a transitional government that includes members of the peaceful opposition, civic and religious leaders . The transitional government must preside over the revision of the constitution, the formation of a new military representing the 13 provinces and region of Ethiopia, and the formation of a committee for peace and reconciliation. All of these steps must be directed toward the goal of holding new free and fair elections in Ethiopia within a year.

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