

## **Open Letter to Senator Russ Feingold, Representative Donald Payne, and to all Members of the Congress of the United States**

By Tecola W. Hagos

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Congress of the United States, which you are a part of at this moment, is the most inept Congress in the history of the United States. Collectively you have failed miserably in carrying out your first duty as elected members of Congress (in the Senate and in the House of Representatives) to protect the human and civil rights of the people who elected you. One has just to look at the content of the PATRIOT ACT to realize how Congress failed to protect the human and civil rights of American Citizens by giving wholesale-power to the Executive Branch of the United States Government. Particularly as part of the Congress, you have conceded over and over to President George Bush imperialistic power allowing him to do most anything without proper check and balance required by the Constitution of the United States. As Members of Congress, you have created a Caesar for President, and you have abandoned illegally your constitutionally mandated responsibilities. In general, all Members of Congress have acted in a cowardly manner masking their fear of losing voters pretending to be patriotic

As Members of Congress, including Senator Feingold and Representative Donald Payne, all have participated in an illegal war against a sovereign nation of Iraq, as well as Afghanistan, based on cooked evidence and lying Executive officials and military commanders. Although in their individual votes some Members have not fully supported the PATRIOT ACT or the war against Iraq, nevertheless, they are part of the collective and as such responsible. It is no excuse to claim that one has been misled by the Executive. All Members of Congress were all willing participants in the lies and deceptions that resulted in an unjust war where millions were killed or murdered by United States Military and where the United States forces further caused the destruction of infrastructure, such as factories, irrigation systems, even hospitals et cetera illegal acts under international law. Members of Congress did nothing when the Bush commanded Military, as a matter of Executive decision, tortured Prisoners of War and treated other civilians caught in areas of conflicts with brutality and violence including murders and rape contrary to the Geneva Conventions and Protocols. In other words, the hands of every Member of Congress, up to his or her armpits, are soaked with the blood of millions of innocent Iraqi and Afghan people. Members of Congress have absolutely no moral standing to judge anyone in the world on ethical grounds.

Now, coming directly to the proposed Bill, "Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia Act of 2008," I am making the following comment with great pain, for at one point I had thought of Senator Feingold as a Senator with great future. It is incomprehensible to me how a Senator with such obvious intellect could be so blind-sighted that he gives as his reason for introducing the Bill, "Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia Act of 2008," the very consequences that contradict what the Bill is supposed to achieve. Senator Feingold stated on the Floor of the Senate introducing "Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia Act of 2008" that the Bill's purpose is "to reaffirm policy objectives towards

Ethiopia and encourage greater commitment to the underpinnings of a true democracy—an independent judiciary and the rule of law, respect for human and political rights, and an end to restrictions on the media and non-governmental organizations.” To begin with I could not fathom the arrogance of Senator Feingold trying to dictate terms to a sovereign nation, as if Ethiopia is the State of Wisconsin. Ethiopia was a powerful state even before there was a Europe. Some degree of historical perspective is necessary here. *Mit lenatua astemarch*. Any fresh graduate of law school who had studied even introductory courses on the law of nations, or on international organizations and obligations under multilateral treaties such as the Charter of the United Nations could easily see serious infractions on the sovereign rights of Ethiopia in the types of bills being sponsored by Feingold and Payne. A good starting point for re-educating those Members of Congress who might have forgotten the principles of comity, equality of States, and friendly relations would be the 1970 United Nations General Assembly resolution on the “Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,” G.A. res. 2625, Annex, 25 UN GAOR, Supp. (No. 28), U.N. Doc. A/5217 at 121 (1970). This General Assembly Resolution 2625 is no ordinary resolution but a *lex lata*.

