

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. _____

Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance
in Ethiopia.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Ms. CANTWELL, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. COONS, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. RUBIO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging
inclusive governance in Ethiopia.

Whereas the first pillar of the 2012 United States Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa is to strengthen democratic institutions, and the United States Agency for International Development Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Strategy states that strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights, and participatory, accountable governance are crucial elements for improving people's lives in a sustainable way;

Whereas the third pillar of the 2012 United States Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa is to advance peace and security, including supporting security sector reform;

Whereas democratic space in Ethiopia has steadily diminished since the general elections of 2005;

Whereas elections were held in 2015 in which the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front claimed 100 percent of parliamentary seats;

Whereas the 2014 Department of State Human Rights Report on Ethiopia cited serious human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, killings, and torture committed by security forces as well as restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of association, politically motivated trials, harassment, and intimidation of opposition members and journalists;

Whereas the Government of Ethiopia has repeatedly abused laws such as the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation to limit press freedom, silence independent journalists, and persecute members of the political opposition;

Whereas laws such as the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation have been used to restrict the operation of civil society and nongovernmental organizations in Ethiopia across a range of purposes, particularly those investigating alleged violations of human rights by governmental authorities;

Whereas the case of the "Zone 9 Bloggers", whose arrest, detention, and trials on terrorism charges brought international attention to the restrictions on press freedom in Ethiopia, is indicative of the coercive environment in which journalists operate;

Whereas the Ethiopian Human Rights Council reports at least 102 protestor deaths, and according to Human Rights Watch, Ethiopian security forces have killed at

least 200 peaceful protestors in the Oromia region, and that number is likely higher;

Whereas state sponsored violence against those exercising their rights to peaceful assembly in Oromia and elsewhere in the country, and the abuse of laws to stifle journalistic freedoms, stand in direct contrast to democratic principles and in violation of Ethiopia's constitution; and

Whereas, during President Barack Obama's historic visit to Addis Ababa in July 2015, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn expressed his government's commitment to deepen the democratic process and work towards the respect of human rights and improving governance, and noted the need to step up efforts to strengthen institutions: Now, therefore be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) condemns—

3 (A) killings of peaceful protesters and ex-
4 cessive use of force by Ethiopian security
5 forces;

6 (B) arrest and detention of journalists,
7 students, activists and political leaders who ex-
8 ercise their constitutional rights to freedom of
9 assembly and expression through peaceful pro-
10 tests; and

11 (C) abuse of the Anti-Terrorism Proclama-
12 tion to stifle political and civil dissent and jour-
13 nalistic freedoms;

1 (2) urges protesters in Ethiopia to refrain from
2 violence;

3 (3) calls on the Government of Ethiopia—

4 (A) to halt the use of excessive force by se-
5 curity forces;

6 (B) to conduct a full, credible, and trans-
7 parent investigation into the killings and in-
8 stances of excessive use of force that took place
9 as a result of protests in the Oromia region and
10 hold security forces accountable for wrongdoing
11 through public proceedings;

12 (C) to release dissidents, activists, and
13 journalists who have been jailed, including those
14 arrested for reporting about the protests, for
15 exercising constitutional rights;

16 (D) to respect the right to freedom of
17 peaceful assembly and guarantee freedom of the
18 press and mass media in keeping with Articles
19 30 and 29 of the Ethiopian constitution;

20 (E) to engage in open and transparent
21 consultations relative to its development strat-
22 egy, especially those strategies that could result
23 in people's displacement from land; and

24 (F) to repeal proclamations that—

1 (i) can be used as a political tool to
2 harass or prohibit funding for civil society
3 organizations that investigate human
4 rights violations, engage in peaceful polit-
5 ical dissent, or advocate for greater polit-
6 ical freedoms; or

7 (ii) prohibit or otherwise limit those
8 displaced from their land from seeking
9 remedy or redress in courts, or that do not
10 provide a transparent, accessible means to
11 access justice for those displaced;

12 (4) calls on the Secretary of State to conduct
13 a review of security assistance to Ethiopia in light
14 of recent developments and to improve transparency
15 with respect to the purposes of such assistance to
16 the people of Ethiopia;

17 (5) calls on the Administrator of the United
18 States Agency for International Development to im-
19 mediately lead efforts to develop a comprehensive
20 strategy to support improved democracy and govern-
21 ance in Ethiopia;

22 (6) calls on the Secretary of State, in conjunc-
23 tion with the Administrator of the United States
24 Agency for International Development, to improve
25 oversight and accountability of United States assist-

1 ance to Ethiopia pursuant to expectations estab-
2 lished in the President's 2012 Strategy Toward Sub-
3 Saharan Africa; and

4 (7) stands by the people of Ethiopia, and sup-
5 ports their peaceful efforts to increase democratic
6 space and to exercise the rights guaranteed by the
7 Ethiopian constitution.