

REVIEWING CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN
ETHIOPIA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2018

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:03 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The committee will come to order, and good afternoon to everyone.

Our first order of business is to note that today many Ethiopians are celebrating the start of the New Year under the Ethiopian calendar. So I want to wish our friends a very, very happy New Year and many more to come.

Many of the hearings that this subcommittee has held over the years, especially on Ethiopia, have been focusing on criticism, raising fundamental human rights issues in Ethiopia. As a matter of fact, I introduced a bill back more than 10 years ago, the Ethiopian Human Rights Act. But today, however, strikes a far different tone, one not of criticism but of commendation for the great strides Ethiopia has made since Prime Minister Abiy assumed authority in April of this year.

Consider where we were just a year ago: A state of emergency existed, and thousands of political prisoners languished in jail; a cold war standoff existed between Ethiopia and its neighbor Eritrea; and, of course, people in prisons were being tortured and mistreated in the most horrific of ways.

As this subcommittee pointed out in a hearing we held in March 2017, and I quote: Increasingly repressive policy has diminished political space and threatened to radicalize not only the political opposition but also civil society by frustrating their ability to exercise their rights under law.

In response to this, I introduced, along with original cosponsors Karen Bass and Mike Coffman, my good friend and colleague, H. Res. 128, a resolution supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia.

The resolution sets forth milestones which needed to be met and passed thanks to the leaderships of so many, including our Chairman Ed Royce, our Ranking Member Eliot Engel, and, of course,

Kevin McCarthy and the Speaker, who ensured that the bill got to the floor in a timely fashion.

But success of this measure was due in largest part to the efforts of the Ethiopian diaspora community in the United States, which came together to demand that egregious human rights abuses immediately cease and that fundamental human rights must be promoted and protected for all in Ethiopia.

Indeed, one of the greatest collateral benefits brought about by the passage of H. Res. 128 is the political effectiveness of the Ethiopian American community, which provided a textbook civics lesson for all of us to admire and to emulate. It is thanks to their tireless efforts of contacting their congressional Representatives, of providing very, very good insights as to what was going on on the ground and making the case in a persistent manner that helps spur Congress to action.

Since assuming office, Prime Minister Abiy has begun to implement some of the very reforms that H. Res. 128 called for. He has released thousands—I say again—thousands of political prisoners and lifted the state of emergency. But he has also reached out to the diaspora community, catalyzed an end to the schism that had plagued the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and initiated a historic peace deal between Ethiopia and Eritrea this past July.

Indeed, it is hoped that his domestic reforms will also inspire Eritrea, which remains a repressive regime, to undertake similar internal reforms. As an aside, Eritrea must reform. Some estimates put it at more than 10,000 prisoners being held unjustly, including two U.S. Embassy staff, and one young Eritrean American named Ciham Ali Abdu.

This then is an opportunity and an opportune moment for Eritrea as well to enact justice reforms, release political prisoners, and end coercive conscription policies. If that country did this, it would become too a critical U.S. strategic partner, and it could be—professionalize its military so as to contribute to peacekeeping missions.

Just a few weeks ago, Ranking Member Karen Bass and I visited—and our staff—the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, where we met with Prime Minister Abiy, and a very broad array of individuals and groups including His Holiness Abune Mathias I. One impression I had was a profound feeling of change and optimism, the likes of which I have not seen in Ethiopia ever.

For what he has accomplished in less than half a year, the Prime Minister deserves praise and encouragement, yet we still must keep in mind that expectations have been raised and the reforms he has begun must continue. For example, the notorious charities and societies proclamation and the antiterrorism proclamation both passed in 2009 remain on the books and thus retain the potential to stifle legitimate civil society organizations and political speech.

Many former prisoners and torture victims still demand justice. Ranking Member Bass and I met with several groups of tortured victims in Addis, and what they described as having what they went through was absolutely horrific. One refrain we heard over and over, including from the Orthodox Church, is that there is a need for a truth and reconciliation in order for the country to move forward.

There also needs to be an opportunity for people who have been displaced to return home. Catholic Archbishop Abraham Desta of Meki recently brought to my attention that over 2.5 million people are internally displaced and require the government's immediate attention, especially by providing education for displaced children as the school year has already started.

The economy needs to grow to provide jobs for the many youth, including those who have participated in protests and civil disobedience; reforms in the economic sector, including liberalization and deregulation; as well as an opening of the economy to ethnic groups that have not been fully enfranchised needs to continue. It also has been said that the reforms begun by Prime Minister Abiy represent a "once-in-a-generation opportunity for Ethiopia." It is thus absolutely crucial that this opportunity be seized and in no way squandered.

With this in mind, the United States must remain a strong partner with Ethiopia, someone we know that they can call upon, and I know we are. We are so grateful to have our Assistant Secretary, who was the former Ambassador to Ethiopia, here today.

We collaborate on counterterrorism measures. We support and are grateful for Ethiopia's contribution to peacekeeping, indeed with more than 12,000 troops deployed between U.N. and AU missions. Ethiopia is the largest contributor to peacekeeping missions worldwide, and we must continue to encourage Ethiopia to participate in international military education training, or IMET, military professionalism programs.

I also was encouraged by our conversations with military Chief of Staff General Mekonen on training Ethiopian peacekeepers on fighting the blight of human trafficking. Ethiopian is currently a tier two country. As the author of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I will be strongly advocating that all antitrafficking training be included in our IMET training for Ethiopian peacekeepers. Again, they are not tier one, which is the best tier, to try to help them make progress in a broad range of trafficking issues in that country.

I do believe, having met the man and having had an opportunity to engage in substantive discourse with him, Prime Minister Abiy is the right man for the right time and therefore deserving of our support.

Finally, and speaking of support, I want to especially thank our Ambassador, Mike Raynor, our Deputy Chief of Mission Troy Fitrell, and political officer Wilson Korol, as well as all our Embassy staff for the support that they gave for our delegation. Their professionalism and their designation should give us great confidence that our relationship with the Prime Minister and his staff and country will remain strong and we will move forward together.

I would like to yield to my good friend and colleague, Ms. Bass, for any opening statements.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman Smith. Thank you, one, for leading the codel and having us go down—even though it was a short trip, I think we were able to accomplish a lot—and especially for holding this hearing today.

I want to welcome the Assistant Secretary. Thank you for your time coming and addressing us today.

With the transition to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, it is an opportune time to take a closer look at our bilateral relationship and what opportunities exist to strengthen the bond between our two nations.

As Africa's fastest growing economy and its second most populous country, Ethiopia is a key regional partner for the U.S. The last few years, while unstable and at times chaotic, have led to a peaceful transition of power to Africa's youngest leader.

The Prime Minister's initial efforts are promising and have elicited effusive headlines from international news publications. However, we do know that he faces daunting challenges ahead, including regional security issues, the country's past human rights record, ethnic tensions across the country, and hardliners within the EPRDF that hope to stall his reform agenda.

And I think holding this hearing today and beginning this process of examining our relationship, it is really an opportunity for us to figure out as the U.S. how we can help move Ethiopia forward especially in this time period.

And then relations with Somalia and Eritrea continue to be Ethiopia's top security concerns, and we know that the government will need to address tensions with Somalia as well as its key role in counterterrorism efforts. Ethiopia will also need to navigate rapprochement with Eritrea while easing concerns from its own citizens over recent peace deal ending a decades-long stalemate.

Despite these challenges, I will say, for the last 14 years, I have represented a large Ethiopian community in Los Angeles. We even have a section of town that is called Little Ethiopia. And for the last 14 years, the diaspora has been so concerned and so upset at what was taking place in their homeland. And to me, it has just been so inspiring to see the Ethiopian diaspora and the people in Ethiopia—and when we visited—that are really encouraged and excited about the possibility of moving forward and recognizing that there are daunting challenges.

We did face a little pushback when we were there over our resolution 128, and some people voiced why did we do it at that particular time, what was our timing, what were we trying to say. And the chairman and I had an opportunity to explain that, you know, the resolution was not trying to—well, it was trying to be encouraging and wanting things to move forward and was not trying to slap Ethiopia right when change was occurring. We had an opportunity to really discuss that with many people.

I am looking forward to seeing how we can provide continuing support but how our support might change. I mean, one of the things that we know is going to be a challenge is governance, preparing for elections. When we met with the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister was very clear that he wanted to see change take place, but he was not wedded to be the Prime Minister forever, and he made that point very clear with us.

We had the opportunity to meet with different ethnic groups and for them to express their concerns. And I think that one of the challenges that Ethiopia is going to face now is how to do the reconciliation, how to account for human rights abuses that took place in the past, how to account for that, and how to bring people together at the same time.

And then when we spoke with the Prime Minister, you know, he was clear: We want to move the country forward, and we will have to figure out the truth and reconciliation process along the way, but we can't stop and just focus on the grievances from the past. We absolutely have to do that healing, but we have to move the country forward.

I want to welcome my colleague, Mr. Garamendi from northern California, who is here, and I know he will speak in a minute. But I was particularly happy to have him come here because Mr. Garamendi lived in Ethiopia and was a member of the Peace Corps many years ago and, in all those years since, has maintained contact with the village in which he served.

Thank you very much. I yield back my time.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Bass, thank you very much for that.

And we will recognize Mr. Garamendi in a moment, but I would like to yield to Mr. Coffman from Colorado, who has been a tenacious promoter of human rights in Ethiopia.

And as the ranking member pointed out, you know, when we brought this up in April, Prime Minister Abiy had already, obviously, assumed office. But we introduced this in 2017, in February 2017. We went through some rewrites because things were changing on the ground, and frankly, we gave to his government a prescriptive list of what the U.S. Congress, the House of Representatives, expected would happen.

And it has been very telling just how close many of the things that, on a bipartisan basis, we had recommended, starting with the release of political prisoners, have happened. So we hope that the resolution has made some difference.

And as I said earlier, it does go back to 2005 after I visited with President Meles and was profoundly disappointed with his human rights abuses, which was legion at the time, and stressed—and introduced the human rights bill at that point toward Ethiopia. So thank you, Ms. Bass. We worked very closely on this, and the trip, I think, was a great success.

And now I would like to yield to Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass.

First, I would like to thank Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and the rest of the Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations Subcommittee for allowing me to participate in today's hearing.

I have the distinct honor of representing the largest Ethiopian community in Colorado, I think one of the largest in the United States that is in my congressional district. And over the past few years, it has been my pleasure to get to know them, listen to their concerns, and work on their behalf here in Washington, DC.

I am also very proud to have two of my constituents, Mr. Girum Alemayehu here today, and Jamal Said, to offer their thoughts on the current situation in Ethiopia.

What we have seen in Ethiopia over the past few months has been entirely remarkable. New reforms and changes under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy have started Ethiopia on what I believe to be a stronger path of inclusion, democracy, and new freedoms. It is of the utmost importance that the United States can

show to Ethiopia and the Ethiopian people that we stand side by side with them as these reforms occur and that we are able to provide assistance whenever and wherever possible.

House Resolution 128, which was passed by the House of Representatives on April 10, has played an important role in illustrating the commitment that the United States has concerning the people of Ethiopia. This legislation called on the Government of Ethiopia to make clear, decisive steps toward becoming more inclusive, more democratic, and more respectful of the basic human rights of its own citizens.

I was very glad to see House Resolution 128 enjoy such bipartisan support from the Foreign Affairs Committee as well as in the full House of Representatives. While progress has been made, we must also be aware of the steps that are still required to be taken to address some of the remaining issues within Ethiopia. Specifically, there are still very troubling reports of ethnic violence taking place in the country where many have died and hundreds of thousands have been displaced from their homes.

We also still want the results of the FBI's investigation into the grenade attack on June 24, which occurred at a rally for the new Prime Minister and resulted in multiple deaths and injuries as well as what further actions may be required to be taken. The Ethiopian Government needs to be able to show that it can protect all of its citizens to be free and also that it takes great concern with the reports of continuing violations of human rights.

Again, I would like to thank the subcommittee for inviting me to today's proceedings, and I look forward to listening to witnesses' testimonies as we continue this important discussion on how the United States and the House of Representatives can support Ethiopia as it works toward addressing some of these remaining concerns.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Coffman.

The chair recognizes my good friend and colleague from California, Mr. Garamendi.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I thank you, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Bass. It is a privilege to be with you. This committee has been of extraordinary importance in all the work that you do and personally important to me because of your work in Africa and specifically Ethiopia.

It was 50 years ago that my wife and I were Peace Corps volunteers in southwestern Ethiopia and attempted to—I could attempt to say [speaking foreign language] to all, maybe [speaking foreign language]. In any case, yes, we have gone back and forth to Ethiopia over many, many years.

The current situation in Ethiopia is extraordinarily positive, and I, along with most others, remain very, very optimistic about where this new government will lead Ethiopia.

There are certainly going to be issues that will affect the citizens and the people in the area. It is a complex country with many ethnicities and languages and incredible economic challenges and challenges from the neighborhood. I would encourage all of us to be attentive, not to be patient, but to also understand the complexities that face Ethiopia.

I know that the current government, Mr. Abiy Ahmed, is doing everything he can. Of particular note—and I noticed the Ambassador's time in Ethiopia when the Eritrean-Ethiopian war was in full—underway with tens of thousands of people dying—that the peace negotiations that occurred during that time in which a team of returned volunteers had a role, has apparently now taken hold after some 17 years of passage. That is a good thing. It will allow the northern part, in fact, all of Ethiopian and Eritrea to enjoy the benefits of peace and the reduction of the military attention that that area has had.

There is much to be done. This committee is extremely important, and I really want to thank the committee for the opportunity to be here and to follow along. I know that my wife and I will continue to always love Ethiopia and the people of Ethiopia. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

I would like to now yield to our distinguished colleague from Virginia, Mr. Garrett.

Mr. GARRETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Very briefly, as I pointed out during this subcommittee hearing and the full committee hearings, and as I am sure our witness today is more aware of than I am, we are really at a turning point as it relates to Ethiopia's march forward. There are certain demographic and geographical realities on the ground.

For example, there is 15.5 times as much land area in the nation-state of Russia as in Ethiopia, and yet the population of Russia is about 35 plus or minus million greater than that of Ethiopia. And so we have a lot of people in a relatively small area, which creates problems in and of itself, particularly when we consider the birth rates therein.

And this isn't necessarily a good or bad thing; although, I will point out the amazing diversity and vibrant cultural contributions as well as contributions in the realms of the arts and sciences, et cetera. They go back literally millennia to the region. But if we don't start to get it right, we may not be able to reel it back in.

And so I am encouraged by Prime Minister Abiy's steps. I think that we are headed in the right direction but certainly as it relates to regional stability, which I think I could articulate and argue plays in the 21st century directly into global stability, we need to make sure we get this right.

And so, Mr. Chairman, members of the panel, it is important that what we do here today, that we formulate policy in the United States appropriate to our role as an outside nation to encourage and support Ethiopia as it tries to develop economically, educationally, culturally, socially, and that we stand and speak with a clear voice as it relates to civil societies, as it relates to best practices, engaging disparate elements and opinions, because we won't have today over again.

So, with that, I thank the chairman for calling this meeting, and I thank the members of the panel. I hope that we can do good work for the future here today.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Garrett.

I would like to now introduce our very distinguished leader, in the job for a month but certainly a very wise and experienced Afri-

ca hand, a man who has done tremendous work over the years, Tibor Nagy is the Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs.

Ambassador Nagy has spent over 32 years in government service, including 20 years in assignments across Africa. He served as United States Ambassador to Ethiopia from 1999 to 2002 and the United States Ambassador to Guinea from 1996 to 1999. He also served as deputy chief of mission in Nigeria from 1993 to 1995, in Cameroon from 1990 to 1993, and in Togo from 1987 to 1990.

After his retirement from the Foreign Service and before being called back into service, Ambassador Nagy was vice provost for international affairs at Texas Tech University from 2003 to 2018. Ambassador Nagy has received numerous awards for his service, including recognition for helping prevent famine in Ethiopia and supporting efforts to end the Ethiopian-Eritrean war. He has lectured nationally on African development and U.S. diplomacy and serves as a regular op-ed contributor to the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal Newspaper on global events.

Ambassador Nagy is also coauthor of “Kiss Your Latte Goodbye: Managing Overseas Operations,” the nonfiction winner of the 2014 Paris Book Festival. He came to the United States in 1957 as a political refugee from Hungary. He received his BA from Texas Tech, MSA from George Washington University, and he and his wife Eva Jane have three children and the first triplets to be born in independent Zimbabwe.

We welcome you, Mr. Secretary, Mr. Ambassador to the committee. And, again, we thank you for your extraordinary service for so many decades and look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE TIBOR P. NAGY, JR., ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador NAGY. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to testify today on U.S. national interests and recent developments in Ethiopia.

I also wanted to take the opportunity in this hearing—my first before you—to address Eritrea and the regional significance of the improving relationships between Ethiopia and Eritrea. As a former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, this topic is of great importance to me personally, so it is a real pleasure to be here with you today.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, I also want to thank you for your recent trip to Ethiopia. I greatly appreciate the focus that Congress has on this region, which I believe is very important for our national interests, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss recent developments with the subcommittee.

