



OROMIA ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

12108 Benjamin Street, Beltsville, Maryland 20705

October 9, 2007, Washington, DC

Open Letter to Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

HR2003 does not serve American or Ethiopian public interest

Oromia Economic and Cultural Development Association (“Association”) is no-profit organization with its main office located in the State of Maryland. The general membership of the **Association** met on October 9, 2007, discussed the pro and cons of HR2003 and resolved as follows:

1. The Bill grossly undermines the prevailing peace, development, stability and the democratization process that are taking root in Ethiopia. Anyone with a right mind who remembers the horrendous political situation during the previous regimes would not think of drafting a Bill attacking the existing administration, but applaud them for their good will and ability to resolve complex political problems in the region and for their impeccable achievement in economic development and significantly changing the living conditions of the people for the better.
2. Ethiopia has not only established a good diplomatic relationship with United States since the demise of the communist leaning Military Regime in May 1991, it became an ardent supporter and the only ally of the United States in actively and successfully fighting local and international terrorists thereby squashing **Al Qaeda’s grand plan of making the Horn of Africa breeding ground for Al Qaeda.**
3. While fighting international terrorism, the country has exhibited amazing success in the areas of economic development significantly changing the living conditions of the people, specifically, the historically forgotten rural folks constituting over 85% of the country’s population that lived in destitution for the last 100 years. .
4. In the areas of education children in remote areas who never had opportunities to go beyond grade 3 in the past are now able to attend higher education at Universities and colleges. This was made possible only by the efforts of the government and the people in building elementary schools in every village and secondary schools at least in every district giving ample opportunities for rural children to attend higher education. .To be more specific, 90% of school-aged children attend primary schools as compared to only 22% in 1991 when the Military regime was overthrown. .
5. The Federal Constitution ratified in 1994 grants the public to exercise basic rights such as freedom of speech, forming associations freely, freedom of press, freedom of movement, right to travel abroad without restrictions, economic freedom and right to work. As a result of the conducive political environment created during the last 15 years, different political parties representing various interests of political communities work together as meaningful oppositions voicing their views freely within the Federal and Regional Parliaments. .

6. The election conducted in 2005 has been declared free and fair by credible observers. As result the oppositions who had only 12 seats in the Federal Parliament were able to gain over 200 seats demonstrating that the democratization process is on the right track. The post election human tragedy was never intended to happen if it was not initiated by the ill-fated people within the leadership of the main opposition group known as Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), who called for subversive action against the government by inciting uncontrollable mob armed with machete and locally made explosives targeting certain ethnic groups in the capital city. This not an exercise of freedom, but an exercise of negative freedom outside the realm of law. Since nobody is above the law, the government had taken appropriate corrective action, which saved the loss of thousands of innocent lives in the City.

7. Unsurprisingly, the leaders of CUD recently admitted to inciting the post election violence and apologized to the government and peoples of Ethiopia and vowed not to repeat such devilish act in the future. Donald Payne regardless of the admissions of wrongdoing goes on to disseminate his deceptive propaganda to lure the American public to support his cause. Without exaggerations, if the Ethiopian government had not taken decisive action to curb the violence, the horrible human tragedy that had taken place in Rwanda would have been repeated in Ethiopia.

8. Ethiopia is a home of more than 80 different nations and nationalities with distinct languages and cultural values, (including Oromos constituting about 40%). These nations and nationalities have been oppressed, despised and ignored by the previous regimes for over hundred years. Since 1991, the rights of all nations and nationalities in Ethiopia have been recognized; while at present they all enjoy equitable distribution of power and resources at all level of government. This sense of equality and equity has created an intolerable feeling in most of CUD membership closely related with he past oppressive system of government. CUD is an amorphous organization with no democratic principles but congregated only based on hate and bigotry towards certain national groups: specifically towards Tigray and Oromos. CUD's major objectives as demonstrated during the 2005 Election was to abolish the Constitution, dismantle the Federal structure and specifically the Regional State of Oromia. They don't wish to see diversity taking root in the country and an all-inclusive form of government currently in power.

9. HR 2003 would have no any contribution to the economic growth and development of approximately 80 million peoples of Ethiopia other than to satisfy the desire of some ethnocentric hate mongers in Diaspora making false accusations against the popular government based on rumors and innuendo. .

10. HR 2003 by no means serves American or the Ethiopian public interest. It is a blatant effort to lure the U.S. Congress to support of partisan Ethiopian political agenda. HR 2003 if legislated into a law will embolden terrorists in the region, definitely promotes lawlessness, social anarchy and terrorism. It would also create undesirable rift between the United States and Ethiopia for no apparent reasons.

11. Our Association vehemently condemns HR 2003 sponsored by the irresponsible law makers since it infringes upon the rights and the freedom of the Oromo nation and other nationalities from freely exercising their rights of self determination granted by the Constitution and benefit from the ongoing economic development and political freedom prevailing in Ethiopia. As such we find the intermeddling of the Congressional Committee and its flagrant act of imposing a Bill on a sovereign people to be extremely offensive and degrading. It attempts to make the Federal Republic of Ethiopia US tutelage micro-managed by the Congress.

12. Ethiopia is the only friend and reliable ally of the United States. We do not expect any less than amicable relations and cooperation existing between the two countries. This Bill damages

the existing diplomatic relations and bilateral cooperation eventually de-capacitates the ability of the two countries jointly fight terrorism and Muslim extremists.

13. The US Congress does not fully understand the custom and tradition of the Ethiopian people. Ethiopians did not accept any dictation by foreign powers during the Colonial Scramble of Africa 150 years ago; why would they accept similar foreign intrusion now. For instance in the late 19th century several attempts were made by European colonial powers to put Ethiopia under their influence. They were diplomatically resisted and they were later defeated in a battle in 1896. Subsequently, the European colonial powers were forced to recognize the independence of the country and the sovereignty of the people. A society with proud history and a pride for all black nations considers this Bill as an attack on their freedom. This Bill brings national shame and ushers the beginning of foreign intrusion unprecedented in the history of country.

Dear: Senator:

Today, the United States has more enemies than friends around the world. There is no need to lose one more friend for no apparent reasons. The allegations that the Congress makes on the Ethiopian government have no any basis and they are far from the truth. As such we strongly recommend that the Senate Sub-Committee travel to Ethiopia and gather empirical facts before making arbitrary and capricious decisions based on one sided testimonies of biased individuals.

Sincerely,

Negussie Birratu/Chairperson

Oromia Economic and Cultural Development Association is a non-profit organization registered with the State of Maryland, and the main objectives are to promote economic and cultural development in Oromia and encourage the Diaspora community to invest and be part of the economic and cultural development in Oromia. .Over 5,000 Oromos reside in the Metropolitan areas that support the ongoing democratization process in Oromia/Ethiopia and participate in various investment programs.

You may contact us at (301) 937 4836 or Email – nbirratu@verizon.net