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For Immediate Release
October 18, 2007

H.R. 2003

“Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007”

U.S. SENATE ADVOCACY PACKET

Packet Includes:

1. Talking Points
2. Ethiopian Regime Arguments
3. Current Human Rights Situation
4. Sample Letter to Senators
5. Contact Information for Senators
6. Link to Testimony and Photographic Evidence of Victims of H.R. Abuses
(Submitted to European Parliament/Cong. Briefing Inquiry Commission)

HOW TO USE ADVOCACY MATERIALS

Use materials from the packet to do your grassroots advocacy.

The Coalition recommends a personal visit to your Senator’s office (or other Senators’ offices) if you live in the Washington metro area, or if you are visiting Washington, D.C.

If a personal visit to Congress is not possible, please visit the **district offices of your Senators** in your state and meet with staffers. Ask that your message and advocacy materials be transmitted to Congress.

Alternatively, **please fax items 1-4, with a cover letter, and follow up with a telephone call.** PLEASE PERSONALIZE YOUR COVER LETTER by indicating your state, profession and special interests in promoting human rights in Ethiopia and so on.

In your **Congressional visits and discussions** with Senators and/or Senate staffers, assemble **Items 1-4 and 6** in a **neat folder** with a cover letter (item #4) on top and present it to them. If possible, attach a copy of the pdf document (testimony and photographs) available at:

<http://www.mdhe.org/doc/personskilled%20.pdf>

FOLLOW UP WITH PHONE CALLS!!!!!!!!!!!!

Please keep in mind that Senators and their staffers are extremely busy people. Be respectful and appreciative of their time. Use “Talking Points” to highlight important facts and issues about H.R. 2003. Stay focused on the Talking Points and answer questions, if any.



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TALKING POINTS **ETHIOPIA HUMAN RIGHTS**

H.R. 2003

“ETHIOPIA DEMOCRACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2007”

I. On October 2, 2007, the House unanimously passed H.R. 2003.

H.R. 2003 passed unanimously in the House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health on July 27, 2007. It also passed unanimously in the House Foreign Relations Committee on September 26, 2007. It passed unanimously on the House floor on October 2, 2007.

II. H.R. 2003 Passed the House With Full Bi-Partisan Support

H.R. 2003 has 85 co-sponsors in the House. H.R. 2003 was introduced in the last Congress by Christopher Smith (R-New Jersey), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations in the form of H.R. 5680. Members of the House Black Caucus fully support the bill and have officially co-sponsored it.

III. H.R. 2003 is Co-authored by the Membership of the House Black Caucus

H.R. 2003 is fully supported by the Congressional Black Caucus and co-authored by its individual members.

IV. H.R. 2003 is Intended to Promote Human Rights in Ethiopia

Under Sections 3 and 5, H.R. 2003

- Seeks release and/or speedy trial of all political prisoners in the country.
- Urges prosecution of persons who have committed gross human rights violations.
- Provides financial support to strengthen human rights and civil society groups.
- Promotes and bolsters the independence of the Ethiopian judiciary by various means.
- Supports independent media operation without government censorship.
- Expands the Voice of America's Ethiopia program.
- Facilitates access to the Ogaden region by humanitarian organizations.
- Provides assistance to strengthen local, regional, and national parliaments.
- Promotes dialogue and negotiated settlement of political disputes.
- Provides training for civil society groups in election participation and monitoring.
- Provides support to improve the performance of the Ethiopian National Election Board and political parties in the country.

V. H.R. 2003 Does NOT Affect U.S. Counter-terrorism Policy in the Horn of Africa.

Section 5 B of H.R. 2003 exempts application of the bill to counter terrorism and related efforts. “(B) EXCEPTION.--Subparagraph (A) shall not apply with respect to peacekeeping assistance, counter-terrorism assistance, or international military education and training for civilian personnel under section 541 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.” It prohibits use of American military aid to violate human rights. “Peacekeeping or counter-terrorism assistance provided to Ethiopia shall not be used for any other security-related purpose or to provide training to security personnel or units against whom there is credible evidence of gross human rights abuses or violations.” (Emphasis added.)