Allow me to open our time today with some thematic remarks on recent developments. In Ethiopia, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has initiated groundbreaking reforms across most every area of Ethiopian society since becoming Prime Minister on April 2, 2018. He deserves tremendous credit for his boldness in tackling issues that previous governments have not addressed.

We have a strong relationship with the highest reaches of the new administration which reflects not only our century-long diplo-

matic relations with Ethiopia, the only country in sub-Saharan Africa which was never colonized, but also our great support for Dr. Abiy's reform vision.

Implementing this reform vision is not without its challenges, and to make such broad and rapid changes will require reinforcing the foundation for the relationship between the Ethiopian people and its government. We have seen Dr. Abiy do so, actively engaging with the public to support his government and his works to implement reforms. In July, he came to the United States to meet with the Ethiopian diaspora members, many of whom are enthusiastic participants in our own electoral process and care greatly for their homeland.

Dr. Abiy has also taken dramatic steps to end the former government's repression of civil liberties, inviting a diversity of voices, including many who were previously criminalized to participate in Ethiopia's future. Yet, strengthening institutions, setting the economy on a firm footing, and restoring stability to areas facing humanitarian disaster and ethnic conflict will not be done overnight.

The expectations of the Ethiopian people are also incredibly high and many of them are young. We estimate that there are around 70 million Ethiopians younger than 30, many of whom have participated in protests in recent years due to frustration with corruption and the lack of economic opportunity.

The Ethiopian Government has openly sought partnership with the United States to achieve its ambitious reform plans. We have a tremendous opportunity to support Ethiopia as a friend and partner in the process. We are working to provide support to Dr. Abiy and his administration across all of these challenges as he continues his work in years ahead.

But looking more broadly at regional issues, we enthusiastically welcome Dr. Abiy and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki working together to end 20 years of conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. There is still much work to do to repair the consequences of the conflict for the peoples of both countries, especially in border regions. But we have already seen a tremendous outpouring of emotion on both sides supporting peace, and both governments have highlighted the positive consequences this will bring for the entire Horn of Africa.

We support both sides as they explore possibilities for peace and continue to encourage and support their long-term success. But guaranteeing the full benefits of peace for years to come will depend on the strength of all parties' efforts to restore friendship and prosperity to both countries, and this must be done as inclusively as possible including with other important partners in the region and beyond.

Since Eritrea's mid-June decision to send a delegation to Ethiopia, there have been several meetings between the two governments' officials in Asmara, Addis Ababa, and capitals across the Horn of Africa to discuss trade, development, and tourism.

So far, the public and tangible examples of improved relations are the reopening of telephone service and the resumption of regular flights between both countries. And since this was written, they just opened their land borders yesterday at two points, which was remarkable.

Eritrea is also expanding capacity at the Port of Massawa for use by Ethiopia, and it was just announced early in September that an Ethiopian commercial vessel used the Port of Massawa for the first outbound shipment on an Ethiopian vessel since the peace agreement. We anticipate that these and other steps will create the potential for greater development of people-to-people ties on both sides of the border.

Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea leads us to another remarkable story: Eritrea's reemergence onto the regional and global stage and the many potential opportunities for the United States stemming from regional peace. With Ethiopian-Eritrea's conflict ending, we see strong potential for Eritrea's contribution to improving regional security.

Eritrea has resisted extremist threats and could provide lessons to others on how to maintain a diversity of communities free from violent extremism. Eritrea can also contribute to regional peace and stability, as we have seen with Eritrea's engagement with Somalia and South Sudan and Eritrea's role-brokering agreements among Ethiopian opposition groups.

Eritrea, which has a strong tradition of self-sufficiency and independence, could also promote a stronger regional approach to countering potentially malign influences of global competitors operating in the region. Nonetheless, we still have significant concerns in our bilateral relations with Eritrea that we will continue to highlight in days ahead.

Eritrea currently continues to imprison several of our Embassies' locally employed staff members for politically motivated reasons. We have also raised concerns about the detention of American citizens who are detained for the same reasons.

Though Eritrea has regularly asserted that it has no substantive relationship with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea has not fully explained certain past arms procurement transactions between Eritrea and the DPRK that the U.N. panel of experts reported. Broader human rights concerns, such as indefinite obligatory national service, the arbitrary detention of religious and political prisoners, and a tightly controlled opaque system of government also hinder our scope for cooperation.

The United States has deliberately engaged with Eritrea in recent months, with both these opportunities and concerns in full view, and we will continue to do so. Although we have already seen many gains from peace, which the President and the Secretary of State have both hailed publicly, further progress will require more action, some of these priority issues in Eritrea.

Thank you so much, and I look forward to your questions.
[The prepared statement of Ambassador Nagy follows:]

**Statement by Assistant Secretary Tibor Nagy, Bureau of African Affairs
“U.S. National Interests in Developments in Ethiopia”
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and
International Organizations**

Wednesday, September 12, 2018, 2:00PM

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the invitation to testify today on U.S. national interests in recent developments in Ethiopia. I also wanted to take the opportunity of this hearing—my first before you—to address Eritrea, and the regional significance of the improving relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea. As a former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, this topic is of great importance to me personally, so it is a real pleasure to be here with you today.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Bass, I also want to thank you for your recent trip to Ethiopia. I greatly appreciate the focus the Congress has on this region, which I believe is very important for our national interests, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss recent developments with the Subcommittee.

Allow me to open our time today with some thematic remarks on recent developments.

ETHIOPIA

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Implementing this reform vision is not without its challenges, and to make such broad and rapid changes will require reinforcing the foundation for the relationship between the Ethiopian people and government.

We have seen Dr. Abiy do so, actively engaging with the public to support his government as it works to implement reforms. In July he came to the United States to meet with Ethiopian diaspora members, many of whom are enthusiastic participants in our own electoral process and care greatly for their homeland. Dr. Abiy has also taken dramatic steps to end the former government's repression of civil liberties, inviting a diversity of voices – including many who were previously criminalized – to participate in Ethiopia's future.

Yet strengthening institutions, setting the economy on a firm footing, and restoring stability to areas facing humanitarian disaster and ethnic conflict will not be done overnight. The expectations of the Ethiopian people are also incredibly high, and many of them are young. We estimate that there are around 70 million Ethiopians younger than 30, many of whom have participated in protests in recent years due to frustrations with corruption and the lack of economic opportunity. The Ethiopian government has openly sought partnership with the United States to achieve its ambitious reform plans. We have a tremendous opportunity to support Ethiopia as a friend and partner in the process.

We are working to provide support to Dr. Abiy and his administration across all of these challenges as he continues his work in years ahead.

PEACE BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA

Looking more broadly at regional issues, we enthusiastically welcomed Dr. Abiy and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki working together to end 20 years of conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. There is still much work to do to repair the consequences of the conflict for the peoples of both Eritrea and Ethiopia, especially in border regions. But we have already seen a tremendous outpouring of emotion on both sides supporting peace, and both governments have highlighted the positive consequences this will bring for the entire Horn of Africa.

We support both sides as they explore possibilities for peace, and continue to encourage and support their long-term success. But guaranteeing the full benefits of peace for years to come will depend on the strength of all parties' efforts to restore friendship and prosperity to both countries, and this must be done as inclusively as possible, including with other important partners in the region and beyond.

Since Eritrea's mid-June decision to send a delegation to Ethiopia, there have been several meetings between the two governments' officials in Asmara, Addis Ababa,

and capitals across the Horn of Africa to discuss trade, development, and tourism. So far, the public and tangible examples of improved relations are the reopening of telephone service and the resumption of regular flights between both countries. Eritrea is also expanding capacity at the Port of Massawa for use by Ethiopia, and it was just announced early in September that an Ethiopian commercial vessel used the Port of Massawa for the first outbound shipment on an Ethiopian vessel since the peace agreement. We anticipate that these and other steps will create the potential for greater development and people-to-people ties on both sides of the border.

ERITREA

Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea leads us to another remarkable story: Eritrea's re-emergence onto the regional and global stage, and the many potential opportunities for the United States stemming from regional peace.

With Ethiopia and Eritrea's conflict ending, we see strong potential for Eritrea's contributions to improving regional security. Eritrea has resisted extremist threats, and could provide lessons to others on how to maintain a diversity of communities free from violent extremism. Eritrea can also contribute to regional peace and stability, as we have seen with Eritrea's engagement with Somalia and South Sudan, and Eritrea's role brokering agreements among Ethiopian opposition groups. Eritrea, which has a strong tradition of self-sufficiency and independence, could also promote a stronger regional approach to countering potentially malign influence of global competitors operating in the region.

Nonetheless, we still have significant concerns in our bilateral relations with Eritrea that we will continue to highlight in days ahead. Eritrea currently continues to imprison several of our Embassy's Locally Employed Staff members for politically-motivated reasons. We have also raised concerns about the detention of American citizens who are detained for the same reasons. Though Eritrea has regularly asserted that it has no substantive relationship with the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK), Eritrea has not fully explained certain past arms procurement transactions between Eritrea and the DPRK that the UN Panel of Experts reported. Broader human rights concerns such as indefinite, obligatory national service; the arbitrary detention of religious and political prisoners; and a tightly controlled, opaque system of government also hinder our scope for cooperation.

The United States has deliberately engaged with Eritrea in recent months with both these opportunities and concerns in full view, and we will continue to do so. Although we have already seen many gains from peace, which the President and the Secretary of State have both hailed publicly, further progress will require more action on some of these priority issues in Eritrea.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SMITH. I thank you so very much, Mr. Secretary, again, for your leadership and for being here today.

I do have a number of questions, and I will ask them in somewhat succession. We do have a number of members here today, and I think that is a good sign of the concern that we all have.

Let me start with sex trafficking and trafficking in general. Again, it is an area that I have spent more than 25 years working on and written a number of laws on, and I raise it everywhere every time I go. And Ethiopia does have a problem. Prime Minister Abiy inherited a very significant problem with child sex tourism which remains unabated in Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Hawassa, Bishoftu, to name at least some areas where it is very, very rampant.

Convictions have dropped. In 2016, there were 640; in 2017, it dropped to 182, a very bad trend line, because we know the problem has not gone away. And on a positive note, last month, Sudan and Ethiopia signed an agreement to work together on their border to fight against human trafficking, and I think that was a great step forward.

And when Karen Bass and I met with Chief of Staff General Mekonen, we both really strongly made the point that his soldiers need to be trained in how to mitigate human trafficking, to spot it, to be on the side of protection and not on the side of exploitation.

He seemed very open to it, especially when we mentioned the IMET training that might be an area where we could include this. And I wonder if you could just speak to that, because he has so many issues and problems he has to deal with all at once, and I think there is a key here or a concern that we need to all manage expectations. It is not all going to be done in a day. But I think this needs to be emphasized very, very strongly.

Secondly, if I could, and that is on the issue of the internally displaced, 2.6 million displaced, about 1 million IDPs in eastern Oromia. What are we doing to try to help them in their humanitarian crisis, which is obviously severe?

We have also raised on our trip—and we are doing it again here; we have done it in our resolution and elsewhere—the use of torture against so many individuals. I know the Prime Minister has cleaned house of some of the worst of the worst, but we know in Maekelawi prison, which is finally being shut down, we heard stories of people who had been grossly mistreated. And obviously the guards and others who were a part of that need to be held to account.

And, finally, the whole issue of China's influence—and I know you are very concerned about that, as well—the debt that they are piling on one African country after another that will become unsustainable in exchange for their minerals, their oil, their wood. It is a one-way ticket to Beijing in terms of the net benefits of that relationship, and I think Ethiopia is beginning to understand that themselves.

So maybe you can speak to that as well.

Ambassador NAGY. Sure. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Four extremely important areas to address. Maybe I can take them in reverse order. The Chinese one is extremely important, and that is one that is of great personal interest to me. I think the

Ethiopians definitely understand that China is not the long-term solution for their problems.

I think it is true in just about all of Africa that the problems—the greatest problems they are going to face is this demographic wave of the population doubling between now and 2050. And the solution all comes down—it sounds simplistic, but it is really not, but it comes down to jobs, jobs, jobs for the young people.

And Prime Minister Abiy, I think, is one of those enlightened leaders that fully comprehends that to take Ethiopia on a road to prosperity and stability, it requires creating jobs, jobs, jobs for those millions and millions and millions of young people who are, you know, a huge percentage of the population will be under 15. And that is not going to come from trade with China.

So he is extremely eager to open up trade and commerce in Ethiopia with other companies. They are reaching out to us, as are a number of other African countries, and I think it is extremely important for the United States to engage with him, obviously not only that area, but that area is critically important to their long-term future.

And that will require several strategic steps because, of course, it will require work on the part of Ethiopia to put on in the kind of enabling environment which will be welcoming to other companies besides Chinese, and I think that they are very eager to proceed on that. It will also require work on the United States Government's part to help the Ethiopians technically in those areas.

And then, finally, it will also require us to reach out to American companies to go to Africa because, unlike China, we don't have state-owned corporations and state-owned banks to where we order companies to go to countries X, Y, and Z and invest so much money.

American companies, I know, are eager to invest in Africa, especially Ethiopia has now a phenomenal reputation. And in many cases, companies want to do that, but they find it difficult because they are not sure that the environment is right for them. So it is a cycle that we actually have to step into and work on to help Prime Minister Abiy succeed.

In the area of the use of torture, extremely important area. The United States, of course—

Mr. SMITH. While you are answering, could you just add to that answer. The Torture Victims Relief Act, and I authored four of those over the years, provide for that intervention for PTSD especially. Is that something that you would consider, you know, helping the Ethiopian Government obtain because those best practices lead maybe not to a cure but to an ability to overcome the nightmares to a great extent?

Ambassador NAGY. Absolutely. And we have had experience doing this before. I remember when I was Ambassador in Guinea, the whole region was engulfed in Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil war, and the United States became quite active in working with the victims of torture to try to help them overcome that.

As a matter of fact, we worked with the Peace Corps to introduce a brand new program to where third-year volunteers could actually—had to have the competent abilities to work in the camps specifically with the torture victims.

So, as you said, Mr. Chairman, the military and the security forces are having to work on so many issues at the same time, but this is one that is critically important. And it is also one that the Ethiopians are going to have to have a national dialogue on, because different countries in Africa have had different approaches to this kind of internal peace and reconciliation post trauma.

Liberians did it one way; Sierra Leoneans did it another way; the South Africans, of course, did it a certain way. And it has to be done culturally. But as you said yourself, they do have to come to some kind of resolution because, otherwise, it is a poison that will exist in their society going forward.

We, of course,—it is not for the United States to tell other countries how to do it, but we certainly have to be prepared to support when asked to do so. And I was delighted to hear you say that even the military are interested in this. So that would be another one.

On the internally displaced, as usual, I am—the United States does step forward very quickly. I was very pleased to see this, that in July, the U.S. Government announced more than \$170 million in humanitarian assistance for the emergency response in Ethiopia.

I mean, we are there. The internally displaced numbers are horrifying. They go back several years, although recently because of the emergency that happened in Somalia and the brief violence that took part there that added another great number of internally displaced. So we are there, USAID, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Food for Peace, and we will continue to be there to monitor and to help whatever way we can.

And let's see, I think the last one was the trafficking in persons. Again, I think you have a situation with Ethiopia where you have a transitioning government with the enlightenment to want to change things. Their problem comes up is that they have to change things in so many critical areas.

And even the security forces, again, they want to improve. We want them to improve, would love to see nothing more than to see them get up to that tier one status. And they want to engage with us. We want to engage with them. We have made that—specific recommendations. So we will work with them on that very actively to help them get there. It is very rarely that you have a government with so many good intentions.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. It might be worthwhile to configure a trip with the TIP office—

Ambassador NAGY. Yes.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. Because they are experts and they have a wealth of best practices that they could share.

Ranking Member Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much.

And, again, Assistant Secretary, I really appreciate you being here today, and I look forward to welcoming you on Friday at the Africa Brain Trust that the Congressional Black Caucus is doing, and I know the public will look forward to hearing your comments.

I wanted to follow up with the discussion that you were having about the reconciliation process, and specifically my questions want to know your opinions about what we can do in Congress to be helpful with the process.

So, you know, when we met with the various groups, you know, top on their agenda was reconciliation. When we met with the Prime Minister, you know, you got a slightly different message. I mean, he understands how critically important it is, but at the same time, he doesn't want the country to be consumed by that. And so I just wanted to know your thoughts on what we might do that might be helpful.

Ambassador NAGY. I believe that the best thing to do would be for the United States of America, as voiced by the people's Representatives, to recognize that Prime Minister Abiy has indicated an interest in going toward national reconciliation, the importance of national reconciliation, and that the United States stands ready to support any way possible to make that happen, as we did with South Africa, as we did with Liberia, as we did with Sierra Leone, to walk that fine line of not dictating but recognizing and respecting so that, as I said before, it does not become a poison in the future environment. It has to be taken out.

