



The Honorable Senator James Inhofe
United States Senate,
Washington, D.C.
Subject: **For the Record on Ethiopia and Human Rights**
April 23, 2018

Dear Honorable Senator Inhofe,
The Consortium of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations (**TIBIBIR**) presents its compliments to the Honorable Senator and submits this appeal for your consideration and for the record.
The Consortium of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations (TIBIBIR) is a non-profit organization representing a cross-section of Ethiopia and Diaspora based communities and consisting of 25 faiths, human rights, youth, women as well as academic and professional groups. Committed to the advancement of the rule of law, the protection of human rights, inclusive government and democracy in Ethiopia, TIBIBIR spearheaded unprecedented Convention of Ethiopian political and civic stakeholders in Seattle, Washington from February 16-19, 2018. More than 26 opposition parties as well as representatives of 25 CSOs, together, representatives of 51 diverse and prominent organizations attended this historic conference.
The Convention vowed to work together, mobilize the global community and support the democratic aspirations of Ethiopia's 110 million people. The Convention noted with appreciation the enormous commitments on the part of members of the U.S. House and Senate to pivot U.S. and American relations on the core principles of "supporting human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia." Ethiopians applaud this initiative.
TIBIBIR believes that Ethiopia will serve as a beacon of freedom, the rule of law and democracy and will play a critical role in the struggle against terrorism, fundamentalism and extremism if and when its diverse population enjoys unfettered freedom and human rights.
As you may know, Ethiopia has demonstrated the capacity to serve as an enduring and shining example in the peaceful coexistence of followers of the Christian, Muslim and Judaic faiths. They together believe in the centrality of Ethiopia as a country and being an Ethiopian as a singular national identity. They reject exclusion and marginalization.
Mr. Senior Senator



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In light of the massive human toll on the ground and the required fundamental changes that need to take place in Ethiopia to avert a civil war, TIBIBIR wishes to go on record that your assertions in connection with the unanimous passage of H. Res. 128 by the House and the potential passage of S. Res. 168 by the Senate that are based on human rights violations on the ground are patently wrong. We find it disheartening that, instead of relying heavily on the U.S. Department of States' annual report on human rights violations in Ethiopia, your assertions and conclusions are based purely on information and fake news availed to you by TPLF officials and their agents. Had you talked to a cross-section of Ethiopians during your visits to Ethiopia, you would have acquired a better picture of why the government is considered illegitimate, corrupt and cruel. Members of Congress are knowledgeable of the core issues in Ethiopia.

The TPLF led and dominated regime in Ethiopia is awash with aid monies and is unabashed to spend it to buy favors. We urge you to look into the fact that each month, more than 120,000 children join the ever crowded field of the hungry and the famine. Millions depend on emergency food aid, most of it from the United States. Further, Ethiopia suffers from the worst case of corruption and illicit outflow in its entire history.

If and when passed into law, H. Res. 128 and S. Res. 168 create the legal foundation to go after corrupt officials as well as human rights violators. The new Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed was appointed in large part due to the popular resistance by Ethiopia's youth, 70 percent of the population who were born in the last years of the Military Dictatorship and most under the current regime. It is their cause that matters most.

We attach for your reference a memorandum by an Ethiopian human rights group that lodged a formal complaint against Mengistu Haile Mariam, resident in Zimbabwe and the response of the European Parliament. The vast majority of Ethiopians protesting human rights violations in Ethiopia today have nothing to do with the dictatorship or what is referred to in you Facebook or YouTube release on April 16, 2018 as "regime remnants." Our singular focus is not on the past but the current and future of Ethiopia's 110 million people.

Accordingly, we wish to urge you to change your position and side with the just causes of the vast majority of Ethiopians instead.



We offer the following facts to illustrate why a change in your position will not only serve the long-term interests of the American and Ethiopian people; but will also place you on the right side of history.

