

THANK YOU LETTER TO SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

Honorable James M. Inhofe

U.S. Senator

453 Russel Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510-36003

Dear Senator Inhofe:

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

Even though I have been always aware of your good service to our country and people through your position in the United States Senate, your recent correct characterization of H.R. 2003 and the intentions of the people behind it has encouraged me to write you this piece. I have seen a few letters addressed to your name posted on the internet by individuals and groups working against the interest of Ethiopia, and in essence against the interests of the United States because Ethiopia is a staunch ally of the United States of America in the fight against international terrorism. In this regard, weakening Ethiopia's defense mechanism could directly mean compromising the efforts of fighting terrorism. These individuals have aired their negative criticism, especially of your recent appropriate judgment on the ill-devised Bill--H.R. 2003. They even organized a group of people--though few in number--to protest in front of your office, in Oklahoma.

H.R. 2003 is supported only by few but vocal Diaspora Ethiopians who are determined to transpose the current democratization process in Ethiopia to the old, dark days of the Marxist Junta—Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam. In order to achieve their evil goal, they are working relentlessly with few representatives of the United States under the disguise of liberating the Ethiopian people from what they call "oppression and tyranny". 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 and their sympathizer 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 positive changes to Ethiopia and to the way things used to function in the previous administrations. Here is a list of some of the accomplishments--though not complete-- 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.
- **The Judiciary 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.

Dear Senator:

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 and its supporters are 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 unwavering determination of the current government in democratizing Ethiopia, the country's future is bright and promising. Therefore, the Ethiopian people don't want to see their bright future shattered with the passage of H.R. 2003. The passage of H.R. 2003 benefits neither the Ethiopian nor the American people for it does not have any merit. Passing a Bill as punitive as H.R. 2003 at a time when the Ethiopian government is extending its hand to work with all opposition groups in the country for the betterment of Ethiopia tantamounts to a "slap in the face" for a job well done. To this end, I ask you, Senator, to continue your support to Ethiopia and to say no to the enactment of this undesirable bill once and for all.

Sincerely yours,

Mezgebe Gebrekiristos