Ms. BASS. Do you think it is helpful to do a resolution, a sense of Congress, or some kind of statement especially following on the heels of the resolution that we did?

Ambassador NAGY. I think resolutions are greatly paid attention to in Ethiopia. During my time as Ambassador, I was called often by the Ethiopian Government based on actions that Congress took. So it definitely would receive widespread—

Ms. BASS. That wasn't good, I take it.

Ambassador NAGY. Pardon me?

Ms. BASS. That was not good, I take it.

Ambassador NAGY. Well, yes, I was chewed out a fair number of times because I was, let me put it this way, credited with the action that, in fact, Congress took.

Ms. BASS. I see.

Ambassador NAGY. But in that regard, so I think it would definitely have its purposes, and as I mentioned, it definitely would be noticed by not only the Ethiopian Government but the larger Ethiopian community worldwide. And it is not just in the U.S. diaspora, it is, you know, Ethiopians around the world.

Ms. BASS. Right. Well, you know, when you mentioned promoting U.S. business involvement in Ethiopia—and I agree with you 100 percent, but one way we also might look to be helpful—I mean, the diaspora has been involved in terms of business, but we might look for ways to promote that, especially the diaspora that has not felt they could really engage with the country because of prior administrations. So something that we might figure out what we could do to help promote diaspora business involvement as well, in addition to, you know, the multinational corporations.

I wanted to ask you also about Eritrea. With the opening of relations between the two countries, do you think or do you have any sense at all whether the force, national service will continue on the military side, you know, considering what the nature of it would be, and especially given that that is one of the major reasons for the migration out of Eritrea, you know, and the people getting on the boats and attempting to make it to Europe?

Ambassador NAGY. Representative Bass, you are absolutely right on that. Up to now, for the last 20-plus years, Eritrea has used

Ethiopia as an excuse to maintain what I would almost call a fortress state and have one of the largest standing armies in Africa, despite the size of their population, plus the heinous national service, which never seem to end. With the opening of peace, they really will no longer have a reason to do that.

So we will be very—we will be following events very closely to see what domestic steps the Eritrean Government now takes to go along with their outward openings internationally, because I think it is critically important for Eritrea to do domestically the types of openings that they are doing internationally.

I was astounded also a couple of days ago to see the Presidents of Eritrea and Djibouti embracing on the tarmac of Asmara Airport. These events, for me, are mind-boggling. In my 40 years of following Africa, I have never seen this type of transition happen. I think it is a clear indication of the wonderful things that can happen from enlightened, strong leadership, just like we have seen awful things happen around unfortunately the continent and from other types of leadership, which is the opposite of that.

And I hope that that serves as an example to President Isaias as well, that it leads to instant popularity. You don't have to have a repressive state when you are doing the right thing and you are taking your people's interests as your first goal.

Ms. BASS. Do you see our relationship having changed at all with Eritrea since opening with Ethiopia?

Ambassador NAGY. Well, the atmosphere has improved, I think, remarkably, but now let's get to the heart of the issue and let's get to actual events and actions, because that also goes, for example, to the sanctions regime.

You know, Eritrea cannot assume that by saying wonderful things and opening good relations with the neighbors, that that will automatically lead to sanctions relief. There have to be concrete actions taken, and we, of course, will remain very engaged and, you know, say things that will not always be popular, but they have to be said.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

I yield to my good friend from Denver.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Real concerned with these extraordinary numbers, high numbers of displaced individuals in Ethiopia and the ethnic tensions inside the country. Is there anything else that the United States can do to influence that situation in terms of getting better, reducing the tensions, and what is the Prime Minister able to do?

Ambassador NAGY. That also—thank you, sir. That is a phenomenal question because ethnicity in Ethiopia is such a historically interesting issue. In one respect, Ethiopia being an ethnic federalism offers almost a unique model in Africa based on how some of the other States have been structured because of the boundaries. So it offers that example.

So ethnicity in Ethiopia has been a very stark issue. But then, on the other hand, of all the places I have served in Africa, I have never met people like in Ethiopia who carry all of them a sense of Ethiopianess in their DNA going back to 2,000 years of Ethiopian

history. So it is one of those, you know, two forces existing in the same place.

I believe that Prime Minister Abiy recognizes that the best solution to ethnic friction is economic progress, economic opportunity for the young people who live there, because if the opportunities exist and there is really no reason to be having animosity toward other—that other ethnicity that may be in the other side of town, and I believe that he intends to work in that regard.

We, of course, may be in position to offer programs of technical assistance in this regard. But I truly believe the heart of the issue and the heart of the solution really would be economic progress to where the ethnic groups don't feel that urgency of competition just based on ethnicity.

Mr. COFFMAN. Ambassador, you mentioned about the need to go through—for Ethiopia to go through a process of reconciliation. You gave some examples of different countries that have gone through a process of reconciliation. One of your examples is South Africa. Is South Africa in some way a model of reconciliation?

Ambassador NAGY. The only difference being there that in South Africa, you have, of course, that racial dimension, which is almost unique to that country. In Zimbabwe, it was at one time but not to the extent in South Africa, which is quite a bit different from Ethiopia, because in Ethiopia it was not a racial dimension or even so much of an ethnic dimension as just abuse of a segment of the population by a historicity of regimes, going all the way back, in some respects, you know, quite frankly, to the Emperor but then, of course, certainly the Mengistu regime, the successor regime led by Prime Minister Meles, and the post-Meles government. Now the one that wants to take the lid off everything, let the light in, transparency, openness, it falls to them to—in many respects it is unfair because it falls to them to have to undue the harm that has been done in previous generations, but it has to be a restorative but also cathartic experience.

Mr. COFFMAN. Ambassador, what can we do to assist Ethiopia to try to make these changes, these reforms from the Abiy administration, the Prime Minister, sustainable?

Ambassador NAGY. To continue engagement, to take a whole-of-government approach, to mobilize all of our resources together, and, in commonality, to maintain an ongoing dialogue to stay with it, and also to act as quickly as the U.S. Government is capable of acting because he is moving very, very quickly. And he realizes also that the changes that he is bringing in are quite fragile and that his people are expecting him to move quickly also and to show progress.

So we have to be also very flexible and very deft. And I would like to also echo what the chairman said that we are fortunate to have Ambassador Raynor in Addis at this time, an extremely talented Embassy staff.

Our communications are constant. Their communications with Abiy's government, Prime Minister Abiy's government, are ongoing and constant, so we are going to all work together to be able to maximize the effectiveness of the U.S. Government because all of us want to see the same thing for a whole variety of reasons, from

U.S. security to our business prosperity but also to the regional stability in the Greater Horn of Africa.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mike.

We are joined by the distinguished chairman of the full Foreign Affairs Committee, Chairman Royce.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will just make some general observations here, but let me begin by thanking you and ranking member Karen Bass for the trip that you made to Ethiopia and the arguments you put forward.

And let me also thank Mike Coffman. We worked together on the resolution. And let me say that this issue, Mike, of advancing human rights in Ethiopia is one that I think we are somewhat encouraged by some of the recent events, but your observation that we need to sustain this progress, we need to see the Prime Minister's work sort of taken up as a long-term commitment by the government is important. The focus of the resolution was for the government in Ethiopia to address these human rights concerns head on. And we have indeed, as I say, seen some commendable progress since then.

When he took office in April, the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took some pretty bold steps to reform Ethiopia's government, some pretty bold moves on the economy as well. And we have tens of thousands of political prisoners now that have been released. Many more in exile have felt safe enough to return home. That is what I am told in Los Angeles and in southern California by the community. Media freedom certainly has expanded from where it was. And the government, I think, in their public recognition about the need to systemically improve human rights conditions have made the right commitments there.

The economic reforms are encouraging, but many of them are proposed at this point, so we want to see full implementation and enforcement. There has also been historic progress toward resolving the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and we should comment on that because, during my time as chairman of the Africa Subcommittee, we held a number of hearings on the brutal conflict between these two countries.

Years later, we can finally look upon the conflict with cautious optimism. The recent reconciliation between these two countries is very encouraging. Genuine peace and improved economic and security cooperation, of course, would bring stability, would bring mutual prosperity to both Ethiopians and Eritreans.

But I think this is just the beginning. The road ahead for Prime Minister Abiy's government will be a very challenging road. It must increase accountability of government officials. You have got to do something about accountability of the security forces. It will ensure that all citizens' voices are heard and respected.

The U.S. and Ethiopia have long enjoyed a strong, bilateral relationship, enjoyed the opportunity with the congressional delegation we took to Ethiopia, and I know my colleague sacrificed a lot of time and effort there, John, when you were in Ethiopia at a very difficult time with the Peace Corps. Americans are rooting for an Ethiopia on the mend, and everything we see is encouraging.

So our committee will continue to track developments and look forward to further strengthening the partnership, further strengthening Ethiopia's efforts toward becoming a more free, a more inclusive, a more prosperous nation. And I thank the Assistant Secretary for his engagement in all of this.

Ambassador NAGY. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROYCE. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to yield to Mr. Garamendi.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Once again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the privilege of joining your subcommittee for this hearing, an extremely important hearing.

Chairman of the full committee Mr. Royce, thank you for your many years of attention to Africa and Ethiopia in that process.

And, Mr. Coffman, the same.

Just a couple of things. I am on the Armed Services Committee, and the new National Defense Strategy emphasizes Russia and China. The result of that, apparently, is a movement by the Department of Defense to move away from Africa, particularly the Sahel and areas of violent, extreme organizations.

I draw that to the attention of this committee, the interrelationship between the work of this committee and the Armed Services Committee, with regard to the role of the Department of Defense and the State Department in Africa deserves our attention.

Of specific interest beyond that is some of the questions that have arisen with regard to the current famine, drought that is occurring on the eastern portions of Ethiopia and probably going to move beyond that. The work of this committee in pushing back on the \$300 million rescission in the food aid programs is much appreciated, I think by—certainly by everybody that pays attention to what is going on in those countries.

And I would draw the—and ask the Ambassador and Assistant Secretary about what specifically is taking place with regard to support for famine relief in the area as well as security issues.

And, with that, I would yield back.

Ambassador NAGY. Thank you very much.

On famine relief, our Food for Peace for Ethiopia is at \$373 million. And Ethiopia, as you know from your time there, unfortunately suffers periodic famine, and each time, the United States tends to be the first one there. I had the same thing happen during my ambassadorship, where we were actually able to stem off the famine.

And the types of famine that hit it are of two varieties. Sometimes, unfortunately, a famine is in the highlands, and sometimes it is in the lowlands. Totally different requirements.

But I am always honored to be associated with the United States of America, because, thanks to your generosity and the generosity of the American people, we are always the first ones there to respond. And we will certainly continue to do so going forward, whatever it takes. We are always the most generous. In my lecturing at Texas Tech, I always thanked the American farmers, because we had many of those kids in the classes.

On the security front, of course Ethiopia is one of our most important partners, not just in the region but also throughout Africa.

As I believe the chairman mentioned, Ethiopia is the largest troop contributor to U.N. Peacekeeping operations. They contribute troops to several operations in Sudan. And then, bilaterally, they do it in Somalia because it is their neighbor and Somalia is critically important to their own peace and well-being.

That is one of the other reasons this ongoing peace process between neighbors, one after the other, after the other, is so critically important. From my own experience in Ethiopia, I recognize the Ethiopian Armed Forces as one of the most professional I have ever worked with. And we depend on them for maintaining peace and security throughout the greater Horn, and we will certainly continue that engagement.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Could you—excuse me, Mr. Chairman.

Could you speak briefly about Sudan, southern Sudan?

Ambassador NAGY. Well, of course, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya—IGAD, everybody—has been devastated by the events in South Sudan. We were so optimistic when the country gained its independence, and what has happened since then has been devastating.

And a little while ago, I was mentioning what a huge difference one enlightened leader who actually cares passionately about their own people, what a difference that has made to Ethiopia. And I mentioned the opposite of that. And I fear that that is exactly what we have seen in South Sudan.

The current peace process is the only peace process we have going. We hope that it will succeed. And, of course, we will do our best to be supportive, because everybody wants to see peace and reconciliation there. Unfortunately, the leadership, to say that it was disheartening is an understatement.

Mr. GARAMENDI. The role of Ethiopia in that has been long-term and significant, and I assume it is remaining so.

Ambassador NAGY. Yes, sir, absolutely. Ethiopia, of course, has been tremendously helpful on a number of fronts, both Sudan, South Sudan—when Sudan was still one country—because I remember when I was Ambassador, I had a number of conversations with then-Prime Minister Meles about Sudan, at the time, the civil war—and then, of course, the other neighbor, Somalia.

So Ethiopia has been a very positive force for stability and peace on both of those fronts. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

Just let me ask a few final questions, if I could.

Mr. Secretary, you know, I have been to South Sudan twice within the last 2½ years or so and, like you, am greatly distressed over Salva Kiir's performance and how destabilizing it has been, and the loss of life in not just South Sudan but the explosion of refugees and IDPs from that manmade crisis. So we wish you well as Assistant Secretary for all of Africa, of course, in your efforts there.

Just a small recommendation would be to consider bringing former President George W. Bush back into it. He and Salva Kiir did hit it off well. Kiir still wears the hat given to him by President Bush.

Ambassador NAGY. That is right.

Mr. SMITH. And I think President Bush would be more than helpful and effective in saying, "Get with the program, Mr. Presi-

dent. End the complicity of your troops with rape and pillaging of food stuffs," the World Food Programme and our own, of course, being stolen by some of them. It is just awful. So if you could maybe take that back.

But let me just ask a question. In Abyei, as we all know, the disputed border between Sudan and South Sudan, Ethiopian peacekeepers have played a huge role. And we know that there is consideration being given to downgrading that—their withdrawal of mechanized artillery units, replacing them with police.

When we met with General Mekonnen, he voiced his extreme concern about that. And I would hope that you would take that back, that it could actually make the situation worse. And he also made the point that he may even withdraw all of his troops.

So I do hope that that is something you might want to speak to. Because I think every dollar we invest in U.N. Peacekeeping, especially in a place like Abyei, is a dollar well-served. The mission supports it. Any efforts at cost-cutting I think would be not achieved because there could be the loss of life.

Also, some of our witnesses will follow—so if you could speak to that—will follow in a moment with panel two, including Jamal Said.

And we heard this while we were there, and of course we pushed this in our resolution, and that is the idea of having a commission, investigation, perhaps a peace and reconciliation commission that parallels what South Africa did, what El Salvador did after its terrible war with the FMLN, to try to weed out the bad apples, hold them to account, and move on to a reconciliation process that, you know, leads to a stronger and more human-rights-oriented Ethiopia. So if you could speak to those.

And, finally, in our witness testimony from Emily Estelle from AEI, she makes a number of excellent points, but one of them is that sustained conflicts risk mobilizing Ethiopia's Somali population, potentially causing a new opportunity for al-Shabaab to recruit or even expand its attacks in Ethiopia. Your assessment of that risk of those Somalis who, obviously, live in and around Ethiopia?

Ambassador NAGY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again, if you permit me, I will take those in reverse.

Mr. SMITH. Sure.

Ambassador NAGY. With the Somali situation, indeed, one of the reasons that the Somali regional state of Ethiopia had such a large police force, the so-called Liyu police, there were so many of them, was exactly the reason to make sure that al-Shabaab stays out of the Ethiopian-Somali region.

Unfortunately, the local political forces were working for ill. They used the Liyu police for human rights violations, for repressing the local population. And when Prime Minister Abiy recently changed the Somali leadership, they were largely responsible for some of the violence and mayhem in the Somali region.

Prime Minister Abiy and the Ethiopian leadership is very concerned with the potential for al-Shabaab influence and entry into the Somali region, so they are keeping their eyes on that. And the Ethiopian security forces are also very sensitive to that issue. So

we definitely will engage on that, because that fits, obviously, in with U.S. Strategic interest on that one.

On the peace and reconciliation commission, again, I absolutely accept, embrace that suggestion. And I would just underline that, with the Ethiopians, it is a system that they will need to develop unique to their culture, their history, how they want to go about it. And we will be as supportive as we can be, as we have been in a number of other situations around the world. And the South African one, obviously, was a very effective and working model in Africa.

On the U.N. Peacekeeping, of course we have been in contact also with the Ethiopians on their concerns. And, globally, the U.N. Peacekeeping forces are very much of an issue for the United States, and our government is looking at the various peacekeeping forces and how to put what resources where. So we will definitely maintain that conversation with them, because we have heard the same thing that you have, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

Anything else?

Mr. COFFMAN. Oh. Yeah.

Mr. Secretary, just one final point, and that is, how would you characterize the forces working against the Ambassador right now, in terms of his trying to move these reforms forward within Ethiopia?

Ambassador NAGY. As I mentioned, it is certainly not a done deal. The situation is still very fragile. We know that there are reactionary forces at work as well. They may have been partially part of the reason that the Somali region so erupted in violence recently.