Senator Feingold seems to be a confused man. For example, after identifying the “Horn” region as a dangerous area, and characterizing Ethiopia’s neighboring countries from being genocidal to promoting terrorists, he then turns on Ethiopia that he identified as a friendly and stable nation and slaps it with a disrespectful and patronizing Bill. He stated, “Ethiopia sits on the Horn of Africa—perhaps one of the roughest neighborhoods in the world, with Somalia a failed state and safe haven for terrorists, Eritrea an inaccessible authoritarian government that meddles across national borders, Sudan a genocidal regime, and Kenya still emerging from a profound electoral crisis. One look at the deteriorating situation across the Horn and the importance of a robust relationship with Ethiopia is obvious. And, by contrast with some of its neighbors, Ethiopia appears relatively stable with a growing economy. But I am concerned about a number of anti-democratic actions in that country, particularly since this administration has largely overlooked them.” This is absurd. Senator Feingold must be told in no uncertain terms that the reason he gave for introducing the Bill is idiotic, not worthy of a Senator. A grade school child knows that one does not attack a friend on ones team even if that team member is a weak player. It is an impossibility to try to bring about democratic change by destabilizing Ethiopia, the only stable country in the region.

Senator Feingold is a supporter of Israel, a nation the United Nations General Assembly at one point shunned for a period of time by labeling Israel a Zionist state equating Zionism with racism and Apartheid. What is happening in Ethiopia is a child’s play compared to the severity and the pervasiveness of the violation of human rights of Palestinians by the Israeli Government due to long term occupation, mass detention, building illegally walls on Palestinian land, creating facts on the ground favorable to Israel and driving out Palestinians out of their homes and land. If Senator Feingold is interested in human rights, he should have started looking into the violations of the human rights of Palestinians by Israel before he points his finger at Ethiopia. I know of no instance where Senator Feingold ever criticized even some of the most outrageous

acts of violence by the Israeli Government forces against Palestinian civilians. Senator Feingold is a hypocrite, no better than a *tera cherchari*.

In case of Egypt the United States Government yearly provided over 2 billion dollars in assistance free and clear for over twenty years. Egypt is run by the most repressive authoritarian Government in Africa. What does the United States Government get in return from such a nation whose nationals were some of the 9/11 terrorists. Egypt is not involved in any of America's wars as a partner in the Middle East, it has refused to participate in any of the war theaters in Iraq or Afghanistan. If at all Egypt might be secretly financing terrorists. By contrast the brave men and women of Ethiopia's great military forces fought side by side with America's sons and daughters in Korea, and Ethiopians still continue fighting on the side of the United States against terrorists in Somalia to date. Egypt has targeted Ethiopia for a long time from the time of Pharaoh Hatshepsut, for over three thousand years. In our own time, Egypt financed and trained so called "liberation" fighters and terrorists aimed to destabilize Ethiopia and the region for almost half a century. Egypt wants Ethiopia destabilized and in chaos so that it will use the water of the Nile unchallenged because almost 90% of the water of the Nile that reached Egypt originate from the highlands of Ethiopia—the Blue Nile Basin. All of the fertile soil in Egypt is soil taken by the Blue Nile from Ethiopia. Currently, Egypt is involved along with Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan in the Islamic Courts insurgency in Somalia. The Islamic Courts leaders were identified having close links with Osama bin Laden terrorist operations. And yet, there is no attempt by Congress to pass a Bill to "democratize" the far worse Government of Egypt. Shame on all Members of Congress, picking on Ethiopia America's friend at a time of its greatest political weakness!

It is laughable that the United States Congress is spending its valuable time considering the lack of democracy in Ethiopia when it has far more formidable problems right in its own front yard. The Congress has been unable to deal with the recession and handle the economy of the United States. It has failed monumentally dealing with national security problems. It is overwhelmed by the corruption in the mortgage and financial markets, the war expenditure of two unpopular wars, and a President who is constantly thumbing his nose at Congress. Why is it important whether Ethiopia is a democratic nation? What sin did Ethiopia commit against the United States that two of the Senators of the United States are introducing a Bill that is disrespectful, patronizing, and devoid of any real merit except to alienate a friendly Government? It sets bad precedent and negates the idea of the equality of states, a principle that is the cornerstone of all international relations and the very foundation of the United Nations organization.

