

OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C, 20500

12/27/05

Dear Mr. President,

As an American of Ethiopian origin, I am writing to express my appreciation for your continued support of the on-going democratic process in Ethiopia and to highlight some of the vital changes that were implemented by the current government of Ethiopia.

I have seen a few letters addressed to your name posted on the internet asking you to liberate the People of Ethiopia from what they called oppression, or in the authors' own word "tyranny." I understand that these people are entitled to their opinion but when they write to the President of the United States, they should have been careful not to misrepresent the facts. As far as I know, there is no tyranny in Ethiopia. To the contrary, Ethiopians enjoy unprecedented democracy for the first time in the nation's more than 3000-year history. The Nations, Nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia highly appreciate the current democratic change and they are committed to embrace and foster it despite frequent calls to reverse the course of history by some of the opposition groups. The people of Ethiopia know quite well the difference between tyranny and freedom for they have experienced both under the previous governments and the current government respectively. It is ironic that the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) calls the current democratically elected government a dictatorship when, in fact, many of the CUD's leadership and most of its Diaspora supporters served the previous Marxist dictator regime that killed many innocent Ethiopians as part of its "red terror" campaign.

I am also astounded that some members of the CUD are unhappy with the current Ethiopian government's tough stance on terrorist elements in the "Horn of Africa" and that they are trying to distract the government from its continued commitment to fight terrorism. In their press circulations, they have said that the Ethiopian government is fighting terrorists in order to please the United States and other donor countries. The truth is that the Ethiopian government has been fighting terrorism for the safety of its citizens based on the strong belief that terrorism is the enemy of all humanity. In fact, the current Ethiopian government has been fighting terrorist elements mainly along its border with Somalia since the 1990's----way before the tragedy of September the 11th of 2001.

The current government has brought so many changes to Ethiopia and to the way things used to function in the previous administrations. Here is a list of some of the accomplishments of the current government that I believe are worth mentioning:

- **Constitution:** The current government introduced a constitution in 1994, and ratified in 1995 that guaranteed every Nation, Nationality, and people in Ethiopia their unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession. Article 39 of the constitution further grants to every Nation, Nationality and people the right to speak, to write and develop its own language; to express and promote its culture; and to preserve its history.

- **Elections:** The current government has helped the Ethiopian people to conduct three National elections including the recent parliamentary election that was hailed as fair and free election by world renowned election observers including the former U.S President Jimmy Carter.
- **Education:** The government believes education is a key factor for the improvement of the economic situation in Ethiopia. To this end, it has more than quadrupled the number of colleges and Universities in the Country within the last fourteen years and student enrollment has increased by ten fold. Ten years ago, private colleges were non-existent in Ethiopia, today; there are many of them throughout the country.
- **Economy:** The government encourages free market through the Ethiopian Privatization Agency (EPA) that was established in February of 1994. Since then, business entities ranging from small retail trade outlets to large-scale enterprises have been privatized. The economy has been showing consistent growth against the odds of some drought years.
- **Court system:** Out of its conviction to justice, the government has established for the first time an independent court system that works for the people. In today's Ethiopia, justice is served for every citizen; no innocent person gets penalized for a crime and no one is above the law.
- **The Press:** Consistent with the constitution it helped to materialize, the government has given licenses to more than a hundred private Newspapers and magazines in the country. The freedom of press is a milestone achievement for the people of Ethiopia for it was unheard of in the previous governments.
- **Parliamentary system:** The government has introduced the first truly representative parliamentary system comprised of members elected directly by the people and responsible to the people.

Mr. President,

You would be shocked to know CUD's fierce opposition to the aforementioned Ethiopian constitution that essentially guarantees full freedom to all Nations and Nationalities of Ethiopia regardless of their population size. The CUD preaches about unity without the consent of all members of the Ethiopian people much like the previous governments who have committed serious atrocities against the Nations and Nationalities of Ethiopia in the name of Unity. In today's Ethiopia, every citizen is free to choose his/her destiny. This, of course, does not go well with the CUD leadership's "one fits all" (one language and one culture) prescription for the more than Eighty distinct ethnic groups. Hence, CUD is poised to change it forcefully.

In conclusion, with the support of freedom loving countries such as the United States, Great Britain and others together with the foundation laid by the current government, Ethiopia's future is bright and promising. To this end, I ask you, Mr. President, to continue your support to Ethiopia and its people in their struggle to realize the fruits of democracy and I thank you for that.

Sincerely yours,

Mezgebe Gebrekiristos