1. Between November 2015 and the end of March, 2018, not less than 1,000 innocent Ethiopians, most of them Oromo and Amhara youth were murdered by Ethiopian federal police, special militia, security and defense. These forces are all commandeered by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) that dominates the government.
2. Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, the U.S. Department of State annual report on human rights and others confirm that tens of thousands of Ethiopian have been rounded-up, jailed, tortured and maimed by the Government of Ethiopia. It was after massive global outrage and domestic demonstrations and boycotts that hundreds were released. Thousands remain in jail.
3. Civil conflicts instigated by the governing party resulted in numerous killings and; in the Oromia region alone, in the displacement of more than one million Ethiopians.
4. There is a plethora of evidence that following the flawed 2005 elections democratic and civic space in Ethiopia has steadily diminished. Ethiopia is ranked “in the bottom tier of Freedom House annual global rankings since 2011, dropping further in 2017 (Freedom House Global Ranking).
5. The 2016 & 2017 Department of State Human Rights Report on Ethiopia cited “serious human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, killings, rape, and torture committed by security forces as well as increased restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of association, politically motivated trials, harassment, intimidation, and arrest of opposition members and journalists.”
6. The 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation that is still in place “limits press freedom, silences independent journalists, and persecutes members of the political opposition.” The 2009 equally draconian Charities and Societies Proclamation have been used “to restrict the



operation of civil society and nongovernmental organizations in Ethiopia across a range of purposes, particularly those investigating alleged violations of human rights by governmental authorities.” As practices in Western democracies illustrate, it is virtually impossible to establish democratic governance without independent CSOs.

7. In October, 2016 and subsequent months, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the United Nations Working Group on “enforced or involuntary disappearances and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions publicly called on the Government of Ethiopia to allow an international commission of inquiry to investigate the protests and the violence used against peaceful demonstrators.”

8. On April 21, 2018, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein arrived in Ethiopia for his second official trip in under a year, this time at the invitation of the government of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy. He last visited Ethiopia in May 2017. He will hold talks with the Prime Minister and is most likely to ask for a visit by a Special Rapporteur to review human rights abuses in Ethiopia. Such a request has been recommended in H. Res. 128 passed by the House and in the draft resolution, S. Res. 168 proposed by the Senate.

9. On October 16, 2018, the government of Ethiopia imposed “a far-reaching, six-month State of Emergency that restricted a broad range of actions, including blocking mobile Internet access and social media communications, undermining freedoms of association, expression, and peaceful assembly, which led to the arrest of over 26,000 persons, and which was extended by four months on March 30, 2017.” The state of emergency has since been reinstated for a second time in less than 2 years. Ethiopia is now effectively governed by TPLF military command posts.

10. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch report that thousands of political prisoners remain in jail and another 1,000 have been jailed since January, 2018.



11. The government of Ethiopia admits poor and repressive governance and poor administrative public services and acknowledges that “security forces” have abused innocent civilians.” However, no single federal or regional officer accused of abuses, including killings has been held accountable.

12. There is no documentary evidence that shows civilians including youth “killing, maiming or torturing federal or local police officers or other security personnel. “ It is true that property has been damaged during protests.

We agree with you that Ethiopia and the Ethiopian people need “your” and our prayers. Ethiopians are among the most religious people on earth. They pray each and every day for peaceful coexistence, safety and the rule of law, the unity and sovereignty of their country and for sustainable and equitable development. All faiths participate in the process.

Mr. Senior Senator

TIBIBIR believes that democratic institutions, respect for the rule of law and human rights, participation by the entire society in policy and decision- making, accountable governance and leadership are vital in improving the lives of the Ethiopian people; and in safeguarding against fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism.

For this reason and at minimum, we urge you to refrain from prolonging the agony of the Ethiopian people.

We also pray and hope that you will consider to stand with Ethiopia’s 110 million people by not blocking the passage into law of S. Res. 168. My colleagues and I will be happy to meet with you and/ or with your staff at any time.

Sincerely,

Betru Gebregziabher, Chairman

The Consortium of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations (TIBIBIR)