VI. H.R. 2003 Does NOT Affect U.S. Humanitarian Assistance to Ethiopia.

H.R. 2003 allows Ethiopia to receive food aid programs, assistance to combat HIV/AIDS and other health care assistance, peacekeeping assistance, and counter-terrorism assistance. Section 4, (2) (A) (B) provides, “Nonessential United States assistance (EXCLUDING “humanitarian assistance, food aid programs, assistance to combat HIV/AIDS and other health care assistance, peacekeeping assistance, and counter-terrorism assistance) shall not be made available to the Government of Ethiopia if the Government of Ethiopia acts to obstruct United States technical assistance to advance human rights, democracy, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, economic development, and economic freedom in Ethiopia. (Emphasis added.)

VII. H.R. 2003 Demonstrates That Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Are Central Values in American Foreign Policy.

The U.S. is often criticized for supporting dictatorships throughout the world out of political expediency. H.R. 2003 demonstrates to the world that America supports human rights, accountability and the rule of law. It demonstrates to the people of Ethiopia and all Africans that America will not allow its military aid to be used for political repression.



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**ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S ARGUMENTS
IN OPPOSITION TO
H.R. 2003
(ETHIOPIA DEMOCRACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2007)**

According to D. L. A. Piper, the Lobbying Firm Representing the Government of Ethiopia,

I. "H.R. 2003 Threatens U.S. National Security Interests."

H.R. 2003 is said to "threaten U.S. national interests" by undermining the strategic counter-terrorism partnership with Ethiopia, imposing onerous sanctions and limiting U.S. security assistance to democratize Ethiopian military institutions.

Response: H.R. 2003 does not in any way threaten U.S. national security interests. The certification and sanctions requirements apply only if the Government of Ethiopia fails to release political prisoners, prosecute persons suspected of gross human rights violations, and disallows the functioning of a free independent press and human rights and civil society groups. continue to politicize the judiciary, and prevent the establishment of democratic institutions, among others. (See Sec. 6, (a) (3) (A-K) of the bill.)

II. "H.R. 2003 Overlooks Progress Toward Democracy and Reconciliation"

H.R. 2003 "overlooks" the "immense progress made in Ethiopia since the May 2005 elections in creating a competitive, pluralistic democratic system of government."

Response: This claim is contradicted by the **most recent** U.S. State Department Human Rights Report for 2006 which concluded:

The [Ethiopian] government's human rights record remained poor in many areas. Human rights abuses reported during the year included the following: unlawful killings; 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; detention of thousands without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists for publishing articles critical of the government; restrictions on freedom of assembly and of association; violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation; exploitation of children for economic and sexual purposes; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities and against religious and ethnic minorities; and government interference in union activities.

Other international human rights organizations have made similar conclusions.

(See U.S. State Department at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/shrd/2006/80586.htm>; Amnesty International at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/annualreport.php?id=ar&yr=2007&c=ETH>; Committee to Protect Journalists “Ethiopia Leads Dishonor Roll as most Repressive of Independent Press” at: <http://www.cpj.org/backsliders/index.html>; The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights at: http://www.omct.org/pdf/Observatory/2005/report/ethiopia_obs2005eng.pdf

III. “H.R. 2003 Impedes Further Democratic Progress.”

H.R. 2003 “impedes further democratic progress towards human rights, democracy, and economic freedom in Ethiopia and prohibit new and ongoing democracy, human rights, trade promotion, and agriculture assistance programs.”

Response: The Ethiopian Government has produced no evidence whatsoever to support its contention that H.R. 2003 impedes further democratic progress. H.R. 2003 actually promotes democratic progress by ensuring free, fair and competitive elections process with a level playing field, good governance based on representative, transparent and accountable institutions, independent courts and legislative bodies operating under the rule of law, robust civil society institutions, and above all, an independent media that can keep government honest and keep citizens engaged. (See Sec. 6, (a) (3) (A-K) of H.R. 2003.)

IV. “H.R. 2003 Presents a One-Sided View of the Facts.”

H.R. 2003 “presents a one-sided view of the facts and does not reflect careful, objective and impartial investigation.” “Findings” in the bill are based on “opposition claims and accusations more often than not are taken at face value.”

Response: The findings section in the bill has been removed. There are no legislative findings in the version of the bill passed by the House on October 2, 2007.