That is why I think it is critically important for the friends of Ethiopia, at this time, to be as supportive as possible so that Prime Minister Abiy can go back to the people and show actual, concrete results.

Because one point I make over and over again is that the young people of Africa—and they are the young people of Africa—have exactly the same dreams and ambitions as young people everywhere else, thanks to modern technology. And that is the kind of life they want, and that is what they are expecting from their own leaders. And the enlightened leaders understand this, and they want to respond very quickly, because otherwise they won't have much of a future.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary, and we look forward to working with you going forward.

Ambassador NAGY. Thank you so, so much, Mr. Chairman and members of the panel. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. I would like to now welcome our second panel to the witness table.

And I would like to yield to Mr. Coffman to do the introductions for our distinguished witnesses.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to introduce our second panel.

Girum Alemayehu is the cofounder of the Ethiopian American Development Council. He is also a founding member of a sister organization, the Ethiopian American Civil Council, based in Aurora, Colorado.

He plays a leading role in several civic engagement and humanitarian projects in Colorado. Mr. Alemayehu is the cofounder and cochairman of the Taste of Ethiopia, a nonprofit based in Denver that promotes Ethiopian heritage and community service in a festival that brings together over 10,000 people each year.

Mr. Alemayehu grew up in Ethiopia and studied philosophy and played soccer in Addis Ababa University. He pursued a master's degree of science in agricultural education from Oklahoma State University and is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Walden School of Public Administration.

Thank you for being here today. We look forward to your testimony.

Do you want me to do the second one?

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay.

And then I am proud to introduce, from Colorado as well, Jamal Said. He is the president of the Oromo Community of Denver and a human rights activist. He grew up in the Oromia regional state of Ethiopia and came to the United States in January 1999, seeking refuge from persecution.

He graduated from Columbia College in 2009 with a degree in business administration. He is married and has four children and lives in Aurora, Colorado.

Thank you for testifying before the subcommittee today.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Coffman.

I would like to now introduce, as well, Emily Estelle, who is a senior analyst for the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute and the Africa team lead. She studies the Salafijihadi movement in Africa, including al-Qaeda, ISIS, and associated groups.

Ms. Estelle specializes in the Libya conflict and has expertise in the Horn of Africa. Ms. Estelle also coordinates the Critical Threat Project's training and tradecraft and manages the integration of technology into the research process.

Ms. Estelle graduated summa cum laude from Dartmouth College with a B.A. in anthropology, modified with Arabic language.

We then will hear from Yoseph Badwaza, who is a senior program officer for Ethiopia at Freedom House.

Prior to his position at Freedom House, he was the secretary general of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Ethiopia's foremost human rights organization. Mr. Badwaza fled Ethiopia in 2009, when government attacks on the Ethiopian Human Rights Council became more persistent.

When he arrived in the U.S., Mr. Badwaza continued his advocacy of human rights protection and good governance. In 2010, he received the Alison Des Forges Award from Human Rights Watch for his activism.

Mr. Badwaza has an LL.B. From Addis Ababa University and an LL.M. in human rights from the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

We will now begin.

**STATEMENT OF MR. GIRUM ALEMAYEHU, CO-FOUNDER,
ETHIOPIAN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

Mr. ALEMAYEHU. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the situation in Ethiopia.

I would like to open my testimony first by thanking my Representative, the Honorable Mike Coffman from Colorado District 6, for his support to the Ethiopian-American constituents in his district and for giving us the forum to voice our concern about current developments in Ethiopia.

I also would like to recognize the active participation of all Ethiopians, from all walks of life, in advocating the passage of H. Res. 128.

H. Res. 128 was passed on April 10, 2018, and in the same month, the long-lived struggles of the Ethiopian people resulted in disintegration of the EPRDF from within. The former Prime Minister was unable to control the situation, even after declaring the state of emergency, and resigned.

Following that, a new, vibrant Prime Minister was appointed. I give full credit to Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Lemma Megersa, Gedu Andargachew, and Demeke Mekonnen for their extraordinary work in transforming Ethiopia from a looming ethnic-based civil war into unprecedented civil peace.

Ethiopia is undergoing peaceful changes unlike any that has been seen in its long history. After 27 years of dictatorial rule, Ethiopians for the first time are now seeing the dawn of a new day in which they are regaining hope and confidence in their future.

Over the past 6 months, we have seen things none of us expected in our wildest imagination. To put some examples, the state of emergency was lifted; many political prisoners were released; Ethiopians who were denied entry into Ethiopia are now receiving a hero's welcome.

Peace was finally achieved with neighboring Eritrea. The phone service and flights are reinstated. They are also working hard to reconnect the countries through the five roads. Some of the roads that were heavily mined are now being repaired for commercial use between the two countries.

The government has made a significant stride toward the market economy and even offered to partially privatize some of the government-owned businesses. Ethiopian Airlines and Ethiopian Telecom are the two biggest that are slated for privatization.

The press is operating without being muzzled by the government, and independent media networks are allowed to work from Ethiopia.

With all the changes happening there, there are some worrying events.

All over the country, nearly 2 million people have been forced out of their homes to escape violence, particularly Oromos from the Ethiopian Somali region, Gedeos from Oromia, Wolaytas from South region, and Amharas from Benishangul Gumuz. Most of them are women, children, and the elderly.

The attempt to take the life of the new Prime Minister at a public support rally in Addis Ababa this past June has yet to be resolved in spite of help from FBI investigators from the USA. There were highly publicized cases of mob justice in Shashemene in Oromia and Bure in Amhara regions.

The terror unleashed in Jigjiga, the capital of the Ethiopia-Somalia region, where six churches were burned down, priests were killed, and people labeled as highlanders were viciously murdered in public squares.

All these signs, I believe, show the weakness in the institutions that safeguard law and order, human rights and democracy. The last 27 years, the EPRDF has weakened the institutions to be subservient to it.

The U.S. Can help strengthen the institutions by providing resources for capacity building of the Human Rights Commission, the Election Commission, and the Broadcast Authority as independent, competent, and credible institutions.

We would like the USA to urge the Ethiopian Government to: Create an independent commission to conduct a full, credible, and transparent investigation into the killings, detention, torture, and instances of excessive use of force by security forces, and hold accountable security forces accused of such actions through public proceedings, and to publicly release the written findings from such an investigation;

Organize an independent commission that oversees the reorganization of the Human Rights Commission, the Election Commission, and the Broadcast Authority to be independent institutions;

Conduct a full, credible, and transparent investigation into the recent ethnic violence that led to loss of life and displacement of a large number of Ethiopians, including those that targeted Amharas in Benishangul, Oromos in Somali region, Gedeos in Oromia region, and Wolyatas in Southern region, and hold accountable those responsible for those human rights violations;

And to call for an open, constructive dialogue with all the opposition forces, both at home and abroad, armed and peaceful, in order to chart the country's future together.

I know, Mr. Chairman, under your leadership, your committee in this House will do its part for well-being of the Ethiopian people. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I stand ready to answer any question you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Alemayehu follows:]

Testimony of Girum Alemayehu
Ethiopian-American Development Council
Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and
International Organizations
September 12, 2018
‘Reviewing Current Developments in Ethiopia’

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the situation in Ethiopia. I would like to open my testimony first by thanking my representative, the Honorable Mike Coffman (CO-6) for his support to the Ethiopian-American constituents in his district and for giving us the forum to voice our concern about current developments in Ethiopia. I also would like to recognize the active participation of all Ethiopians from all walks of life in advocating the passage of HR 128.

HR 128 was passed on April 10, 2018 and in the same month the long-lived struggles of the Ethiopian people resulted in disintegration of the EPRDF from within. The former prime minister was unable to control the situation, even after declaring the state of emergency, and resigned. Following that a new vibrant Prime Minister was appointed. I give full credit to Abiy Ahmed, Lemma Megerssa Gedu Andargachew and Demeke Mekonen for their extraordinary work in transforming Ethiopia from a looming ethnic based civil war into an unprecedented of civil peace.

Ethiopia today is undergoing peaceful changes unlike any that has been seen in its long history. After 27 years of dictatorial rule, Ethiopians, for the first time, are now seeing the dawn of a new day in which they are regaining hope and confidence in their future. Over the past six months, we have seen things none of us expected in our wildest imaginations. To put some examples:

1. The state of emergency was lifted
2. Many political prisoners were released, Ethiopians who were denied entry into Ethiopia are now receiving a hero's welcome.
3. Peace was finally achieved with neighboring Eritrea. The phone service and flights are reinstated. They are also working hard to reconnect the countries through 5 roads. Some of the roads that were heavily mined are now being repaired for commercial use between the two countries
4. The government has made a significant stride towards the market economy and even offered to partially privatize some of the government owned business. Ethiopian Airlines and Ethiopian Telecom are the two biggest that are slated for privatization.

5. The press is operating without being muzzled by the government. And independent media networks are allowed to work from Ethiopia.

With all the changes happening there are some worrying events. All over the country nearly 2 million people have been forced out of their homes to escape violence, particularly Oromos from the Ethiopian Somali region, Gedeos from Oromia, Wolaytas from the South region and Amharas from Benishangul Gumuz. Most of them are women, children and the elderly.

The attempt to take the life of the new Prime Minister at a public support rally in Addis Ababa this past June has yet to be resolved in spite of help from FBI investigators from USA. There were highly publicized cases of mob justice in Shashemene in Oromia and Bure in Amhara regions

The terror unleashed in Jijjiga, the capital of the Ethio-Somalia region where six churches were burned down, priests were killed, and people labeled as highlanders were viciously murdered in public squares.

All these signs, I believe, show the weakness in the institutions that safeguard law and order, human rights and democracy. The last 27 years, the EPRDF has weakened the institutions to be subservient to it. The US can help strengthen the institutions by providing resources for capacity building of the Human Rights Commission, the Election commission, and the Broadcast Authority as independent, competent and credible institutions.

We would like the USA to urge the Ethiopian Government to:

- create an independent commission to conduct a full, credible, and transparent investigation into the killings, detentions, torture and instances of excessive use of force by security forces and hold accountable security forces accused of such actions through public proceedings, and to publicly release written findings from such investigation
- organize an independent commission that oversees the reorganization of the Human Rights Commission, the Election commission, and the Broadcast Authority to be independent institutions.
- conduct a full, credible, and transparent investigation into the recent ethnic violence that led to loss of life and displacement of a large number of Ethiopians (including those that targeted Amharas in Benishangul, Oromos in Somali region, Gedeos in Oromia region and Wolaytas in Southern Region) and hold accountable those responsible for these human rights violations.
- To call for an open and constructive dialogue with all the opposition forces (both at home and abroad, armed and peaceful) in order to chart the country's future together.

I know, Mr. Chairman, under your leadership your committee and this House will do its part for the wellbeing of the people of Ethiopia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. I stand ready to answer any questions you might have.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very, very much.
Mr. Said?

**STATEMENT OF MR. JAMAL SAID, PRESIDENT, OROMO
COMMUNITY OF DENVER**

Mr. SAID. Chairman Chris Smith, Ranking Member Karen Bass, Members of Congress, Ambassador Tibor Nagy, fellow panelists, and distinguished guests, I offer my gratitude to my Congressman, Mike Coffman, great ally of the Ethiopian-Americans in his district, for the opportunity to represent not only Oromo Community of Denver but to speak to the concerns shared by Oromo and other communities across the U.S. And Ethiopia.

When we brought to you the demands of the Oromo youth, who are known as Qeerroo, we in the diaspora stepped up to speak for them because their voices were not heard in the international community. Now, with many of the reforms, voices that were once silenced are finding expression and they can be heard.

And we are grateful that you, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Bass, have followed up with a congressional delegation to Ethiopia on August 23rd, where you recognized, met with, and spoke with Qeerroo in Addis Ababa.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's strong reforms are certainly to be celebrated. Now it is necessary to consolidate and to build on these reforms in order to bring opportunity and prosperity to the Qeerroo and to the country.

Everyone thought that Ethiopia was on the verge of collapse until the Qeerroo proved to be disciplined, sustained, and non-violent in their modern form of resistance. They created the opening that ushered in this era of change.

I want to remind you of the need to ensure that the benefit and the opportunity created now with the grassroots. Those who took the greatest risk and have made the greatest sacrifice must not be forgotten or marginalized again.

At this point, most key demands of the Oromo protesters have not yet been met, but they have hope and we have hope.

The first is land rights. The first line of resistance was over the loss of ancestral land. This matter has not yet been addressed. The land of indigenous Oromo, Anuak, Sidama, and many other peoples were turned into a commodity for sale or lease without their knowledge or consent.

Another is language rights. A major demand of Oromo youth is to gain access to opportunity and shared prosperity. The need to adapt Afaan Oromo as a Federal working language in Ethiopia alongside Amharic remains a top priority. In day-to-day reality, access to a vast array of opportunities is currently blocked for those who do not speak Amharic.

Another key demand is for justice and accountability. You should be aware that, despite the release of prisoners in Ethiopia, the killing and the displacement of Oromo and other people in some areas has intensified, particularly in East Hararghe, West Hararghe, Bale, Guji, and Borana. Over 2 million people are now displaced across the country, destitute, in urgent need of international assistance to be resettled back in their homes.

The many cases of disappearance and imprisonment highlight the need for an independent commission created to conduct a full investigation and release its findings and recommendations.

Regarding the demand of inclusive governance, Ethiopia is home to multiple communities who have been marginalized. A democratic Federal system where power is not monopolized at the center can ensure that diverse views and interests in Ethiopia are served. To attain a transition to democracy from authoritarian rule, free and fair elections must be carried out in the context of a robust civil society, with an in-person and independent electoral vote.

I summarize my written remarks by saying that the daily lives of ordinary Oromo and Ethiopian people have not yet improved, but the people have hope and they have appreciated the opening offered by Abiy's reform. Even the Qeerroo from the most deprived areas will point out the marginalization has become deeply institutionalized. To undo these arrangements takes vision, time, patience, and collaborative efforts.

The Qeerroo are eagerly committed to joining in the task. They understand that the U.S. Congress has been a great ally who has stood with them. We in the diaspora are pleased to continue to play a supportive role in this journey.

Finally, my written testimony includes my recommendations to the subcommittee which I believe will help Ethiopia transition to a democracy.

Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Chairman. I yield the remaining of my time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Said follows:]

Name: Jamal K. Said

Title and Organization: President, Oromo Community of Denver

Committee: U.S House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs

Subcommittee: Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

Date: September 12, 2018

Title of Hearing: Reviewing Current Developments in Ethiopia

Introduction

Chairman Chris Smith, Ranking Member Karen Bass, Members of Congress, Ambassador Tibor Nagy, fellow panelists, distinguished guests. I offer my gratitude to my Congressman from Colorado's Congressional 6th district in Colorado, Representative Mike Coffman, staunch ally of all the Ethiopians in the district, for the opportunity to represent not only the Oromo Community of Denver in Colorado but to speak to concerns shared by Oromo and other communities across the US and Ethiopia.

On their behalf, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for your support in recognizing the sacrifices of Oromo youth, who are known as *Qeerroo*, and other Ethiopian youth who demanded deep reform in Ethiopia from early on and in working closely with us, the diaspora. You have acknowledged the sustained nonviolent resistance of youth – first across Oromia and then joined by Konso people and people from Amhara region. As early as September 2016 this body responded to that youth groundswell by introducing a house resolution (861) on Ethiopia. Then, the next year, in the new 115th Congress you updated it, made it stronger and reintroduced it as House Resolution 128 on “respecting human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia.” It was kicked off with a hearing on March 9, 2017 titled “Democracy Under Threat in Ethiopia.” With massive support from the diaspora the well-honed H Res 128 passed the House on April 10, 2018.

The passage of H Res 128 was born out of collaborative work of your Subcommittee with the diaspora communities like ours and the other Ethiopian American and human rights groups – including my fellow panelists here who all worked to bring us to this time of historic transition and potential transformation in Ethiopia. You stood with us and with those who persisted through suffering. You continue to stand with us. I personally have to tell you that you both hold a special place in the hearts of Ethiopians who longed for change.

When we brought the *Qeerroo's* demands to you, we in the diaspora stepped up to speak for them because their voice was not heard in the international community. Now with many of the reforms, those once-silenced voices are finding expression and can be heard.

We continue to listen and take our lead from them. And we are grateful that you, Chairman Chris Smith and Ranking Member Karen Bass, are listening also. You have followed up with a Congressional Delegation to Ethiopia on August 23. You both met with a range of Ethiopian groups and have received the emotional outpouring of gratitude from Oromo and other

Ethiopians in many walks of life, recognizing you, greeting you with tears, thanking you for your role in their release from prison and their right to express themselves without reprisal. Thank you for attending with Ambassador Raynor a Town Hall meeting in Addis Ababa with Oromo civic association members and some *Qeerroo* (Oromo youth) to hear their concerns. Your trip underscored that US policy toward Ethiopia really mattered during the transition to a new Prime Minister, and it continues to matter now on the ground in Ethiopia. The effects and the impact of H Res 128 have been to support the transformation underway. Certainly, in my community your efforts have been praised.