The problem Ethiopians have with the Government of Meles Zenawi is the business of Ethiopians and nobody else's. I despise Meles Zenawi for what he has done to our beloved Ethiopia. However, I insist solving our problem and fighting our fights by ourselves than running to some "big brother" to do our fighting. I am aware of the Al Mariams of the World who are making a career out of blackmailing the Ethiopian people pretending to be on their side. Nothing is more humiliating for Ethiopians to see one of their own lobbying the Congress of the United States to pass some legislation that will reduce the Sovereign nation of Ethiopia into some form of a "protectorate" no

different than a colony of the United State. If my history is not that rusty, I remember that our ancestors chose to go to war than let Italy act as our agent and speak on our behalf undermining our Sovereignty—the Adowa battle. I have read and also heard all kinds of rational why some Diaspora Ethiopians favor such a Bill. Their main arguments are two: 1) by having such a Bill, Meles Zenawi will be forced to respect the human and democratic rights of the people of Ethiopia; and 2) since the United States is providing billions of dollars in economic and military assistance to Ethiopia, it can demand that the Ethiopian Government follow certain set of guidelines and submit to be monitored by the United States Government. Both arguments are based on faulty premises and are contrary to well evolved principles and practices of international relationships and international norms and laws.

If the concern of Al Mariam and his supporters were truly in the best interest of Ethiopia, there is no need to have the name of Ethiopia mentioned in those Bills. The same result would have been attained by simply erasing the name “Ethiopia” from both the Joint Feingold Bill and that of Payne’s HR 2003. The same ideas contained in both Bills could have been stated as general principles governing all recipients of American money without singling out Ethiopia. The goal of democratization, the system of safeguarding democratic and human rights et cetera would have been implemented far more effectively than cornering a nation to accept such degrading status. Mentioning Ethiopia alone in the Feingold Bill and in HR 2003 of a year ago, in a region where there are nations with worse records of violations of human rights, is a pointed insult to our Ethiopian national pride and a serious erosion of our Ethiopian Sovereignty. What is tragic is that the people behind all this anti Ethiopia movement may in fact be agents of our historic enemies such as Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Pakistan, and now Eritrea. It is clearly established due to his activities that Representative Donald Payne is no different than an official agent of the Eritrean Government. What Al Mariam and supporters are doing is that in trying to hurt Meles Zenawi, they are hurting Ethiopia and Ethiopians that will last a long time. Government leaders come and go, what endures is Ethiopia. If Al Mariam and supporters lived about a hundred and fifty years ago during the “Scramble for Africa,” I believe they would have negotiated in secret with the Italians or the French or the English undermining their Emperor and selling out Ethiopian territory for weapon and money. Thus one must be very careful in fighting to oust Meles Zenawi so that one does not throw the baby with the used bath water.

I would like it be clearly understood by every Member of the Congress of the United States that it is personally offensive to me to witness the display of such arrogance and disrespect of my country in mentioning Ethiopia in the heading of a local Joint Bill. As a matter of ethics and political duty to my people, I call upon all patriotic Ethiopians to oppose Senator Feingold’s Bill and Payne’s HR 2003. There are other ways to effect change in Ethiopia than to use a steamroller Bill. There is no need to insult a whole people by subjecting their Government to abide by set of rules imposed by a foreign and arrogant country. What the Bill is attempting to do is to blackmail the current Ethiopian Government to dance to a certain tune that Congress has arbitrarily set if that Government wants to receive economic assistance. One must take into account the current situation where Ethiopia is at crossroads. Kicking out Meles Zenawi and

destabilizing Ethiopia through the forces of alien politicians will not bring about peace and security to Ethiopia. Instead it will fracture Ethiopia in such a way that millions will suffer and the nation will descend into civil war. The solution is not to be found in using outside forces, such as political and economic pressure of foreign countries, but by working with other Ethiopians in Ethiopia including the political parties functioning in Ethiopia. Governments change through time, but what endures and remains as part of the ethos of a people is the harm they suffered in the hands of traitors. If this means having to be in bed with the current Ethiopian Government, it is a small price to pay in order to preserve the sovereignty and dignity of Ethiopia. Let us remember the fact that the hardest shoving could be achieved only by those who are very close to the individual to be kicked off.