V. H.R. 2003 “Promotes Further Deterioration of the Situation in Somalia.”

H.R. 2003 “promotes further deterioration of the situation in Somalia by preventing the spread of Islamic fundamentalism” and the “the region from becoming a radical Islamist state that harbors and encourages jihadist-terrorist elements allied with al-Qaeda”, and undermining “support for the UN-backed interim government in Baidoa”.

Response: H.R. 2003 does not promote further deterioration of the situation in Somalia. In a recent speech, Zenawi stated that he sent his troops to Somalia to give the Somalis peace at the “request made by the government of Somalia”. He said peace remains elusive because of “threats posed by extremists who have taken refuge in Somalia”. He explained that he “was forced to revise plans for [troop withdrawal in] the third and final phase because terrorists were regrouping and coordinating their efforts with Eritrea.” Zenawi withdrawal of his troops from Somalia under the current circumstances would “prevent deployment of AU (African Union) peacekeepers”, and lead to a “reversal of the process of stabilization of Somalia”. He reassured

his parliament that he will “completely pull out” his troops “upon the successful conduct of the reconciliation conference and the consolidation of the TFG with the capability of the police and defense forces bolstered and the full deployment of AMISOM realized.”

Zenawi has never mentioned H.R. 2003 as a problem in his Somalia policy, or in any way aggravating his predicament there. The “deterioration” of the political situation in Somalia has nothing to do with H.R. 2003. It has to do with 1) the presence of Ethiopian occupation forces in Somalia, and 2) Zenawi’s support of Gedi’s regime. Zenawi has stated that he miscalculated the intentions and integrity of the Somali clan leaders, and underestimated the complexity and severity of Somali clan politics. ([Washington Post Foreign Service, Friday, June 29, 2007; Page A16.](#))



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THE CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA

The human rights situation in Ethiopia has deteriorated significantly in Ethiopia over past year.

I. Human Rights Violations in Ethiopia Continue Unabated.

The **U.S. State Department** in its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Ethiopia (March, 2007) stated:

The [Ethiopian] government's human rights record remained poor in many areas. Human rights abuses reported during the year included the following: unlawful killings; 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; detention of thousands without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists for publishing articles critical of the government; restrictions on freedom of assembly and of association; violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation; exploitation of children for economic and sexual purposes; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities and against religious and ethnic minorities; and government interference in union activities.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78734.htm>

II. Human Rights Violations in the Ogaden Have Reached Catastrophic Proportions

Human Rights Watch in a statement submitted to the House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health on October 2, 2007 stated:

In the Ogaden, we have documented massive crimes by the Ethiopian army, including civilians targeted intentionally; villages burned to the ground as part of a campaign of collective punishment; public executions meant to terrify onlooking villagers; rampant sexual violence used as a tool of warfare; thousands of arbitrary arrests and widespread and sometimes deadly torture and beatings in military custody; a humanitarian and trade blockade on the entire conflict area; and hundreds of thousands of people forced away from their homes and driven to hunger and malnutrition.

In less than three months, Ethiopia's military campaign has triggered a looming humanitarian crisis. Human Rights Watch has learned that hundreds of civilians have been killed in what appears to be a deliberate effort to mete out collective punishment against a civilian population suspected of sympathizing with the rebels. Overall, the killings probably number in the hundreds since the beginning of 2007, with a sharp escalation following the attack on the Chinese oil installation—and they continue to date. Many of the killings have been demonstration killings: the Ethiopian army gathers all of the local population, and then selects a few people suspected of having ties to the ONLF, and then kill them in front of the crowd by either shooting or strangling them. Testimony of Saman Zarifi, Human Rights Watch at:

<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/zar100207.htm>

III. Ethiopia Remains One of Three Nations in the World Where Press Freedoms Have Deteriorated the Most Over the last Five Years.