I have been asked to provide insights into developments since the passage of the resolution, so in the short time I have, I will raise the key ongoing demands of the people that are linked to their eventual prosperity.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's broad-sweeping democratic electoral, judicial, media and human rights reforms are certainly to be celebrated. He has released tens of thousands of political prisoners, activists, and journalists, lifted the State of Emergency, brought peace with Eritrea through rapprochement, engaged opposition political parties, unblocked access by formerly restricted media companies, removed banned parties from legal designation as "terrorist" organizations and visited Ethiopia's neighboring countries.

The *Qeerroo* celebrate Prime Minister Abiy's success, his innovation, his courage for a special reason. They know that he was unknown a year ago when they were resisting daily the obstacles that suppressed their own potential. They see that when the political opening came that they fought for, he got the opportunity to exercise his capacity and express himself, revealing his deep-seated values. He outperformed everyone's expectations. For many Oromo, Prime Minister Abiy symbolizes the potential that each Oromo and each person has to exceed expectations to live into a different future when obstacles are lifted.

Key Issues to be addressed:

Now it is necessary to consolidate and build on the Prime Minister's powerful reforms in order to bring opportunity and prosperity to the country. I want to remind you of the need to ensure that the benefits and the opportunities reach the Oromo, Amhara and other youth who took the greatest risk and made the greatest sacrifice to bring the openings that all the country now enjoys. It should not be allowed for them to be forgotten again, marginalized again.

The original demands of the #OromoProtests were to stop land grab, free all political prisoners, make Afaan Oromo a Federal working language alongside Amharic, repeal the anti-terrorism proclamation and the restrictive charities and societies laws and lay the groundwork for inclusive governance. The House Resolution 128 called upon the Ethiopian government to meet these demands. Ultimately providing prosperity will require deep institutional reform. At this point in the process most of the Oromo protesters demands have not yet been met, but they have hope, and we have hope. That is why we are here, continuing to advocate and work with you productively into a new secure, peaceful and prosperous reality. What will that require? The people at the grassroots are clear about what is required.

Land Rights

First is land rights. The first line of resistance was over the dispossession of ancestral land. This matter has yet to be addressed. The lands of indigenous Oromo, Anuak, Sidama and many other peoples were turned to a commodity for sale and lease without their knowledge or consent. Their lands were used as magnets to attract foreign investors and diaspora population as well as to illegally enrich relatives, use it to make friends and sometimes even sold off casually to pay debts or make payroll. The *Qeerroo* assert that the Oromo and other peoples have a right to live on their ancestral land without fear of displacement. They demand that development policies be formulated and carried out with full participation of and for the benefit of communities. Thus, we ask the Congress to urge the Ethiopian government to introduce land reform and otherwise engage in open and transparent consultations about its development strategy. We urge the Ethiopian government to end the practice of displacing local communities from ancestral lands in the name of development and to offer those already displaced from their lands the right to seek remedy or redress in courts. Dispossessed and displaced people need to be repatriated to the lands from which they have been violently removed.

Language Rights

The other major demand of Oromo youth (shared with youth across the country and the continent) is to gain access to opportunity and share in prosperity. This is where one full-throated call of Oromo youth needs to be understood in context – the need to **adopt afaan Oromo as a federal working language in Ethiopia alongside Amharic**. In day-to-day reality, access to a vast array of opportunities is currently blocked to those who do not speak the Amharic language, the current Federal language. Yet a majority of the people in Ethiopia speak Oromo as their first language. This needs to be clear to anyone seeking to remove obstacles to economic, social, political participation. So, the matter of the youth calling for access to business, administrative, educational, health, media and all services in their own language is a matter of leveling the playing field, eliminating the biggest hurdle to providing opportunity for millions. With this single policy change, now-closed doors will open for a huge sector who are now excluded from the marketplace, the government services, the courts, the hospitals, etc.

Justice and Accountability

Justice is the foundation for building public trust. Public accountability for persons who have violated and continue to violate rights is the first step to building reliable public institutions. You should be aware that, despite the release of prisoners in Ethiopia, the killing and the displacement of Oromo and other people in some areas has intensified, particularly along the borders of Oromia with neighboring regional states including in East Hararghe, West Hararghe, Bale, Guji and Borana. The Liyu police forces that were led by security units loyal to the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) have committed many mass killings since Abiy attained the Prime Minister position, e.g., in Calango Town, in Moyale, Miyu Muluqe and Mieso. So far, none of these criminals have faced reprisals. Over two million people are now displaced across the country, destitute, in urgent need of international assistance and placing a heavy burden on those who care about their survival.

Sadly, Ethiopia is full of stories of anguish and injustice fueled by decades of authoritarian governance. These stories touch everyone in Oromia and reveal why it is important that PM Ahmed's administration make pursuing justice an urgent priority.

Also, the nation mourns the unresolved disappearances of many well-loved personages. For example Yosef Bati, a former schoolteacher snatched by security forces in Addis Ababa, Nadhi Gammadaa, head of a bureau was detained by Ethiopian armed forces and never seen again; Lamessa Boru, detained by TPLF forces while undergoing treatment at the Police Hospital in Addis Ababa; Bekele Dawano disappeared while in detention in Agarfa prison. Dabasa Guyo, an Oromo wisdom keeper, beloved oral historian and spiritual leader was kidnapped from Kenya by unidentified security forces and taken across the border into Ethiopia. He has been missing since September 2015. The whereabouts of these persons and hundreds of others remains unknown. The Abiy administration should be encouraged to bring closure by providing families with information or assistance to locate their missing family members. We urge the Ethiopian government to make pursuing justice in these – and the cases of over 200 unexplained disappearances — a priority.

Reps Smith and Bass, when you were in Ethiopia, you heard the heartbreaking story of Kefaluw Tefari, a young Oromo man who was snatched from the street and hauled off to prison without explanation or cause. He lost both his legs as a result of torture in detention and named his perpetrator. You encouraged victims of this kind of abuse to address this matter of justice and accountability by creating a list of those who have been responsible. Thank you for supporting justice and rehabilitation for the many persons like him who have been left without recourse.

His case and many like it highlight the need for an independent commission created to conduct a full, credible, and transparent investigation into the conduct of gross human rights violations and the public release of its full written findings and recommendations. We also call for systems of accountability to be put in place that provide justice for the survivors of torture, violence and other atrocities, to hold responsible persons who carried out deaths, cruelty, dispossession and displacement. Further, we support the U.S. Congress in seeking that provisions of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act be applied to the cases of Ethiopian government officials who have carried out or ordered gross violations of the human rights of individuals and business entities.

Opportunity for Youth

The *Qeerroo* in Ethiopia are a prime example of the youth bulge across Africa. The young Prime Minister exemplifies in his person the great potential of the youth. The youth have already demonstrated that without armaments, without violence, they achieved their goals through the concerted discipline required to conduct a sustained nonviolent protest against one of the most heavily armed regimes in Africa. Their courageous collective action brought the opening for reform that PM Abiy stepped into. We think that prosperity can be built on the youthful enthusiasm that is overwhelming the country

Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Bass, during the Congressional Delegation trip, you wanted to know how you can help further. You pointed out that it is appropriate for Congress and US agencies to play a supportive role as the people on the ground propose solutions. Now that the youth have a voice, our role in the diaspora shifts to supporting what they identify as their needs and help communicate those to you who are seeking to build up the continent. We believe that solutions found for the Oromo *qeerroo* and for the youth countrywide in Ethiopia will be applicable to addressing the African youth rising across the continent. We commit to continue to serve as a bridge to point to obstacles – as I have pointed to earlier in my remarks – as they are revealed so that former protesters can gain access to opportunities and actively move forward to build a prosperous future.

Inclusive Governance

Above all, Oromo seek democracy and peace. They are not alone in this. Ethiopia is home to multiple communities who historically and presently suffer from political, economic and cultural marginalization. The Oromo, along with the rest of the peoples of Ethiopia, believe in mutual recognition, equality and co-existence. A democratic federal system where power is not monopolized at the center can ensure that the diversity of views and interests in Ethiopia are served. Federalism with democracy can empower people to solve their problems and develop the means to address the social, political and economic challenges they face.

To attain a transition to democracy from authoritarian rule, the peoples' rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression must be respected, and free and fair elections must be carried out in the context of a robust civil society. Thankfully Ambassador Raynor has publicly stated that the U.S. supports free and fair elections in Ethiopia. We call for a non-partisan and independent Electoral Board, whose members are approved by both the ruling party and the opposition parties, to oversee elections at the local, zonal, regional and federal level. Internationally-recognized election observers should assist in election-related preparations and monitor election proceedings. The diaspora may be called upon to play a role in connecting programs that support elections and inclusive governance to the grassroots where these policies must take root. For this to happen some legislative change is necessary.

The Oromo *qeerroo* community constantly looks for ways to connect with other peoples who have been marginalized in Ethiopia, the Konso, the Anuak, the Sidama, the Afar, the Beni-Shangul, the Somali, the Amhara in Welkait, the Wolayita, and many others. Remedies that unleash energy and potential for the Oromo also resonate for peoples in Ethiopia who have not benefited from the repressive structures that enriched only a small minority of the country's population.

I can summarize my remarks by saying that the daily lives of the *Qeerroo* (Oromo youth) and the lives of the ordinary Oromo and Ethiopian people have not yet improved following the Prime Minister's rise to the position. But the people have hope and they have appreciated the opening offered by Abiy's reforms. Even the *qeerroo* from the most deprived areas will point out, marginalization of the Oromo and other people occurred over centuries and became deeply institutionalized. To undo these arrangements will take time and vision and the

patience to see the political, economic and social process through to deep institutional reform. The *qeerroo* are eagerly committed to joining in the task. They see the US Congress has been an ally in this journey who stood with them at the darkest point. We are pleased to continue to play a supportive role in this journey toward respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia.

Finally, I would like to conclude my testimony by summarizing my recommendations to this Subcommittee which I believe will help Ethiopia transition to a democracy.

I recommend that:

- 1.) The U.S. government apply to Ethiopian government officials, individuals, and business entities the Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which is a provision of H Res 128. The Act applies globally and authorizes U.S. government to sanction human rights offenders, freeze their assets, and ban them from entering the U.S., among other terms.
- 2.) The U.S. government call for the Ethiopian government to repeal the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and the 2009 Charities and Societies Act; the former has been used to stifle dissent and prosecute opposition leaders, journalists and bloggers; the latter to curtail the activities of human rights and democracy civic groups.
- 3.) The Ethiopian government form an independent Election Board that both the governing party and opposition parties can agree upon to prevent post-election disputes and crises, and amend election laws.
- 4.) To better transition from post-conflict authoritarian regime to democracy, systems of accountability by put in place such as the formation of a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission,' similar to the one assembled in South Africa to transition from apartheid.
- 5.) The Ethiopian government adopt Afaan Oromo as a Federal working language alongside Amharic to provide access to services in the public sphere for tens of millions of speakers of the Oromo language.
- 6.) The Ethiopian government conduct land reform and ensure the security of the people living on their ancestral land without fear of displacement.

I thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much.

And I would like to now ask Ms. Estelle, if you could give us your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MS. EMILY ESTELLE, SENIOR ANALYST, CRITICAL THREATS PROJECT, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

Ms. ESTELLE. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about Ethiopia's strategic importance. I will focus on the implications of Ethiopia's potential destabilization and present risks to U.S. national security interests in the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia is a key partner to secure U.S. interests. I am aware of the current optimism about its trajectory, and I want to share that optimism, but I must raise reasons for concern.

There is a risk that local and regional conflicts, exacerbated by geopolitical competition, will destabilize Ethiopia and expose the weakness of partner-reliant U.S. strategies. Direct U.S. interests are at risk in the Horn of Africa, including the fight against al-Qaeda and ISIS and freedom of movement in the Red Sea.

Ethiopia faces a rapid political transition and ethnic conflict that could escalate and challenge its stability. Much of the unrest is on the border of the Somali regional state, where Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also faces resistance to his consolidation of power. Sustained conflict could mobilize Ethiopia's ethnic Somali population, potentially creating an opportunity for al-Shabaab to recruit or even attack in Ethiopia.

The Abiy government approach, which includes mass arrests and internet blackouts, could exacerbate rather than solve the problem. Instability in Ethiopia would undermine U.S. efforts to neutralize al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda's Somalia-based affiliate, and reverberate regionally. Persistent ethnic violence or an insurgency from anti-Abiy security officials would draw the regime's focus inward, affecting regional peacekeeping and diplomatic efforts.

American, Somali, and African Union forces have disrupted al-Shabaab in central Somalia and improved security in Mogadishu but have not yet broken its hold on large areas of southern Somalia. These gains will evaporate if Ethiopia, Kenya, or Uganda, which faces an escalating political crisis, falters and redeploys troops home.

The problem of al-Qaeda and ISIS must also be considered alongside issues of human rights and democracy. These groups gain strength by defending and governing Sunni populations made vulnerable by conflict and societal disruption. Conditions in Ethiopia could create this opportunity.

Ethiopia's conflicts typically divide along ethnic lines rather than confessional or sectarian ones, but al-Qaeda has a strategy of coopting ethnic conflicts and is succeeding this way in West Africa, for example.

Both al-Qaeda's and al-Shabaab's ambitions extend beyond greater Somalia, which includes parts of eastern Ethiopia, to all of East Africa. ISIS, which is growing in Somalia, could also target Ethiopia. Legitimate and responsive governance for all Ethiopians both

protects their human rights and inoculates them against extremist organizations.

The Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement is another positive development that nonetheless raises threats to U.S. interests. The UAE's facilitation of the agreement occurs in the dangerous context of a larger contest among Middle Eastern states. Escalating geopolitical competition in the Horn of Africa is layering proxy conflicts onto existing fault lines and increasing the potential for instability, even while generating some positive effects.

Power plays by external actors have caused political turmoil in Somalia, weakening the Federal Government on which the U.S. counter-al-Shabaab strategy relies. Militarization of the Horn and the southern Red Sea has already affected commercial trade and threatens freedom of navigation.

Russia and China are also expanding their influence. The Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement may accelerate this trend, as Russia strikes basing deals with Eritrea and Djibouti, which is home to a vital U.S. base, faces potential isolation that may drive it toward China.

Experiences elsewhere have shown that supporting strongmen does not guarantee security. Ethiopia is no exception. In supporting Ethiopia, we must recognize that redressing legitimate grievances and protecting human rights yields long-term security dividends. Investment in good governance and security also prevents groups like al-Shabaab and ISIS from attempting to coopt local grievances. The U.S. must also weigh the values of outsourcing foreign policy objectives to partners against the potential adverse effects of their involvement.

The U.S. can begin to shape its approach to Ethiopia in two ways: By first using all available tools to help Prime Minister Abiy demilitarize his response to ethnic violence, resolve internal disputes, and conduct necessary structural reforms peacefully and acceptably to all sides; second, ensuring that the U.S. remains the sole guarantor of its interests in the region by not relying on the UAE or any other outside power to manage these interests.

Ethiopia is a critical country in an increasingly important region. The U.S. must recognize the dangers of rapidly changing dynamics in the Horn of Africa to prepare for worst-case scenarios even as we regard new developments with optimism.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Estelle follows:]



Statement before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International
Organizations
On "Reviewing Current Developments in Ethiopia"

Ethiopia's Strategic Importance

US National Security Interests at Risk in the Horn of Africa

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Senior Analyst

September 12, 2018

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational organization and does not take institutional positions on any issues. The views expressed in this testimony are those of the author.

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss Ethiopia's strategic importance.

I will focus on the implications of Ethiopia's potential destabilization and present risks to US national security interests in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia is a key partner to secure US interests. I am aware of the current optimism about its trajectory on both human rights and peace with Eritrea. I want to share that optimism, but I must raise reasons for concern. There is a risk that local and regional conflicts, worsened by geopolitical competition, will destabilize Ethiopia and expose the weakness of partner-reliant US strategies. Direct US interests are at risk in the Horn of Africa, including the fight against al Qaeda and the Islamic State and freedom of movement in the Red Sea.