In order to gain time to start the ball of effective change rolling and to place the right individuals at the right places, there need be a government in Ethiopia with some degree of stability. Thus, for the sake of our long term interest, I advice the Ethiopian Government to take this issue very seriously to the extent of modifying its diplomatic relationships with the United States and to counter this kind of blackmailing with its own new initiatives. However, I urge the Ethiopian Government not to fall for the devious subscript that is aimed to undermine the relationship between Ethiopia and the Executive Branch of the United States Government. Such a scheme has been spearheaded by Eritrea's virtual agent Representative Payne for sometime now. The Ethiopian Ambassador here in Washington DC has failed repeatedly in his mission to protect the sovereignty and dignity of Ethiopia. He ought to be given sufficient support and manpower by the Ethiopian Government in order to be effective in his mission. The alternative is to replace him with far more dynamic and resourceful individual. I would suggest also charging Al Mariam and his supporters, including Senator Feingold and Representative Payne, with criminal charges under the Ethiopian Penal Code for undermining the economic vital interest and Sovereignty of Ethiopia. These individuals are not immune from prosecution under the laws of Ethiopia. I urge the Members of Congress not to allow such travesty of justice and insult of a friendly nation to stand.

Sincerely

Tecola W. Hagos  
September 12, 2008  
Washington, DC

#### **Appendix A**

#### **STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS**

By Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 3457. A bill to reaffirm United States objectives in Ethiopia and encourage critical democratic and humanitarian principles and practices, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, today I am pleased to introduce the Support for Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia Act of 2008. Senator LEAHY joins me as an

original cosponsor. The purpose of this bill is to reaffirm policy objectives towards Ethiopia and encourage greater commitment to the underpinnings of a true democracy—an independent judiciary and the rule of law, respect for human and political rights, and an end to restrictions on the media and non-governmental organizations.

As many in this body know, I have spoken numerous times in recent months about the situation in Ethiopia and I continue to believe that the U.S.-Ethiopian partnership is very important—one of the more critical ones given not only our historic relationship but also Ethiopia's location in an increasingly strategic region. Ethiopia sits on the Horn of Africa—perhaps one of the roughest neighborhoods in the world, with Somalia a failed state and safe haven for terrorists, Eritrea an inaccessible authoritarian government that meddles across national borders, Sudan a genocidal regime, and Kenya still emerging from a profound electoral crisis. One look at the deteriorating situation across the Horn and the importance of a robust relationship with Ethiopia is obvious. And, by contrast with some of its neighbors, Ethiopia appears relatively stable with a growing economy. But I am concerned about a number of anti-democratic actions in that country, particularly since this administration has largely overlooked them.

The security threats in Ethiopia are real but, unfortunately, the Bush administration's approach to addressing these threats and strengthening this alliance remains short-sighted and narrow—focusing predominately on short-term ways to address insecurity while overlooking the need for long-term measures that are needed to achieve the same goal, such as desperately needed governance reform, the rule of law, and increased accountability. Genuine democratic progress in Ethiopia is essential if we are to have a healthy and positive bilateral relationship. It is also essential if we are going to successfully combat extremism, thereby bolstering our own national security here at home.

