

## Senator Feingold: Please “Let Sleeping Dogs Lie”!

By Mezgebe Gebrekiristos,  
September 12, 2008

Once again, an attempt has been made to hit Ethiopia below the belt by Senators from none other than a staunch ally in the fight of International terrorism, the United States of America. This past week, Senators Feingold and Leahy introduced a Senate Bill entitled, “Support for Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia Act of 2008”. This Bill, if passed in its current form, will have the potential of micro-managing Ethiopia’s affairs from Washington D.C.—in essence-- making Ethiopia a modern day colony of the United States of America. And this, for a country that prides itself for maintaining its independence since the time of antiquity is tantamount to complete obliteration from the face of the earth. Prior understanding of this notion would have saved Mr. Feingold and others from initiating such unnecessary bill at best and detrimental at worst to the good relationship Ethiopia and the U.S. now enjoy.

The bill authorizes the U.S. President, with \$20 million price tag, to take “additional steps to support the implementation of democracy and governance institutions and organizations in Ethiopia”. If this is not meddling in Ethiopia’s sovereignty, pigs would fly. An inquiring mind would demand to know the need of enacting a bill from the U.S. Congress to support democracy in Ethiopia, when, in fact, Ethiopia has its own Parliament entrusted with administering the country by its people. If the U.S. is serious in seeing the fledging democracy in Ethiopia grow to a stable and vibrant one, it should espouse the democratically elected government in its democratization endeavors. The Ethiopian government is building institutions of democracy out of its strong commitment—and not to please or otherwise any citizen of western countries—but to transform the country into a free society where every citizen’s God given rights are protected under the law of the land. Here one thing must be underscored: Democracy cannot be imported from outside, and certainly not by enacting a bill in a foreign land by a foreign Congress.

Ethiopia welcomes the support of any freedom-loving country and the United States of America holds a vital position in this regard. Both countries have been engaged in a multifaceted development enterprises and strategic agreements—from health care assistance to the fight of terrorism in the Horn. Mutual-relationships between the two countries have been translated into fruition as evidenced by the swift victory of Ethiopian Armed forces over the Union of Islamic Court (UIC); the decline in the rate of HIV infections; and the huge reduction of infant mortality. These are--among other things--that could be achieved when the two countries work together for the common good of a society. Anything that attempts to disrupt this long-lasting and well functioning relationship, otherwise, is counter-productive, and should be avoided. The bill under discussion is a case in point—with many controversial and uncalled for elements in it.

Ironically, the Senators who sponsored the, “Support for Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia Act of 2008,” praised the great strides made by the Ethiopian government-- that dwarf the achievements of neighboring countries such as the Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, and of course, Eritrea—the rare truth buried in the draft bill. With this knowledge in mind, the best course would have been, then, to help Ethiopia continue playing a stabilizing force in the Horn. Without Ethiopia’s crucial role in that hostile part of Africa, U.S. interests are prone to so many rogue elements. As the contemporary axiom goes, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fit it,” the author of this piece calls on Senators Feingold and Leahy to refrain from distracting the Ethiopian people from fighting their number one enemy—poverty. The Ethiopian people are not interested in the resuscitation of the notorious bill known as **HR2003**. Please, “let the sleeping dogs lie.”

For constructive comments, the author can be reached at [emaa\\_go@yahoo.com](mailto:emaa_go@yahoo.com).