The potential for Ethiopia to destabilize persists. It faces a rapid political transition and ethnic conflict across multiple regions,¹ both of which challenge its stability. The new prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, has pushed through a raft of reforms and raised hopes of a new era of respect for human rights in Ethiopia.² Ethnic violence persists, however, much of it occurring on the border between Abiy's home region of Oromia and the Somali Region inhabited by ethnic Somalis, displacing more than 130,000 people.³

Sustained conflict risks mobilizing Ethiopia's Somali population, potentially creating a new opportunity for al Shabaab to recruit or even expand its attacks into Ethiopia. The Abiy government, which has continued mass arrests and internet blackouts even while making progress on other human rights issues, will exacerbate rather than solve this complex problem if it fails to manage it effectively.⁴ Abiy's government also faces potentially destabilizing challenges from members of the former security establishment, which may be stoking the ethnic conflict in the Somali Region.⁵ Longtime political elites similarly retain the power to derail core economic and political reforms that are required for a true democratic transition in Ethiopia.⁶ Abiy is also likely to lose support from his own base if he fails to contain rising ethnic tensions or mitigate the high expectations placed on him as Ethiopia's first Oromo head of state.⁷

Instability in Ethiopia will undermine US efforts to neutralize al Shabaab, al Qaeda's Somalia-based affiliate,⁸ and reverberate across the region. Persistent ethnic violence would draw Ethiopia's focus inward, away from regional peacekeeping commitments.⁹ An internal challenge from anti-Abiy elements in the security establishment would have a similar effect. US operations alongside Somali and African Union peacekeeping forces have disrupted al Shabaab in central Somalia and improved security in Mogadishu, but they have not yet broken al Shabaab's hold on large areas of southern Somalia.¹⁰

These yet-to-be-secured gains will evaporate if Ethiopia, Kenya, or Uganda—the third of which faces an escalating political crisis¹¹—falters and redeploys troops home. Ethiopia withdrew forces from Somalia due to domestic unrest in 2016, allowing al Shabaab to reoccupy parts of central Somalia.¹² Unrest in Ethiopia also limits its capacity for critical diplomatic engagements, such as the South Sudanese peace talks that it facilitates or negotiations with Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The GERD issue will spawn its own regional conflict if the Nile River states cannot reach an

agreement.¹³

The problem of the Salafi-jihadi movement, which includes al Qaeda and ISIS, must be considered alongside issues of human rights and democracy, as they are linked. AEI Research Fellow Katherine Zimmerman defines the Salafi-jihadi movement as “the ideological movement that holds that it is a religious obligation for individual Muslims to use armed force to cause the establishment of a true Muslim state governed under a Salafi interpretation of *shari’a*.”¹⁴ The movement draws strength from its relationship with Sunni populations by providing protection and governance to populations made vulnerable by conflict and societal disruption. Successes by local and regional Salafi-jihadi groups, such as al Shabaab, advance the global movement’s objectives.

Instability in Ethiopia creates an opportunity for the Salafi-jihadi movement to expand. Ethiopia’s conflicts typically divide along ethnic lines rather than confessional or sectarian ones, and the country has prevented significant Salafi-jihadi recruitment and attacks thus far.¹⁵ Al Qaeda has a strategy of co-opting ethnic fighting and other local conflicts, however, and is strengthening with this strategy in West Africa and elsewhere.¹⁶

Both al Qaeda’s and al Shabaab’s ambitions extend beyond uniting even Greater Somalia, which includes parts of eastern Ethiopia.¹⁷ Senior al Qaeda leadership in Afghanistan see the group as a vanguard for mobilization throughout East Africa.¹⁸ The Islamic State could also turn to Ethiopia as an opportunity for expansion, particularly through online recruitment, leveraging a growing footprint in Somalia.¹⁹ Legitimate and responsive governance for all of Ethiopia’s people is required to both protect their human rights and inoculate populations against extremist organizations.

The rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea is another positive development that nonetheless raises threats to US interests. Ethiopia’s decision to implement the 2000 peace deal with Eritrea has yielded diplomatic milestones, though Ethiopian troops have yet to withdraw from the contested border.²⁰ The rapprochement itself remains fragile, particularly if hardliners within the Ethiopian security establishment undermine the normalization of relations or if the demobilization of rebel groups fails.²¹ The UAE’s facilitation of the agreement also occurs in a dangerous context.²²

Geopolitical competition is intensifying in the Horn of Africa, layering proxy conflicts onto existing fault lines and increasing the potential for instability even while generating some positive effects. The UAE’s engagement is part of a larger strategic competition among Middle Eastern states.²³ Power plays among the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey have caused political turmoil in Somalia. These have weakened the Somali Federal Government (SFG) on which the US strategy to counter al Shabaab relies.²⁴ The militarization of the Horn and the southern Red Sea region has already affected commercial trade and threatens freedom of navigation as more states establish competing military positions.²⁵

Russia and China are also expanding their influence in the Horn of Africa, and the

Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement will likely accelerate this trend. Eritrea, emerging from isolation, will seek to establish strategic partnerships with states that will not balk at its authoritarianism.²⁶ It recently agreed to the construction of a Russian naval logistics center, part of a broader Russian effort to establish strategic military positions on the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.²⁷ Somaliland, which is rumored to be preparing to host a Russian base, will likely seek greater support as Eritrea's opening threatens to divert revenues from Ethiopian goods passing through its ports. Djibouti faces the same challenge. Diplomatic efforts have assuaged Djibouti's initial fears. The threat of isolation remains, however, and will likely drive Djibouti toward closer ties with China, which established its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017.²⁸ The rift between the Gulf states has also created power vacuums that China will attempt to fill.²⁹ Beijing also stands to benefit from its large role in the Ethiopian economy as Ethiopia privatizes.³⁰

Experiences elsewhere have shown that supporting strongmen does not guarantee security. Ethiopia is no exception. In supporting Ethiopia, we must recognize that the redress of legitimate grievances and protection of basic human rights yield long-term security dividends. Investment in good governance and security also prevents groups like al Shabaab and the Islamic State from co-opting local grievances to their benefit. The US must weigh the value of outsourcing foreign policy objectives to partners against the potential adverse effects of those partners' involvement. The US must begin to shape its approach to Ethiopia by:

- 1) Using all available tools to help Abiy demilitarize his response to ethnic violence, resolve internal disputes, and conduct necessary structural reforms peacefully and acceptably to all sides; and
- 2) Ensuring that the US remains the sole guarantor of its interests in the region by not relying on the UAE or any other outside power to manage these interests.

Ethiopia is a critical country in an increasingly important region. The US must recognize the dangers of rapidly changing domestic and regional dynamics in the Horn of Africa to prepare for worst-case scenarios, even as we regard new developments with optimism.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

The author thanks AEI's Critical Threats Project analyst James Barnett for his research contribution to this testimony.

¹ Protests have occurred in the summer of 2018 on the border between the Oromia Region and Gedeo Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), within the SNNPR region, and on the border between the Oromia Region and the Somali Region. See Paul Chaderjian, "Nearly One Million Displaced in Ethiopia Ethnic Violence," Al Jazeera, August 25, 2018.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/million-displaced-ethiopia-ethnic-violence-180825130344133.html>; Charlie Mitchell, "Ethnic Violence Triggers Crisis in South Ethiopia," *National*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/africa/ethnic-violence-triggers-crisis-in-south-ethiopia-1.747553>; Yonas Abiye, "AG Indicts Former Hawassa Mayor over Conflict," *Reporter*, September 1, 2018, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/ag-indicts-former-hawassa-mayor-over-conflict>; Start Network and ACAPS, "Ethiopia: Somali, Oromia and Tigray Displacement," August 31, 2018, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180831_acaps_start_briefing_note_ethiopia_displacement.pdf; and Mu Xuequan, "Internet Connection Restored in Eastern Ethiopia After Three-Week Blackout," *Xinhua*, August 25, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/25/c_137416697.htm.

² Jenni Marsh, "Why Ethiopians Believe Their New Prime Minister Is a Prophet," *CNN*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/28/world/abiymania-ethiopia-prime-minister-abiy-ahmed/index.html>.

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⁴ Xuequan, "Internet Connection Restored in Eastern Ethiopia After Three-Week Blackout"; and *Premium Times Nigeria*, "800 People Arrested in Ethiopia amid Fresh Regional Violence," August 23, 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/281105-800-people-arrested-in-ethiopia-amid-fresh-regional-violence.html>.

⁵ Prime Minister Abiy's hold on power depends in part on his ability to neutralize former regime leaders from the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and their allies. Cross-border violence between the Oromia and Somali Regions in early August may reflect efforts by anti-Abiy security elements to undermine the prime minister. Federal forces intervened in the Somali Region in response and later arrested the former president of the Somali Region, a longtime TPLF ally, for stoking ethnic conflict in the regional capital. A potential assassination attempt in June 2018 may also reflect efforts to remove Abiy from power. See Bronwyn Bruton, "Ethiopia and Eritrea Have a Common Enemy," *Foreign Policy*, July 12, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/12/ethiopia-and-eritrea-have-a-common-enemy-abiy-ahmed-isaias-afwerki-badme-peace-ipf-epdf/>; Borkena, "Former Intelligence Chief Became Fugitive as Ethiopia Issues Arrest Warrant," August 21, 2018, <https://www.borkena.com/2018/08/21/ethiopia-issued-arrest-warrant-on-former-intelligence-chief-getachew-assefa/>; Aaron Maasho, "Ethiopia Arrests Disgraced Regional Boss Accused of Rights Abuses," *Reuters*, August 27, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics-arrest/ethiopia-arrests-disgraced-regional-boss-accused-of-rights-abuses-idUSKCN1L1C1QA>; Allyson McCarthy, Andrew Larsen, and Emily Estelle, "Gulf of Aden Security Review," AEI's Critical Threats Project, August 13, 2018, [https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review-august-13-2018](https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review/gulf-of-aden-security-review-august-13-2018); and Associated Press, "The Latest: Police Say 6 Arrested After Ethiopia Blast," June 23, 2018, <https://apnews.com/9b96e200a8ff405581ca396ae1e699d7>.

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¹³ Daniel Benaim and Michael Wahid Hanna, "Water Wars on the Nile," *Foreign Affairs*, August 9, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2018-08-09/water-wars-nile>.

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- ²⁷ Russia is pursuing military cooperation with Sudan and has increased its influence in Egypt. Russia is also planning to establish a naval base in Somaliland and is constructing a base in Burundi. See "Russia and Sudan Look to Develop Military Cooperation," *Middle East Monitor*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180716-russia-and-sudan-look-to-develop-military-cooperation/>; Nataliya Bugayova with Jack Uises, "The Kremlin's Campaign in Egypt," *Institute for the Study of War*, June 2018, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISW%20-%20Russia%20Egypt%20Campaign%20-%20June%202018.pdf>; Salem Solomon, "Russia-Eritrea Relations Grow with Planned Logistics Center," *Voice of America*, September 2, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-eritrea-relations-grow-with-planned-logistics-center/4554680.html>; Michael Rubin, "The US Needs to Recognize Somaliland Before Russia Does," *Washington Examiner*, August 22, 2018, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/the-us-needs-to-recognize-somaliland-before-russia-does>; and UAWire, "Media: New Russian Private Military Company Operates in Syria," July 6, 2018, <https://www.uawire.org/mass-media-new-russian-private-military-company-in-syria>.
- ²⁸ Nizar Manek, "Season of Peace Blooms as Eritrea, Djibouti Agree to Rebuild Ties," *Bloomberg*, September 7, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-07-season-of-peace-blooms-as-red-sea-states-agree-to-rebuild-ties>; and Ben Blanchard and Michael Perry, "China Formally Opens First Overseas Military Base in Djibouti," *Reuters*, August 1, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-djibouti/china-formally-opens-first-overseas-military-base-in-djibouti-idUSKBN1AH3E3>.
- ²⁹ China offered to deploy troops to Doumeira Island in the Red Sea, which Djibouti and Eritrea both claim, after the withdrawal of Qatari cease-fire monitors in June 2017 nearly led to armed conflict. Abdi, "A Dangerous Gulf in the Horn."
- ³⁰ Allan Olingo, "Ethiopia Bags China Debt Deal, Others Wait," *East African*, September 8, 2018, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/Ethiopia-bags-China-debt-deal/2560-4750468-mrt49v/index.html>.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much.
Mr. Badwaza?

**STATEMENT OF MR. YOSEPH M. BADWAZA, SENIOR PROGRAM
OFFICER—AFRICA, FREEDOM HOUSE**

Mr. BADWAZA. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the subcommittee, it is an honor to testify before you today. And I would also like to recognize the subcommittee's great leadership on human rights issues in Ethiopia.

We are witnessing a pivotal moment in Ethiopia's history. If reform succeeds, Ethiopia could become one of the world's few victories for democratic governance, with significant implications for the entire continent.

Since the selection of Abiy Ahmed as the Prime Minister, we have seen many positive changes. Since a lot of the positive developments have been raised in the first panel and by my distinguished panelists, I would like to focus on the challenges and the recommendations that we would like to make to make the change even deeper and more inclusive.

The positive steps of releasing thousands of political prisoners and the amnesty for opposition party members, including those that are designated as terrorist organizations by Ethiopia's Parliament, and also the plan to limit the term of the Prime Minister's office by making constitutional changes, and initiating legal reforms, including the charities and societies antiterrorism law, and the plans to liberalize the economy, ending the state monopoly, and by appointing reform-minded executives to key economic positions, is something we should all be recognizing.

And another key positive step is also the move that the new Prime Minister took to end 20 years of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

When it comes to the challenge, again, despite the many positive developments, these challenges still remain.

The first one is, while popular support for Abiy and reformers in the ruling party appears to be strong, internal power struggles have not yet been resolved. Powerful members of the establishment are not completely convinced of the wisdom of reform measures and continue to lament that EPRDF is abandoning its ideological foundations of developmental state and revolutionary democracy in favor of neo liberalism and populist tendencies.

Because there has been minimal distinction between the state and the ruling party, the internal EPRDF crisis directly impacts the way the government conducts its business. As a result, party and government officials who are not on board with Abiy's reform agenda are in a position to derail reforms.

There is also a need to revive—the challenge of reviving independent media and civil society that have been decimated through years of violence from the government and draconian legislation. Ethnic-based clashes also threaten the pace and sustainability of reforms, as fear of protracted violence and political instability persist. In the past few months, ethnic-based identity clashes killed hundreds of civilians and displaced over a million. Government strategy in this area seems to be largely reactive.

With the liberalization of the political environment and a new tolerance for free speech, we have seen heightened nationalistic and identity-based rhetoric putting enormous strain on the long tradition of coexistence among Ethiopian ethnic communities.

The antigovernment protests that led to the current change in Ethiopia were primarily organized and led by the youth. Reform measures are generating high expectations among the youth and could lead to resentment and unrest if left unmet.

Armed members of former insurgent groups are returning home. It is not clear whether these former fighters have gone through proper demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration processes. The injection of such forces into an already-tense environment could easily fuel violence, and there have been incidents of violent confrontations between government security forces and these former fighters.

Other than promising to make the next elections free and fair, the government has not yet rolled out a roadmap for electoral reforms, nor has it conducted the constitutionally required census that was postponed in November 2017 for security reasons. Updated census data is crucial for elections. Past findings were bitterly contested and led to violence.

Lack of public trust in the security service is also a challenge. While there have been encouraging signs of restraint by security forces dealing with crowds in recent months, public trust in law enforcement remains very low, and numerous instances of abuse remain unaddressed. Widespread skepticism about the government's handling of the June bombing at the pro-Abiy rally in Addis Ababa and also the death of the chief engineer of the Grand Renaissance Dam reflect that trust deficit. This in the future poses a serious problem, impeding legitimate law enforcement work and resulting in extralegal measures, as observed in recent months in parts of the country.

Some policy recommendations that we would like to propose are: For the United States to ensure the viability of reforms, the United States should press the Government of Ethiopia to mend longstanding ethnic grievances.

Abiy's vision of unity, reconciliation, and inclusion should include concrete strategies aimed at fostering social cohesion. The government should seek to prevent and resolve violent clashes in a manner that involves affected communities by establishing an early-warning system and investigating and punishing perpetrators.

It is critical that the government address youth expectations, undertaking economic reforms to generate job creation, and provide education opportunities that allow youth opportunities for the future.

With national elections in less than 2 years, the importance of thorough reforms to ensure free and fair elections cannot be overstated. Eliminating draconian barriers to participation, including political party registration rules, the structure and composition of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, and the number of seats in wereda and kebele councils are some of the longstanding questions that need to be addressed before any credible election is to be conducted.

Conducting the overdue census should also be part of preparations for elections.

The government should accelerate the process of reforming the criminal justice system too, including revising and repealing repressive laws that impede freedoms of expression, association, and assembly; and, importantly, ensuring that the revision of these laws should be transparent, include all stakeholders, and occur in a timely manner.

There is also a need to ensure a system of accountability for serious human rights abuses that occurred over the past 27 years of the EPRDF rule. This may not necessarily mean that aggressive prosecution should occur, but it could entail a truth commission or another form of inquiry that allows the opportunity to air grievances, question officials, obtain documents, and seek closure. Such an approach can forestall extralegal acts of vengeance against former ruling party officials.

There is also a need to reform the judiciary and law enforcement. It is to undertake comprehensive reform of these sectors to make them independent of political control and influence. The police forces and courts have been routinely used to level spurious and politically motivated charges against critics of the ruling party. Revision of restrictive laws, such as the antiterrorism proclamation, will have little impact in the absence of reforms to the criminal justice system itself.

The U.S. could also help deepen political reform in Ethiopia by increasing U.S. financial and technical support for elections, including capacity-building for institutions such as the National Election Board. The 2019 local elections will be a key test for Abiy's ability to advance his reform agenda and could build positive momentum and experience leading up to the 2020 national elections.