That is why today I am introducing the Support for Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia Act of 2008—because as our administration fails to balance our priorities in Ethiopia, or to adopt comprehensive strategies to achieve those priorities, we are watching significant backsliding in previously hard-won democratic gains. As we turn a blind eye to the escalating political tensions, people are being thrown in jail without justification and non-government organizations are being restricted, while civilians are dying unnecessarily in the Ogaden region—just like so many before them in Oromiya, Amhara, and Gambella. Furthermore, the Ethiopian military has come under increasing scrutiny for its conduct in the Ogaden as well as Somalia, with credible reports from non-governmental organizations of torture, rape and indiscriminate attacks. By providing unconditioned security assistance we are also sowing the seeds of insecurity and creating new grievances both in Ethiopia and in its neighboring countries.

I want to see greater progress—not less—in Ethiopia which is why this bill authorizes an additional \$20 million for democracy and governance projects in Ethiopia. The addition of these funds would make it one of the top five countries on the continent receiving this kind of assistance from this U.S. Government. This bill calls on the President to take additional steps to implement these programs but also requires that

funds made available to the Ethiopian government be subject to regular congressional notification. This ensures U.S. taxpayer dollars are being used appropriately—and used to support a government taking steps to become more democratic, not less.

I make it a practice to pay for all bills I introduce, and the authorization in this bill is offset by a transfer of funds from NASA. Some may disagree with me on the need for an offset, but recent Office of Management and Budget projections confirm that we now have the biggest budget deficit in the history of our country. We cannot afford to be fiscally irresponsible so we must make choices to ensure that our children and grandchildren do not bear the burden of our reckless spending. Instead of cutting specific programs, which are likely to have begun and thus would cost more to close, transferring \$20 million from the general budget would allow appropriators to evaluate, at their discretion, how best to make this transfer.

I ask my colleagues to consider what our own State Department has said about the political situation in Ethiopia and then consider how best to rectify the situation. The 2007 State Department Report on Human Rights notes that in Ethiopia the following occurred: "limitation[s] on citizens' right to change their government during the most recent elections; unlawful killings, and beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of those suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the opposition or insurgent groups; detention of thousands without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights and frequent refusal to follow the law regarding search warrants; use of excessive force by security services in an internal conflict and counter-insurgency operations; restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists for publishing articles critical of the government; restrictions on freedom of assembly; limitations on freedom of association; violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation, FGM; exploitation of children for economic and sexual purposes; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities and religious and ethnic minorities; and government interference in union activities, including killing and harassment of union leaders."

The continued failure of the administration to acknowledge this reality is emblematic of its insular thinking and unwillingness to see the big picture. Without a balanced policy that addresses both short and long-term concerns in Ethiopia we are putting ourselves at greater risk and making ourselves more vulnerable, not less.

## **Appendix B**

**Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, G.A. res. 2625, Annex, 25 UN GAOR, Supp. (No. 28), U.N. Doc. A/5217 at 121 (1970):**

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* its resolutions 1815 (XVII) of 18 December 1962, 1966 (XVIII) of 16 December 1963, 2103 (XX) of 20 December 1965, 2181 (XXI) of 12 December 1966,

2327 (XXII) of 18 December 1967, 2463 (XXIII) of 20 December 1968 and 2533 (XXIV) of 8 December 1969, in which it affirmed the importance of the progressive development and codification of the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and co-operation among States,

*Having considered* the report of the Special Committee on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among states\* which met in Geneva from 31 March to 1 May 1970,

*Emphasizing* the paramount importance of the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security and for the development of friendly relations and co-operation among States,

*Deeply convinced* that the adoption of the Declaration of Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the charter of the United Nations on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations would contribute to the strengthening of world peace and constitute a landmark in the development of international law and of relations States, in promoting the rule of law among nations and particularly the universal application of the principles embodied in the Charter,

*Considering* the desirability of the wide dissemination of the text of the Declaration,

1. *Approves* the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the text of which is annexed to the present resolution;
2. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Special Committee on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States for its work resulting in the elaboration of the Declaration;
3. *Recommends* that all efforts be made so that the Declaration becomes generally known.

