

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 19, 2010

The Honorable Johnnie Carson  
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St NW  
Washington DC 20521

Dear Ambassador Carson:

We are concerned that in the weeks and months prior to the May 23 elections in Ethiopia, the government of Meles Zenawi has acted to suppress democratic opposition voices. Human Rights Watch has recently concluded that “the Ethiopian government is waging a coordinated and sustained attack on political opponents, journalists, and rights activists ahead of the May 2010 elections.” Opposition candidates and activists, including Birtukan Mideksa, have been assaulted or detained by police, and many opposition groups have been prevented from opening local offices. In December, 2009, the most prominent opposition newspaper was closed, and in April 2010, the government began jamming Voice of America broadcasts.

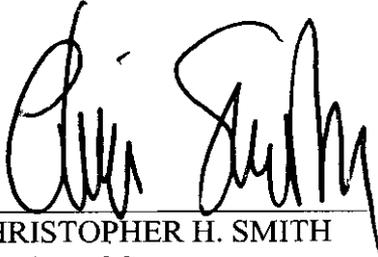
We are also aware that the Department of State’s 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices documented that the Meles government’s practices include:

Unlawful killings, torture, beating, abuse and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces, often acting with evident impunity; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of suspected sympathizers or members of opposition or insurgent groups; police, administrative, and judicial corruption; detention without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement of citizens’ privacy rights, including illegal searches; use of excessive force by security services in an internal conflict and counterinsurgency operations; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists; restrictions on freedom of assembly and association...

Like most Americans, we believe that our country must never be silent about grave human rights abuses. Yet in recent years our government has rarely spoken out

about the Meles government's human rights violations. In view of the 200 peaceful protestors killed by government troops after the 2005 Ethiopian elections, and the intimidation that has already preceded this election, we urge our government to speak publicly to the flaws in this election, and to send a strong message to the Ethiopian government that its conduct during and after these elections will be a very important factor in the development of U.S.-Ethiopian relations.

Sincerely,



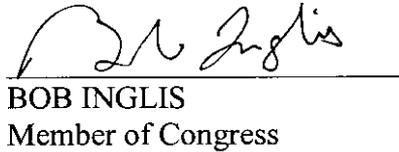
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