The U.S. also should provide robust support to strengthen civil society and independent media. This would take advantage of the new political space and test its breadth in practice.

To the extent allowed by Ethiopian laws, the U.S. should also support capacity-building for political parties, which are underdeveloped after years of repression and in need of assistance if they are to offer meaningful competition.

The U.S. could also encourage substantive engagement in the reform process by the U.S.-based diaspora, which could include exchange programs that aim at mentorship of professionals in key sectors associated with reform efforts.

Finally, if reforms continue to advance, the U.S. can strengthen economic ties with Ethiopia and expand U.S. economic support to assist the new government in providing tangible democratic dividends to a broad swath of population, enabling political reform to become clearly associated with an improved standard of living in what remains a largely impoverished country where growth has been unevenly distributed.

I thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Badwaza follows:]



Reform in Ethiopia: Turning Promise into Progress

Written Testimony by Yoseph Badwaza
Senior Program Officer

**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International
Organizations**

Hearing: Reviewing Current Developments in Ethiopia

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Introduction

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the subcommittee, it is an honor to testify before you today. I ask that my full written testimony be admitted into the record.

We are witnessing a pivotal moment in Ethiopia's history. If reform efforts continue on their current trajectory, Ethiopia could become one of the few victories for democratic governance at a time when many countries are moving in the wrong direction. Much remains to be done, and support from the international community will be needed.

Recent Events in Context

But before I get into specific recommendations on what needs to be done to maintain positive momentum, I will first provide some context for the changes we are witnessing.

In January 2018, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) announced that in order to respond to intensifying antigovernment protests, it would take comprehensive reform measures, including revising and repealing laws that narrowed the political space, facilitating free and fair elections, releasing political prisoners and promoting national reconciliation. In the months that followed, thousands of prisoners were freed and the notorious federal crimes investigations unit in Addis Ababa, commonly known as Maekelawi, was closed.

The resignation of Hailemariam Desalegn as prime minister in February 2018 was one of the most consequential political developments that revealed that differences among supporters of profound changes and those fighting to ensure the continuation of the status quo with minimal overtures to change and reform have reached a tipping point. While the resignation of Hailemariam was greeted with joy by the public and considered a key step that help push reforms forward, the declaration of a state of emergency the next day was a reminder that the power struggle within the EPRDF was far from over.

However, the selection of Abiy Ahmed by the EPRDF to become the new prime minister in April after six weeks of painstaking deliberation within the leadership of the ruling party ushered

in a new chapter in Ethiopia's political history, one that seems to put the country on an unprecedented trajectory of political change and opening.

It is not yet certain this reform effort will be sustained, but if it is, Ethiopians can chart a path to a viable democracy and economic prosperity that will have significant implications for the Horn of Africa region and the entire continent.

A Promising Start

Days after his election as prime minister, Abiy Ahmed took his overarching vision of national reconciliation and forgiveness to the public as part of his tour of the country, conducting town hall meetings, speaking with community leaders and local politicians. This bolstered the image of Abiy as a messenger of hope and change who can lead the country on a democratic path ending decades of authoritarian rule that created so much division and polarization among the different ethnic communities in the country.

In many ways, Abiy's election signaled a dramatic shift in EPRDF's style of governance. While structural changes to the institutions and the legal framework that served as an instrument of repression have yet to be made, the new prime minister and his team have so far taken several bold measures that earned them strong popular support.

Abiy's new government released thousands of political prisoners, including some high profile figures, lifted the draconian state of emergency in June, publicly announced plans to amend the constitution to institute term limits on the tenure of the prime minister, invited exiled opposition politicians to return home and participate in politics and moved to lift the terrorist designation of three major opposition political parties. As a result, many opposition parties including those engaged in armed struggle, have returned home pledging to participate in peaceful political activities.

In the economic sphere, the government is taking steps to end the government monopoly on key economic sectors including telecom, energy and air transport. While the practical implementation of this is going to be complex and is likely to face strong opposition from different sectors of the public, Abiy seems intent on moving forward. In addition to appointing reform-minded executives to key economic positions, including the governor of the National Bank, the Chief Executive of Ethio Telecom and the Head of National Planning Commission, Abiy set up an advisory council on the privatization of state owned enterprises in August.

In another dramatic move with potential implications for the wider Horn of Africa region, Abiy took the initiative to end 20 years of hostility with Eritrea by declaring EPRDF's unconditional acceptance of the 2000 Algiers Agreement and the 2002 decision of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC). In the weeks that followed, leaders of the two countries met several times in Addis Ababa and Asmara. They restored diplomatic relations, re-opened their embassies and signed a number of trade and investment agreements. Last week's symbolic anchoring of one of Ethiopia's commercial vessels at the port of Massawa for the first time in 20 years indicated the consolidation of the rapprochement between the two countries. This peace

dividend seems to be expanding to the region, as Djibouti and Somalia have also engaged in peace talks with Eritrea.

In June, the government set up a law and justice Advisory Council under the auspices of the office of the Attorney General. The Council, composed of 13 independent legal professionals, is entrusted with examining restrictive laws, including the Charities and Societies Proclamation and the Antiterrorism Proclamation, and flaws in the justice system, and developing recommendations for comprehensive revisions including amendments to the laws and restructuring of institutions. The Advisory Council and the different working groups within it have so far done a remarkable job of holding several public forums to solicit feedback from stakeholders on proposed changes to these laws.

Challenges

Despite the many positive developments, enormous challenges persist.

Internal power struggles within the EPRDF: While popular support for Abiy and the reformist elements within the ruling party appears to be strong, internal power struggles within and between the four constituent parties of EPRDF have not yet been resolved definitively. Powerful members of the establishment are not completely convinced of the reform measures that the new leadership is taking. These elements continue to lament that EPRDF is abandoning its ideological foundations of revolutionary democracy and a developmental state in favor of neoliberal and populist tendencies. One reason the party keeps postponing the planned party Congress seems to be this disunity among the leadership on the breadth of the reform measures and the future direction of the party. As the supreme organ of the party, the Congress is being considered as a referendum on Abiy's reform agenda and decisive indicator of the party's direction as a coalition.

As there is minimal distinction between the state and the ruling party, the crisis within the ruling party has a direct bearing on the way the business of government is conducted. Party and government officials who are not on board with Abiy's reform agenda are in a position to derail the momentum of change and cause frustration among the public. The new government has accused these establishment elements of conspiracy to sabotage the wave of change in the party and in the country. For instance, the government blamed disgruntled elements in the security services for many acts of subversion, including the grenade attack at the pro-Abiy rally in Addis Ababa in June.

Reviving independent media and the human rights community: The intense crackdown on dissent that began in 2009 with the enactment of an array of draconian legislation decimated the country's once vibrant human rights community and its independent media, and the damaging effects are likely to persist for some time.

Ethnic tensions: Ethnic-based clashes also threaten the pace and sustainability of reforms, as fear of protracted violence and political instability persist. In the past few months, ethnic and identity-based clashes that flared in Oromia, SNNPR, Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz and Somali regions caused the death of hundreds of civilians and the displacement of more than one million people.

The government's efforts to address these incidents are largely reactive and have so far not done much to bring lasting solutions. There have not been coordinated efforts to bring to justice local government officials who in many cases are instigators and perpetrators of these crimes.

In August, the prime minister ordered the army to enter into parts of the Oromia-Somali border areas in response to recurring clashes between members of the two ethnic communities. This raised concerns, as the move could signal a return to martial law, a scenario witnessed during the state of emergency earlier this year.

Liberalization in the political environment and tolerance for free speech brought longstanding grievances between different ethnic groups into public political discourse. The past few months also witnessed heightened nationalistic and identity-based rhetoric targeting minority communities in different parts of the country. These sentiments are putting enormous strain on the long tradition of co-existence among the various communities. *Managing expectation of the youth:* The antigovernment protests that led to the current changes Ethiopia is witnessing were primarily organized and led by youth. Reform measures are generating high expectations among the youth and could lead to resentment and unrest if left unmet.

Reintegration of armed militia: Armed members of former insurgent groups are returning home to communities in Oromia, Amhara Somali and South regions following the government's declaration of amnesty and invitation to participate in peaceful political activities. It is not clear whether these former fighters have gone through proper demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration processes. The injection of such forces into an already tense ethnic and political dynamics in these parts of the country could easily fuel violent clashes. Violent confrontations between these rebel forces and federal and regional government security forces have already been witnessed in parts of the Oromia region.

Electoral reforms: Other than promising to make the next elections free and fair, the government has not yet rolled out its roadmap for electoral reforms, nor has it conducted the census that was postponed in November 2017 for security reasons.

Ethiopia's constitution requires a census to be conducted every 10 years, typically ahead of the election cycle. Timely and up-to-date census data is crucial for elections. Census findings in the past had been bitterly contested and led to violence in several parts of the country.

Lack of public trust in security services: While there have been encouraging signs of restraint on using excessive force by security forces dealing with crowds in recent months, public trust in law enforcement remains very low, and numerous instances of abuse and mistreatment remain unaddressed. Widespread skepticism about the government's handling of investigations into two recent high profile matters, namely the bombing incident in June of the pro Abiy rally in Addis Ababa and the death of the chief engineer of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), is largely a reflection of that trust deficit. This poses a serious problem going forward, impeding legitimate law enforcement activities and resorting to extra-legal measures, as observed in several parts of the country in recent months.

Recommendations

As the internal power struggle within the EPRDF continues to simmer, it will take time for the effects of Abiy's sweeping reform measures to take root legally and institutionally and be felt at all levels of society.

In order to harness the optimism and hope of the people of Ethiopia and ensure the viability of these reform measures, the United States should:

- **Press the government of Ethiopia to move quickly to:**
 - **Mend ethnic grievances:** Abiy's vision of unity and inclusion should be transformed into concrete strategies aimed at fostering social cohesion by responding to longstanding grievances of ethnic communities. The government should seek to prevent and resolve violent ethnic clashes in all parts of the country in a manner that involves the affected communities by establishing an effective early warning system and investigating and punishing perpetrators of human rights abuses, including members of regional paramilitary forces.
 - **Address youth expectations:** It is critical that the government undertake economic reforms to generate job creation and provide education opportunities that allow youth an outlet for their ambitions and opportunities for their future.
 - **Undertake meaningful reforms to ensure free and fair elections:** With national elections coming in less than two years, the importance of undertaking thorough reforms to the electoral laws and institutions that are agreeable to all political forces cannot be overstated. Eliminating the draconian barriers to participation in the electoral process including political party registration rules, the structure and composition of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), and the number of seats in *wereda* and *kebele* councils are some of the longstanding questions from opposition political parties that need to be addressed before any credible election is conducted. Conducting the overdue census should also be an integral part of the preparations for elections.
 - **Guarantee the independence of democratic institutions:** Pursue reforms that guarantee the independence of key democratic institutions including the judiciary, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) and the security services, ahead of scheduled elections in 2019 and 2020.
 - **Reform the criminal justice system and implement robust changes to the security sector:** Accelerate the process of reforming the criminal justice system and revise and repeal repressive laws that impede freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Also, ensure that the process for

revising laws is transparent, includes all stakeholders, and occurs in a timely fashion. Security sector reform should aim to address impunity for abuses committed by security officials and should aim to improve public trust in the security services.

- **Ensure accountability for rights abuses:** Establish a system of accountability for serious human rights abuses over the past 27 years of the EPRDF's rule. This may not necessarily mean aggressive prosecutions, but could entail a truth commission or another form of inquiry that gives Ethiopians the opportunity to air their grievances, question officials, obtain documents, and seek closure. Such an approach can forestall extralegal acts of vengeance against former ruling party officials.
- **Reform the judiciary and law enforcement agencies:** Undertake a comprehensive reform of these sectors to make them independent of political control and influence. The police and courts have routinely been used to level spurious and politically motivated charges against critics of the ruling party. Revision of restrictive laws such as the Antiterrorism Proclamation will have little impact in the absence of reforms to the criminal justice system itself.
- **Help deepen political reforms in Ethiopia by considering increased US financial and technical support for elections that are free, fair, transparent, and inclusive.** This includes capacity-building programs for institutions such as the National Electoral Board and the judiciary. The 2019 local elections will be a key test of Abiy's ability to advance his reform agenda, and could build positive momentum and experience leading up to the national elections in 2020.
- **Provide robust US support designed to strengthen civil society and independent media.** Such efforts would both take advantage of the new political space and test its breadth in practice. To the extent allowed by domestic laws, the US should also support capacity-building for political parties. After years of repression, opposition parties are underdeveloped and in need of assistance if they are to offer meaningful competition and address a broad range of interests beyond ethnic bases.
- **Encourage substantive engagement in the reform process by the U.S.-based Ethiopian diaspora.** This may include supporting exchange programs that help Ethiopian-born experts to return and advise, mentor, and train professionals in key government and nongovernmental sectors associated with reform efforts.
- Finally, if reforms continue to advance, **strengthen economic ties between the U.S. and Ethiopia and expand U.S. economic support** to assist Abiy and his government in providing tangible democratic dividends to a broad swath of the population, enabling political reform to become clearly associated with an improved standard of living in what remains a largely impoverished country where growth has been unevenly distributed.

Conclusion

Ethiopia is a key partner and ally for the United States, and Ethiopia is at a key moment in its history. The U.S. government would be wise to strengthen its partnership with reformers in Ethiopia to ensure that recent gains are transformed into actual improvements in democratic governance and the protection of fundamental rights – the crucial foundations of sustainable peace and prosperity.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Badwaza, thank you very much for your testimony.

I would like to yield to Ranking Member Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have a couple of quick questions, but let me just begin by thanking all of you, because in each of your comments—and we have your written documents here—you give very specific recommendations. So I was just speaking with a member of my staff that I want to compile all of those recommendations and look and see, you know, where we might be helpful.

But I just have a couple of questions. I believe it was Alemayehu who mentioned the independent commission.

Did you mention an independent commission? And I wanted to know—because you said that in the context of how the U.S. could be helpful. And I wanted to know what you meant. Who would be on an independent commission?

And you also mentioned, I believe, people being—especially the Oromo people—being forced out of their homes and people going back. And how did you see that process taking place?

Mr. ALEMAYEHU. Thank you for the question.

When I meant the independent commission, through the last 27 years, every institution is either diminished or became subservient of the—

Ms. BASS. No, I understood that.

Mr. ALEMAYEHU [continuing]. Dictatorial rule of the EPRDF. So, on this—

Ms. BASS. Who would be on an independent commission?

Mr. ALEMAYEHU [continuing]. Independent commission, I am contemplating Ethiopians who have, you know, an independent view of this ethnic federalism to be in that part and to watch the election and to prepare for that, and also putting that with the watchful eye of the United States, with the support.

Ms. BASS. So it was also mentioned about the Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and the U.S. Government applying to Ethiopian Government officials. Why would we do that right now? And who would you be targeting? I mean, I know some of the offenders—Prime Minister Abiy has gone after himself.

Mr. ALEMAYEHU. I think all this is related to the capacity of the Ethiopian investigators and the last June assassination attempt toward Dr. Abiy at the rally just end up nowhere, and no public explanation is rendered as far as the attempt was concerned. Maybe this is an opportune time for the United States to help in expanding that investigation and let the Ethiopians know about it.

On the other question, the Oromos were—it is a Somalia region, where the Somali region leader forced—due to a territorial or some kind of misunderstanding there, a lot of Oromos were pushed out from the Somali region, and they were not reinstated well yet. And this probably goes to the capacity of the Ethiopian Government.

We are right now with the enthusiasm that Dr. Abiy brought with the reconciliation and peace and unity. How that is translated into the ground on that region is still questionable.

Ms. BASS. Okay.

Do any other panelists want to contribute?

Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. SAID. Thank you, Ranking Member Bass.

You know, over 2 million Oromos were displaced from the Somali region. It is not—Oromos and the Somalis have never conflict. They are brothers. They are the same people. Their displacement is politically motivated by the TPLF regime.

As far as the Magnitsky goes, for the atrocities that have been committed for the 27 years, the country has been looted. When you met the youth in the communities in Ethiopia, you have heard the stories of Kefyalew Tefera, the young Oromo man who was snatched from the street and put in prison, and then he lost his two legs—

Ms. BASS. Yeah.

Mr. SAID [continuing]. In the torture chambers.

Ms. BASS. So I was trying to get at if you were suggesting that the Magnitsky Act be enforced before there is a truth and reconciliation process within Ethiopia, or that that would be one of the results.

Again, when I looked at your recommendations—and I mentioned I want to compile them—I am just trying to figure out how to move forward with them.

So there would be a reconciliation and then the U.S. would respond? Or are you saying that the U.S. should respond before?

Mr. SAID. I am sure—I think in House Resolution 128 the Magnitsky Human Rights Act apply globally. So—

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. SAID [continuing]. The U.S. could act now to those offenders, some of them who are on the run. For example, the head of security forces, Getachew Assefa, is on the run.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. SAID. So the United States can be able to apply that.