***1883rd plenary meeting, 24 October 1970.***

**\* Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fifth Session, Supplement No.18 (A/8018).**

### **Appendix C**

Ethiopia might face problems with U.S. Congress's HR 2003

Gemedo Humnasa

October 03, 2007

There are many things that I don't agree with the EPRDF ruling party in Ethiopia. Particularly, I don't agree that the young democratic institutions are promptly improving in Ethiopia today. But under HR 2003, Ethiopia's security, Ethiopia's economic and political progress might get in jeopardy.

The UN monitoring group said that Eritrea and many other countries were arming the ICU extremists in 2006. We also know that the danger brought by ICU's ally ONLF rebels is a danger against all Ethiopians including many Somali-Ethiopians who



obviously see the one sub-clan led ONLF as an enemy. So it is clear how important security assistance from US means for Ethiopia. Any substantial security assistance reduction to Ethiopia indirectly means reduction in Ethiopia's national budget to other sectors, because without national security, one must ask, how can Ethiopia survive in one of the most dangerous regions in the world? Most of all, democratic advancement and economic development (the aspects HR 2003 precisely claims to advocate) can happen only when Ethiopia has security as a nation. What HR 2003 will be doing is threatening everything necessary in Ethiopia.

According to the UN monitoring document publicized in 2006, the ICU and ONLF rebels have the assistance of Eritrea, Iran, Libya and extremist organizations in Afghanistan, Egypt and many Gulf countries. So the HR 2003 bill diminishing the security support from the dependable ally of Ethiopia – America - would put Ethiopia in a vulnerable position.

### **Unintelligent Congressional intelligence service**

The Ethiopian government should not expect any neutral and rational decision to come from a U.S. Congress influenced by Congressman Donald Payne. The close work of Donald Payne and Co with only one of the numerous political parties in Ethiopia used to make people wonder if Mr. Payne's phonebook is filled with exiled convicts-turned-journalists like Elias Kifle and extremist parts of the CUD party who already rejected democracy by rejecting their parliament appointment post the best election in Ethiopia's history. Now no one is wondering for we know for sure of Donald Payne's friends. Also we already know the Congressional Research Service on Africa is led by Ted Dagne, an analysts who has already failed in Sudan and is currently misleading Congress on Ethiopia as well. So the future of Congressional intelligence on East Africa is bleak.

Extremist and exiled Ethiopian politicians will also continue to use their host countries as a weapon. What is happening in America with exiled Ethiopian politicians has become humorous at times. During the last 5 years, we have actually seen exiled criminals, who helped kill up to 150,000 Ethiopians during the Mengistu 1980s regime, coordinating a round-table and forums on human rights in the colleges of America. This is like Nazi officials organizing human rights conference in American colleges as if they value the life of a Jew. Unfortunately, westerners have no way to know who from Africa they are talking to and they remain gullible enough to be used.

### **Berhanu Nega, doing a service for rogue Eritrean regime**

It is important for Ethiopia to educate Diaspora Ethiopians and westerners using the same technique used by exiled Ethiopian politicians. It is also important for the Ethiopian parliament to condemn politicians like Berhanu Nega for putting Ethiopia in such a dangerous position. (Very disappointing for this writer to see a respectable man like Berhanu Nega harming Ethiopia's national interests) One can't expect to be protected by a constitution that he or she is fighting day and night to damage - just can't have both at

the same time. It is an understatement to say that Berhanu Nega and co are currently doing the dirty foreign relations work of the Eritrean government by keeping the attention of U.S. Congress away from Eritrean regime's assistance to Al-Qaida linked extremists in Mogadishu. Indeed, Berhanu Nega and other politicians have deeply harmed Ethiopian interests, some by indirectly becoming Eritrea regime's agents. For the Ethiopian government to allow Eritrea's agents in its country is a conflicting policy. The Ethiopian government has already outlawed OLF rebels for being the agent of Eritrea. Why isn't the Ethiopian government outlawing the work of similar politicians like Berhanu Nega and co for working for Eritrea? In fact, Berhanu Nega and other supporters of HR 2003 have done more harm supporting Eritrean government's interests against Ethiopia in just the last one year, than the work of OLF the whole last 15 years. Alas, the Eritrean government which has no free press, no multiparty elections, no religious minority freedom of worship and with one of the least GDP growth in Africa might get rescued by Berhanu Nega, from U.S. sanctions. And Berhanu Nega is going to be the mayor of Addis Ababa?