The **Committee to Protect Journalists** in Its Special Report (May, 2007) stated: Three nations in sub-Saharan Africa are among the places worldwide where press freedom has deteriorated the most over the last five years, a new analysis by the Committee to Protect Journalists has found. Ethiopia, where the government launched a massive crackdown on the private press by shutting newspapers and jailing editors, leads CPJ's dishonor roll.
<http://www.cpj.org/backsliders/index.html>

Reporters Without Borders - Ethiopia - Annual Report, 2007

For the first time in its history, the Ethiopian government appears to have launched itself into web censorship. From May to June 2006, most blogs and opposition websites were inaccessible in the country. The government denied being behind it. However, at the end of November, these online publications against mysteriously disappeared, which makes the hypothesis of political censorship appear more plausible. http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20755

IV. Ethiopia is Ranked Among the 138/179 Most Corrupt States in the World.

According to Transparency International (TI), Ethiopia ranks among the most corrupt states in the world. TI ranked Ethiopia 138/179 most corrupt states.
http://www.transparency.org/news_room/in_focus/2007/cpi2007/cpi_2007_table

V. Ethiopia is Ranked 18/177 on the Failed States Index, 2007

According to the Failed States Index (Fund for Peace/Foreign Policy Magazine), Ethiopia is ranked 18 among countries considered "Failed States".
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3865&page=7

VI. Ethiopia has one of the worst governance records in all of Africa.

The Ibrahim Index of African Governance, 2007 Ethiopia scored a dismal 48.7 (worst performers) in the category Rule of law, Transparency and Corruption. Eritrea, Ethiopia's neighbor to the north had a score of 60.1. <http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/index/index2.asp>

VII. Zenawi is Ranked 17th Worst Dictator in the World by Parade Magazine.

Parade Magazine defines "dictator" as "a head of state who exercises arbitrary authority over the lives of his citizens and who cannot be removed from power through legal means. The worst commit terrible human-rights abuses." Zenawi is ranked 17th Worst Dictator in the World by Parade Magazine (2007).

http://www.parade.com/articles/editions/2007/edition_02-11-2007/Dictators



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SAMPLE LETTER TO SENATORS

PLEASE MODIFY THIS LETTER TO SUIT YOUR SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES

DELIVER BY HAND OR FAX ONLY

Date....

Senator

[Address for Senators
Listed below]

Dear Senator

I am writing to ask your support for H.R. 2003, "Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007". This bill authored by Congressman Donald Payne (Chairman, House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health) passed unanimously in the House of Representatives on October 2, 2007. The bill has 85 co-sponsors, including the entire membership of the congressional Black Caucus. It also has wide bipartisan support, and Congressman Chris Smith (R-N.J.), the former Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, has provided substantial leadership in generating bipartisan support for the bill.

The bill provides for basic human rights protections in Ethiopia. Among the important provisions in the bill include: release and/or speedy trial of all political prisoners in Ethiopia, prosecution of persons who have committed gross human rights violations, strengthening of human rights and civil society groups, support for the creation of an independent Ethiopian judiciary, elimination of government censorship of the independent media, access to the Ogaden region by humanitarian and human rights organizations, assistance to strengthen local, regional, and national parliaments and support to improve the performance of the National Election Board and operation of political parties.

Peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and international military education and training assistance programs, humanitarian, food aid and HIV/AIDS programs are NOT affected by the bill.

As you know, the U.S. is sometimes criticized for not being true to its founding principles of human rights and liberty by supporting dictatorships out of political expediency. H.R. 2003 demonstrates to the world that human rights do indeed define the core of American foreign policy, and that America will not allow its military aid to become an instrumentality of oppression. H.R. 2003 is rooted in the very principles that anchor the foundations of the American Republic.

I respectfully ask you to support freedom, democracy and human rights in Ethiopia. Please vote “YES” when H.R. 2003 comes to the Senate floor.

Sincerely,

Name
 Address
 Contact phone number

*** You may insert personal information on your state, background, profession, concerns for human rights in Ethiopia, your support for the Senator and other similar things at the beginning or end of the letter.

=====

SENATE CONTACT INFORMATION

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 110th CONGRESS**

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**Link to Testimony and Photographic Evidence of
Victims of H.R. Abuses
Submitted to European Parliament/Cong. Briefing
Inquiry Commission**

The pdf document at the link below (Testimony and photographs by Yared Hailemariam, a human rights defender in exile, before the Extraordinary Joint committee Meeting of the European Parliament, committees on Development and Foreign Affairs and Subcommittee on Human Rights) contains massive evidence of human rights violations in the post-2005 election period.

The photos show that the killings of the unarmed protesters were not the result of random shootings but premeditated murders which targeted the heads and upper torso of the victims.

Make a copy of this document and present it to your Senator and/or staffers.

The document is available at:

<http://www.mdhe.org/doc/personskilled%20.pdf>