
HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 4031

State of Washington 60th Legislature 2008 Regular Session

By Representatives Santos, Pettigrew, and Kenney

Read first time 01/23/08. Referred to Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs.

1 TO THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
2 AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF
3 REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
4 UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, AND TO THE HONORABLE RICHARD B.
5 CHENEY, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND THE MAJORITY LEADER OF
6 THE SENATE:

7 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of
8 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully
9 represent and petition as follows:

10 WHEREAS, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which
11 constitutes a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all
12 nations, is the source of inspiration and has been the basis for the
13 United Nations in making advances in standard setting as contained in
14 the existing international human rights instruments, in particular, the
15 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African
16 (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and has been
17 incorporated by reference in the Ethiopian Constitution as the part of
18 the supreme law of the land; and

19 WHEREAS, The Ethiopian government has repeatedly violated the

1 rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the
2 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the
3 African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; and

4 WHEREAS, Human rights conditions in Ethiopia have deteriorated
5 significantly in the aftermath of the May 2005 parliamentary elections,
6 and the Ethiopian government has undertaken a massive crackdown on
7 political opposition and dissent, including arrests of opposition
8 leaders, journalists, human rights defenders, and civic society
9 leaders, and extrajudicial killings of protesters by using excessive
10 and deadly force; and

11 WHEREAS, Documented violations of human rights in Ethiopia include
12 widespread violation of privacy rights, warrantless searches and
13 seizures, arrests without probable cause, and severe curtailments of
14 basic human rights, including freedom of speech, press, association,
15 and assembly; and

16 WHEREAS, The massive crackdown on opposition and dissent has
17 resulted in the incarceration of opposition group leaders and members;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, The government of Ethiopia established a commission of
20 inquiry to investigate the violence that occurred in the aftermath of
21 the May 2005 parliamentary elections, and the chairman and vice
22 chairman of this commission reported in a briefing to the United States
23 House of Representatives that the Ethiopian security forces had used
24 excessive force resulting in the deaths of 193 persons and serious
25 injury to 763 others; and

26 WHEREAS, The United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights has
27 expressed deep concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in
28 Ethiopia, and other respected independent international human rights
29 organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and
30 Genocide Watch, have expressed equally deep concern, and called for the
31 unconditional and immediate release of all political prisoners in the
32 country and improvements in the human rights situation; and

33 WHEREAS, Ethiopian-Americans in the United States are deeply
34 concerned about human rights violations in their native country and
35 seek the immediate and unconditional release of opposition leaders and
36 all political prisoners in Ethiopia; and

37 WHEREAS, Congressional House Resolution 2003, the "Ethiopia
38 Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007," which passed the House of

1 Representatives, demanded the immediate and unconditional release of
2 opposition leaders and all political prisoners in Ethiopia and sought
3 improvements in human rights in Ethiopia; and

4 WHEREAS, The Ethiopian government continues to repress all peaceful
5 attempts by the Ethiopian people to bring democratic change by denying
6 universally recognized liberties, including freedom of speech,
7 assembly, association, and of the press, and employing repressive
8 measures aimed at eliminating opposition and dissent; and

9 WHEREAS, Numerous Ethiopian-Americans in the State of Washington
10 have called upon the aid of their state legislature to express its deep
11 concerns over gross abuses of human rights in their native land where
12 they maintain strong family ties;

13 NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that Congress
14 and the President of the United States demand that the Ethiopian
15 government immediately and unconditionally release all political
16 prisoners and journalists and fulfill its obligations under the
17 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as incorporated in its
18 constitution, the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples'
19 Rights, and established norms of human rights, democratic principles,
20 and the rule of law.

21 BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington state legislature condemns the
22 widespread violation of human rights in Ethiopia and the use of
23 violence and deadly force to suppress political opposition and dissent;
24 and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the government of the United States
26 work vigorously to secure as soon as possible the release of political
27 prisoners and prisoners of conscience, as well as closely monitor their
28 treatment in prison, and further demand disclosure of the total number
29 of persons detained on political charges throughout the country, and
30 ensure that all political prisoners and other defendants are treated
31 humanely while in custody in accordance with international and regional
32 standards for the treatment of prisoners, such as the United Nations
33 Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, with particular
34 regard to medical treatment, family visits, and reading and writing
35 materials; and

36 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the government of the United States
37 demand that the Ethiopian government forbear from interference in the
38 exercise of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, and

1 association in Ethiopia, including the right to demonstrate peacefully,
2 the right to publish opinions freely through an independent press, and
3 the right to engage in civil society activism, and put an end to the
4 government media monopoly; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the government of the United States
6 work through its representatives in the United Nations to establish an
7 independent international commission of inquiry to investigate the
8 broad scope of human rights abuses in Ethiopia, and to identify those
9 responsible for human rights violations; and

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the government of the United States
11 demand resumption of the process of reform and improvement of
12 democratic institutions, including a serious and international
13 examination of the results of the parliamentary elections held in May
14 2005; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Congress adopt a resolution on the
16 human rights situation in Ethiopia, aimed particularly at protecting
17 and supporting the Ethiopian human rights defenders on trial, in line
18 with the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders; and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the government of the United States
20 encourage and support the African Human Rights Commission and its
21 member states to more actively investigate and report on human rights
22 violations throughout the country and bring these to the attention of
23 the Ethiopian government and the international community for remedy;
24 and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the government of the United States
26 demand that the Ethiopian government prosecute the individuals,
27 officials, and others who were responsible for the deaths of 193
28 unarmed and peaceful protesters and scores of others who sustained
29 serious injuries as a result of the unlawful use of deadly force by
30 government security forces; and

31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the government of the United States
32 demand that the Ethiopian government implement specific measures to
33 ensure the independence of the judiciary and institute due process to
34 guarantee defendants accused of crimes the right to be tried by a
35 competent and independent court, and the rights to the presumption of
36 innocence, confrontation, and compulsory process, speedy trial, and
37 assistance of counsel; and

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Congress pass "The Ethiopia
2 Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Act of 2006," which was introduced
3 as House Resolution 5680 in the 109th Congress, Second Session, and
4 passed the House International Relations Committee with a unanimous
5 vote; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately
7 transmitted to the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United
8 States, the Honorable Richard B. Cheney, Vice President of the United
9 States, the majority leader of the United States Senate, the Speaker of
10 the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the
11 State of Washington.

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