### **Poverty, and HR 2003 vis-à-vis uniting mechanisms**

If this 2007 year was like the year 1985 under Dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, nothing that happens in the White House would be important for Mengistu's Ethiopian government because Dictator Mengistu would have mocked Congress for threatening him. Mengistu would have laughed in the face of Congressman Donald Payne for intimidating him because Mengistu never cared about the poverty in Ethiopia. Mengistu smiled his way out to a lavish life in exile as 1 million Ethiopians perished with lack of the food stored only 1 mile away in Mengistu's camps. But Meles Zenawi and his EPRDF party leaders actually do care and they know that the even bigger 85 Million Ethiopian population can not achieve basic economic development goals without the assistance of vital friends like the United States. A security assistance reduction triggering a lower budget allocation for infrastructure building in Ethiopia would certainly damage economic development of Ethiopia. So for EPRDF and all humane Ethiopians, it is important not to play political games with the future of poor Ethiopians who need foreign assistance to help get out of the poverty while having security.

The Ethiopian parliament marking HR 2003 and similar attempts by Diaspora extremist politicians as an outlaw act is very important. This will teach Diaspora politicians that their attempt to hijack the slow democratic progress using westerners as proxy is not appreciated and is, in fact, the most unpatriotic act. This will teach ethnic based Diaspora politicians that they can't promote their one-ethnic politics using the White House. As all analysts already know, the cronies hired by HR 2003 sponsors only care about EPRP and CUD groups, or the Neftenga Amhara-led political parties. So HR 2003 will strengthen divisive politics and encourage Ethiopian politicians with extreme ideologies to disown their vital role in a multiparty democratic system. HR 2003 will certainly embolden the violent armed groups, even make some of them think that the bill will bring the fall of EPRDF government and take them to the promise land to power.

Most of all, putting the destiny of the development of Ethiopian democratic institutions in

the hands of American Congressmen and exiled Ethiopian politicians will damage Ethiopian unity even more. Ethiopian 1890s Emperor Menilik's and the Balcha Aba Nefso Ethiopian army's victory over Italian invasion was not just heroic and impressive, but it was also the strongest "uniting mechanism" in Ethiopian history. In fact, the region has witnessed numerous ethnic wars between Amhara and Tigre, between Amhara and Oromo, between Oromo and Sidamo, between Somali and Amhara etc for the last 1,500 years or so. But a united Ethiopia's victorious war against Italy was a historical moment where all ethnicities of the region united to defeat a better armed European Empire. Today, Ethiopia has a chance to produce another historical & important uniting mechanism by gradually achieving a mature democracy together, instead of an imported one sponsored by only one political party with the help of the confused Congressman Donald Payne.

We already know HR 2003 is destructive, but let us assume that HR 2003 does a miracle and a bunch of chubby Congressmen forcefully enforce democracy on Ethiopia by the year 2040. Now, the question for all Ethiopians still is, do you want your children to forever worship US Congressmen for "bringing" democracy to Ethiopia OR do you want your children to honor patriotic Ethiopian forefathers for bringing grassroots-based democracy to Ethiopia?