Ms. BASS. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. SAID. Thank you very much.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Ms. Bass.

Let me just ask a few questions about, first of all, trafficking. In the earlier panel with the Ambassador, the Secretary raised the issue of human trafficking in Ethiopia. I actually, 15 years ago or so, went to a shelter in Addis that was funded by the U.S. Government largely, and many of the women there had been trafficked into the Middle East. And they were the lucky ones who, obviously, came back, were rescued. And they were learning some excellent skills so that they could be employed. And, again, the U.S. taxpayer was funding much of it. And I think it is a great use of our dollar, to help people who have been horribly abused.

But Ethiopia remains on Tier 2, and it has some very huge gaps, particularly in the area of child sex trafficking. And I would hope all of you, if you want to respond or not, would take back that we need to keep this as a priority in our dialogue with the new Prime Minister and his government.

He has inherited, as I said before, just one problem after another. And certainly the cruelty that is imposed upon women and children with trafficking is among the worst on the planet. So I just would encourage you that we all be very proactive and helpful with his government on that.

And if you wanted to speak to that, please do.

On the issue of truth and reconciliation, you know, the South Africans really wrote the book on that, with Desmond Tutu leading the 17-member panel back in 1995. And if my memory is correct, some 21,000 people were interviewed. It became a very, very highly visible process. And there were some trying and successfully destroying documents leading up to its creation and even after its creation to avoid the accountability that this would help bring. But it had that incredibly laudable impact of moving the country forward.

And my hope is—and, Jamal, you had this in your testimony today. It is certainly something that needs to be very seriously considered, but, obviously, the call is to be made by the Ethiopian Government itself. If you wanted to further elaborate on that, that would be excellent.

And if I could, Ms. Estelle, you brought up—I think one of the things—my big takeaway as we got on the plane to come back was that there needs to be a managing of expectations by all the ethnic communities. This is going to take a long time, even though some very high-impact things have been done by the Prime Minister and done very successfully. Everyone is talking positively, but we have to make sure that everybody does not at some point say, “Oh, well, now we are disappointed,” and then there is a reversion back to violence, which would be the worst possible scenario. We need to stay at this, no matter how long it takes, and to encourage peaceful transition and reconciliation among all the disparate elements of the Ethiopian society.

Again, Ms. Estelle, you did bring out that very, very dangerous situation with the Somali ethnic community, and maybe you would want to elaborate on that further. I did ask the Secretary, pursuant to your testimony, about that earlier. I would appreciate that.

And, Mr. Badwaza, you—on the elections, everyone always wants an election ASAP, but it has to be done right, with a full accounting as to who is eligible to vote, and the whole process. I was there in 2005 when President Meles hijacked the election, and it was one of the worst processes I have ever seen for an election.

And so we want a free and fair and totally transparent election. So the United States, I know, can be helpful to the Ethiopians. What date should there be? Should it be an aspirational goal or should it be more hardened, as to when that date should be?

Parenthetically, Karen Bass and I and our staff, we were slated to go to the DR Congo right after our visit to Ethiopia, but we couldn’t get in. We were denied a visa by the President. And, of course, the issue of elections there and the postponement of, for what I believe to be nefarious purposes, to stay in power, not because all the i’s are dotted and the t’s crossed.

But we have to be helpful to the Ethiopians to get that right as well. And I think you can speak to that very well, if you would, from Freedom House.

And then I will yield to Mike for any questions he might have, please. The reconciliation.

Oh, and one other thing if I could. Archbishop Desmond Tutu had the gravitas to leave that—the respect of so many to leave that. Are there people within the church community or the human

rights community that would come to mind? You don't have to name names, but I am sure there are some people who would play that role fairly and dispassionately so that it can be a very, very positive experience for the country.

Mr. ALEMAYEHU. Thank you.

On the first question on trafficking women, children from Ethiopia to other countries, this issue is, you know, very rampant and very common in Ethiopia in every direction. And it is—as I see it, it is, you know, it is relies upon the economic capacity of the country.

Many young women eluded by some dealers in the farmland or in the remote part of Ethiopia telling them, you know, there is an opportunity in other countries. Well, there is no opportunity in their village. So they are subject for this kind of sex trafficking and as we have been seeing in our recent history.

So on this situation, you know, I am—the United States can play a lot in helping small neighborhood capacity building and creating an opportunity, helping the government, you know, to create an opportunity within the village so that, you know, young girls are not travelling from rural area to town to create an opportunity to earn a living and support their poor family.

We know that Ethiopians, we are stricken by poverty. We have only our, you know, determination to succeed. So that is what the young kids, girls, going to somewhere they don't know with nothing in their hand to support their family. So it is capacity building help, an opportunity in the village.

On the second question, on the peace and reconciliation, I work with churches. I serve in church. And there are—Ethiopians usually we respect elderly and religious figures, so we can use religious figure in Ethiopia, the elderly to channel this very abstract concept of peace and reconciliation, because the peace and reconciliation process that we are in is good. We don't know where it ends because sometimes accountability is missing in that peace and reconciliation.

So my suggestion is an academic think tank was religious figures we can—you know, the United States help in formulating or helping the government to formulate some kind of elderly group who can, you know, explain this peace and reconciliation to the young people who are expecting a result right now.

And I don't think, you know, the current situation allows to satisfy all the younger generation to achieve economic prosperity and what they were expecting from the new government. So that is my suggestion, trying to formulate the elderly group based on religious father figures. Thank you.

Mr. SAID. Again, thank you.

To respond to the trafficking it is very important to raise what was happening for the last 27 years. The TPLF and their families owned trafficking companies. Trafficking has been legalized in Ethiopia very much. They are the ones who transport young men and women to the Arab countries and everywhere but in—in another side they are accepting money from the United States Government to prevent trafficking, but in the other side they are the ones who involve it in trafficking. On this, thanks to our youths

and Dr. Abiy, with Dr. Abiy administration and with the removal of TPLF from power, the trafficking can be under control.

As far as the truth and the reconciliation goes, I am sure you have met Abba Gadaa Bayana Sanbato in your visit to Addis Ababa. He is the leader of Abba Gadaa in Oromo. So the civics association needs to be strengthened. A civic association like a Gadaa system need to be strengthened in Ethiopia because for the last 27 years the TPLF eroded, totally wiped out the civic societies so with elders we can have significant changes and then we have a proven result because the Oromo elders have played a significant role with the Somali elders to bring the change that we are seeing in Somalia's region now.

So I will say strengthen the civic society in Ethiopia and repeal the antiterrorism law act in the charity law so that will help. Thank you very much.

Ms. ESTELLE. Mr. Chairman, to speak briefly to your question about the Somali population in Ethiopia, the main point I want to make is that just because the conflict in that region is not yet connected to al-Shabaab doesn't mean that it can't become that way.

So al-Qaeda globally has a strategy of working within local conflicts and essentially changing their character to serve their own objective. So if we look at West Africa right now, there is a case where groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups have taken on the rhetoric of local ethnic conflict and inserted themselves into conflicts and gained support that way.

And so I think that that is a possibility that we must be very aware of in Ethiopia if conflict persists and continues to fester, particularly in an environment where al-Qaeda leadership is emphasizing East Africa as a place for expansion right now.

So while I don't think this is an immediate concern, it is one that we certainly need to be prepared for, especially with Ethiopia's regional importance. Where Ethiopia goes the region is going to follow, so it is the worst case but one that we must guard against. Thank you.

Mr. BADWAZA. Chairman Smith, thank you.

I would like to make a contribution on the issue of Reconciliation and Truth Commission. It has been said, I think rightly, on the first panel that the state of issues in Ethiopia and elsewhere are clearly different than this calls for, I think, a deeper examination of what is on the ground in Ethiopia.

To start with, we still have the same ruling party technically in power that is being accused of all the atrocities that have occurred in the past 27 years, so there is going to be a lot of interests that are going to be affected when we embark on this part of ensuring accountability.

But the key is, I think, where the majority of citizens seem to be in agreement is that there needs to be some process which may be an opportunity to air grievances, which may be to provide an official sort of a national closure which may be a forum for people who have suffered so much over the past 27 years at the hands of the security forces essentially with torture chambers and even in some cases unmarked graves of dissidents being accused of.

So the issue for me is to carefully analyze what model would be effective for Ethiopia and not to lose sight of the fact that there is an imperative to at least provide this forum for airing grievances.

On the issue of, I think, the elections, that is where I see, I think, the enormous task where Abiy's new government is going to be tested in terms of delivering and addressing expectations. One thing in this connection that I would like to make a point is that as the reforms take root and as the change get broadened there is also a need to expand this new group of leadership that Ethiopia is having to wider and more reform-minded people.

In other words, as we encourage the Prime Minister to carry on on the path that he has been following, there is a need also to get him and encourage him to continue some sort of embarking on some sort of a delegation of power and introducing many other supporters of the change to the floor so that he should not necessarily be personally expected to do a lot of the things that is expecting him to.

Coming back to the elections, if we start with the 2019 local elections which have been postponed from this year, there is enormous logistical and technical challenges that need to be met first. The first one is that there is this notion that there are over 3½ million seats across the country that need to be filled by the local and national elections, and this is partly what TPLF deliberately did since 2008 to discourage opposition parties to be able to field candidates. So there is a lot of questions from this newly reviving opposition groups to fix that system before any election is going to take place.

There is also this longstanding issue of the independence of the national electoral board of Ethiopia. It has been widely recognized as a rubber stamp body where successive elections were won by EPRDF very single handedly with 100 percent difference.

So there is this crucial task of doing these reforms before thinking of the logistical aspects of elections. And increasingly these opposition groups are indicating that this change should be given a priority.

So I think other than in addition to supporting the Prime Minister and his team to deepen these reforms, it would be wise to encourage them to roll out their plan first and have the stakeholders have say in what is being planned. It could be running—conducting the elections now or it could be maybe waiting a little bit so that everyone could have their views aired so that we will not be going back to the types of elections that have been taking place in Ethiopia for the past 27 years.

So the logistical and technical and also legal challenge need to be addressed first. And I think the U.S. could be very helpful in encouraging the government, one, in providing technical support to the legal reform process that is taking place right now that would—that is expected to help civil society organizations and the independent media speak freely, engage the government, and other stakeholders in wide-ranging democratic processes including the elections.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Before yielding to Mike Coffman, I just would note that during our visit, and we have worked on this in this committee for years, but I raised with Prime Minister Abiy the issue of the first 1,000

days from conception to the second birthday in food security. I gave him Roger Thurow's book which is entitled—he has been one of the experts who has testified before this committee—on the importance of the first 1,000 days from conception to the second birthday to mitigate child mortality, to hopefully put a huge dent in stunting, which is a huge problem in Ethiopia and elsewhere, to increase the strength and ability of women to overcome some of the problems that lead to maternal mortality.

If the food and the supplementation is sufficient, both mother and baby are healthier. And obviously for the child, some of the cognitive loss that occurs when there is food insecurity can never be reclaimed. So this is that critical window.

So for the record, I gave Roger Thurow's book to him. I made a strong appeal to him to work obviously with his own government but also to work with us because USAID does have a very robust program on this led so ably by Beth Dunford at USAID on the first 1,000 days.

So I hope all of us, while we are working on the political side—and I know you all do this—continue to emphasize the humanitarian and health side as well. We will do an additional hearing on this in the near future, but I just want to get that on the record.

The Prime Minister seemed very empathetic to those goals obviously, so the first 1,000 days is transformational. I have never seen in my entire career one program that can do so much. I mean, the PEPFAR program, all those do enormous good in mortality and morbidity really stopping the deaths attributable to AIDS. But this one, it is just—the kids are stronger. The mothers are stronger. And the next 25,000 or 30,000 days of their lives are that much improved when you get the first 1,000 correct.

So I would like to yield to Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you.

I just have one final question for all the panelists, starting with you, Mr. Alemayehu, and that is, how do you think that given the history of the United States and Ethiopia, sometimes positive, sometimes not positive, but how do the people of Ethiopia and you feel about the United States right now?

Mr. ALEMAYEHU. Thank you, Congressman.

It is a really good question, and it has just touched me deeply. The United States has been helping Ethiopians since the relationship began in 1903. I am one of the beneficiary of this United States support to Ethiopia. Sometimes, as you said, it might be good, sometimes bad because of our leaders in Ethiopia, not because of United States.

I came to United States from the university which is built by United States in 1953 in Alemaya. Now it is called Haramaya. That was the university I was working. It was built by the United States. I was—my first English teacher was a Peace Corps gentleman. I love him dearly, and they showed us the good of people.

So I deeply thank the United States for their help and thank you for that question. And now, with the short past, we have some, you know, questionable support. It is not because of the United States support. It is our people who are bad on the top of, you know, the government who are using that support to the wrong direction.

So I am thinking—I am, you know, suggesting any help, even if it is bad, it helps somebody in that country which needs that help. So we—Ethiopians are mindful of, you know, the United States' support and we love it. We appreciate it. I am thankful of that. Thank you.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you.

Mr. SAID, how do you think that—how do you view the United States, but how do you think the people of Ethiopia right now view the United States?

Mr. SAID. Thank you so much. It is a great question.

Let me start from this, from the Member of Congress. Some of you guys, like Representative Mike Coffman and Representative Chairman Chris Smith, your names are household names in the in most of the Ethiopian people. The Karos, not just me, the Karos who bring, who made this days possible, they believe that the United States Government and the Members of Congress are the greatest alive in their darkest time.

We believe the help of the United States played a great role in bringing the change that we are witnessing, the change, you know, the changes that we see, the praise that we are giving to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was ordinary, a normal person about a year and a half ago. So the—our youth struggle brought him to the frontline.

So I believe, as my colleague said, the role of the United States it is not something that we see in Ethiopia and here in the diaspora as something that we see very lightly. So it is great, and we consider United States as a great ally of Ethiopia.

And the other thing, something that I have to add is that Ethiopia has never been governed by the multiethnic Federal—democratic federalism in the past 27 years. It is led by authoritarian rules, so people need to really understand that. So ethnic—multiethnic democratic federalism has not been tried in Ethiopia. People have been coexisted this. In some case that are three different religious in one household, and we cannot compare Ethiopia to Somalia where it is just one religion.

So we are very much a great example to the entire world where religion can coexist, you know. We believe that we leave that to God. So I just want to add that. Thank you so much.

Mr. COFFMAN. Ms. Estelle, any closing thoughts and about U.S. influence in terms of Ethiopia and where we are right now in terms of how the Ethiopian people see us?

Ms. ESTELLE. Thank you, Congressman.

I think that the U.S.-Ethiopia relationship is certainly strong. The one point I would add is that we can't take that strength for granted. I know this committee absolutely understands that, but looking at the rise of China in particular in the Horn of Africa, this week we had China refinancing Ethiopia's debt, for example.

And so I do think the U.S. needs to be aware of competition in that space and where other states may be gaining influence. That said, I don't see the U.S. relationship to be particularly at risk at this time, but that there are more people bidding for that space than there have been previously. Thank you.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Badwaza.

Mr. BADWAZA. Thank you, Mr. Coffman.

I would say, I think from the point of view of government-to-government relationship, I agree that the relationship has been strong. As much as the Ethiopian population looks up for the United States and the type of freedom people have here and the robust democratic process that takes place here, there is also a sense of disillusionments in some occasions, for example, that comes from—in recent years from the relationship being overly focused on the partnership on counterterrorism and also overly focusing on humanitarian and development support to Ethiopia instead of publicly supporting the aspirations of people to advance democratic ideals and freedoms and to show solidarity when it is much needed.

In many instances that there is, I would say like to say, there is a mixed sort of sentiment when it comes to assessing that relationship as far as the regular Ethiopian is concerned.

Yeah. Thank you.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Coffman.

And thank you to our very distinguished witnesses for your wisdom, for your leadership, your insights. Without objection, your full statements will be made a part of the record, and this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:29 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ), Chairman

September 7, 2018

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

DATE: Wednesday, September 12, 2018
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
SUBJECT: Reviewing Current Developments in Ethiopia

WITNESSES: Panel I
The Honorable Tibor P. Nagy, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Panel II
Mr. Girum Alemayehu
Co-Founder
Ethiopian American Development Council

Mr. Jamal Said
President
Oromo Community of Denver

Ms. Emily Estelle
Senior Analyst
Critical Threats Project
American Enterprise Institute

Mr. Yoseph M. Badwaza
Senior Program Officer - Africa
Freedom House

By Direction of the Chairman

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations HEARING

Day Wednesday Date September 12, 2018 Room 2172

Starting Time 2:03pm Ending Time 4:29pm

Recesses (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Smith

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session

Executive (closed) Session

Televised

Electronically Recorded (taped)

Stenographic Record

TITLE OF HEARING:

Reviewing Current Developments in Ethiopia

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ranking Member Buss, Rep. Garrett

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)

Chairman Royce, Rep. Garamendi, Rep. Coffman**

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes No

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or
TIME ADJOURNED _____

[Signature]
Subcommittee Staff Associate