### **HR 2003 improving democracy, even a pint, is a BIG IF**

HR 2003 being able to improve democracy in Ethiopia, even a little bit, is questionable and doubtful. Other than U.S. Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer and regional analyst J. Peter Pham, all other speakers during the latest US Congress meeting failed to meet basic levels of impartiality. Bringing the Iranian Saman Zarifi from the Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Ogaden Human Rights Committee (OHRC) to speak in front of Congress has left Congress more clueless than they were before. Obviously, OHRC is the wing of the ONLF militants itself, as [already proven](#) before. The OHRC officials know they are being exposed. That's why the stuttering OHRC speaker, Fowsia Abdulkadir, said the word "independent" about OHRC, so many times to Congress, so that Congress doesn't become suspicious.

Yet Human Rights Watch is obviously credible as an institution and it mostly reports accurate data. Even when HRW gets some details wrong, it doesn't report inaccuracies purposely. For instance, according to HRW itself, all the evidence it got about the Ogaden conflict abuses was from Ogadeni witnesses who were told to run away by ONLF rebels during the battle. To expect such refugee "witnesses" to glorify the Ethiopian government is a mockery of Ethiopian politics. In fact, it is the duty of such witnesses directed out of Ethiopia by ONLF, to vilify the Ethiopian government as much as possible. Especially those "refugee witnesses" who flee out of Ethiopia (instead of fleeing away from the conflict, by going towards the stable eastern Ethiopia of Jijgija zone) are often the ONLF rebel supporters. This is elementary information for regional political analysts but no one expects HRW to know this because no one expects HRW to know politics. That is why experts and political analysts like Doctor Peter Pham are necessary, though unfortunately, the doctor was ignored by Congress this time around.

Still, we have to admit that, even if many things have improved in Ethiopia, extrajudicial killings still happen in many places around Ethiopia. These extrajudicial killings are also reported on U.S. State Department's report. But nothing can change this reality in Ethiopia easily since it is related to complex historical political developments. Whether it is HR 2003, HR 2004 or HR 2 million, nothing would fix this issue unless violent insurgencies choose peaceful path to resolve their grievances. Or using the words of U.S. assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer, "insurgencies just don't have the right to exist." It is the duty of Ethiopian and any government, ruling in the center of an unstable region, to respond to terrorist attacks and "military operations" by rebels. When a bunch of ONLF and other rebels in other parts of Ethiopia (with the support of clandestine radios and external forces) violently raid local Ethiopian officials with machine guns, does a local Ethiopian official even have the time to arrest the armed bandits? It defies common sense for an Ethiopian government official facing a shot gun in his face, to invite the armed gunmen to a criminal court. This doesn't happen even in Hollywood. So, basically shooting to kill before one gets killed is the only natural thing anyone in their right mind would do if faced with a violent gunmen. And this is what has been going on in Ethiopia for many years. With small exceptions, almost all recorded "extrajudicial" killings in Ethiopia occur this way and HRW will certainly have a much longer list of "extrajudicial" killings to report for the future. In other words, HRW Africa branch staff will not file for unemployment any time soon.

So, fundamentally, the basis of reported abuses in Ethiopia is questionable, and condemning an Ethiopian government emboldens rebels and bandits to continue their violent path only. HR 2003 would simply do all these against Ethiopia. The violent but desperate rebels roaming around Ethiopia are known to be an easily excited bunch who were prematurely celebrating the destruction of the ruling party and celebrating the disintegration of Ethiopia during the post election violence in 2005. So it doesn't take much to excite the militants at all. Thus, the number one success of HR 2003 would be exciting and encouraging militants around Ethiopia.

In addition to all this, despite being the most flexible governing party in Ethiopian history, the current Ethiopian ruling party (just like ordinary Ethiopians) is still very stubborn and will make sure that HR 2003 doesn't influence Ethiopian domestic politics - just to irritate and annoy Mr. Donald Payne. So at the end of the day, HR 2003 pulls democracy backwards, encourages divisive politics, dwindles allocation of national budget for infrastructure to make up for the lost U.S. assistance for security, supports only one party out of dozens, threatens regional stability and emboldens armed groups all around East Africa, including the Al-Qaeda linked ICU rebels.