

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE 2005 ETHIOPIAN ELECTION

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, Ethiopia, one of Africa's most populous and influential nations, has for centuries been the home to numerous diverse religious and ethnic populations. Last May, the East African nation held elections, which promised to be a big step forward for Ethiopia's democracy. The election process started out more open than previous elections, with the political opposition able to campaign more freely than ever before. Unfortunately, the window of opportunity presented for democracy closed in a wave of government harassment of opposition parties and ethnic hate speech on both sides.

Although there were other problems in the election process, the biggest issue was the delayed release of vote results. Preliminary results indicated that the opposition did much better than in past elections, increasing the number of parliamentary seats won from 12 to nearly 200. However, opposition party coalitions charged that fraud had been committed in many of the races they did not win. Because the government had failed to release results in the weeks after the election, suspicions rose that a victory by the opposition had been stolen.

The controversy surrounding the 2005 Ethiopian election is the result of a number of factors that created a "perfect storm" of political discontent that has created tragic conditions in Ethiopia.

The European Union election monitoring team reported serious irregularities, but its impartiality was questioned after the leak of a preliminary EU report which indicated that the opposition parties would win a majority in Parliament based largely on results in the capital city of Addis Ababa. Periodic statements released by the EU election team were then undercut by statements from EU diplomats, much as I experienced in my visit to Addis last August.

The Government of Ethiopia, by refusing to release all relevant information regarding the election in a timely fashion, created fear that the election had been stolen. International donors worked behind the scenes with the government to create a mechanism to resolve election disputes. However, that mechanism pitted the ruling party and the government-appointed National Election Board against the opposition parties. As a result, the opposition lost 90 percent of the challenges it filed, and the government missed its own July 8th deadline for release of election results, furthering the frustration and suspicion.

As for the political opposition, its leaders contributed to this crisis by failing to provide necessary evidence of election fraud in all too many cases. It isn't that this evidence may not have existed, but the parties appeared to be unprepared to effectively document what the

problems were. Moreover, their refusal to take many of the seats won in the election prevented many issues from effectively being addressed in the Parliament, including the appointment of judges and guarantees of freedom of the press.

The suspicions regarding the election were exacerbated by the government's mass arrest of students in Addis in June. Protests were met with gunfire by government forces. It is estimated that as many as 40 persons identified as political activists were killed by government sharpshooters in the capital alone. Broadened arrests put tens of thousands in jail without charge or adequate contact with families or legal counsel. Further demonstrations in November resulted in at least another 40 persons killed by government forces—this time including those not connected with the political opposition.

The recently-released State Department human rights report on Ethiopia is scathing in its description of what is taking place in Ethiopia, stating that "the government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in some areas."

Among the human rights problems reported by the State Department were: limitation on citizens' right to change their government; unlawful killings, including alleged political killings, and beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention of thousands of persons; particularly those suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the opposition; detention of thousands without charge, and lengthy pretrial detention; government infringement on citizens' privacy rights, and frequent refusal to follow the law regarding search warrants; government restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists for publishing articles critical of the government; self-censorship by journalists; government restrictions on freedom of assembly including denial of permits, burdensome preconditions or refusal to provide assembly halls to opposition political groups, and at times use of excessive force to disperse demonstrations, and government limitations on freedom of association.

Approximately 16,000 people were released from jail earlier this year, but there is uncertainty about how many more prisoners remain behind bars without being charged or while awaiting a trial whose date is not yet set.

During my visit to Addis Ababa last August, I met with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, and I asked him why he had not investigated the June shootings of demonstrators by agents of his government. His response was that the investigation might require the arrest of opposition leaders, and he didn't want to do that while by-elections were still scheduled. He went on to tell me that he had dossiers on all the opposition leaders and could arrest them for treason whenever he wanted. Thus, their arrests were all but certain even before the events that ostensibly led to their being incarcerated. Reportedly, the investigation of the

government shootings of demonstrators is now belatedly underway.

The shootings by government forces and delayed investigation are reminiscent of an earlier incident: the massacre of Anuaks in southwestern Ethiopia beginning in December 2003 and continuing until May 2004.

The farming Anuak minority predominate the Gambella region of Ethiopia, but there have been periodic disputes with the highlanders, who are of the Tigrayan and Amharan ethnic groups. According to a Human Rights Watch report at the time, government forces joined with highlanders to kill at least 400 Anuaks in December 2003 alone and participated in the rape and torture of Anuaks. Genocide Watch and Survivors' Rights International confirmed the events described in the Human Rights Watch report.

The Government of Ethiopia announced last year that trials of government forces responsible for 13 of the Anuak killings had finally begun. However, there is no word yet on the result of these trials. While the government is engaged in such efforts, one hopes it also will investigate reports of the killing last year of 24 members and supporters of the Oromo National Congress and other allegedly politically-motivated killings by government forces in 2005.

Ethiopia has been an important ally of the United States in Africa, and the stability of one of Africa's most populous nations is critical to American policy, especially in the important Horn of Africa region. However, the violations detailed in the State Department human rights report and in other accounts of independent human rights organizations will only make this nation more vulnerable to civil war or a foreign-supported insurgency.

This past Monday, a series of explosions in Addis Ababa led to the death of one person and the wounding of three others in a blast on a crowded minibus. This was part of a wave of attacks that began in January and included three explosions earlier this month that wounded three persons at a restaurant, a market, and outside a school.

America's commitment to promote the respect for human rights around the world demands that we examine the current situation in Ethiopia and that we prevail upon our ally to live up to its international human rights commitments while this situation can still be salvaged. The discussions the Government of Ethiopia is conducting with its political opposition and with our government are good signs that some positive movement is possible. Other humanitarian gestures, for example, the eye operation the government reportedly authorized for opposition leader Hailu Shawal, are also an important step in the right direction.

However, the current situation calls for more than small steps taken slowly. If a crisis in Ethiopia is to be averted, reforms, investigations, and trials must proceed with all deliberate speed. This is why we convened a hearing on the situation in Ethiopia yesterday and

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

why I have introduced H.R. 4423—the Ethiopia Consolidation Act, which we intend to mark-up next week.

As I have said many times, “Friends don’t let friends commit human rights abuses.” This is a perfect example of why we must follow that dictum.

TRIBUTE TO ELDON POWELL

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Eldon Powell. Mr. Powell served in the Army under General Patton with the 90th Infantry Division in Europe from 1944 to 1946. He has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal for distinguishing himself by heroic service.

To best honor Mr. Powell, I would like to share with the members of this distinguished House the poem written, entitled “By My Dad’s Side” by his daughter, Sandra L. Moore.

Always I’ll remember being by my Dad’s side
Watching him slowly rise to his feet
To pay homage to His American Flag

The look on his face
His posture secure
His hand over his heart
His eyes set only upon “Her”

And without saying a word
And giving no thought to the crowd
My Dad once again would remember it all
As he would rise to his feet and pay homage
to his call

His Call to his Country
His God given Word
To uphold and defend what was good, what
was pure

To defend what was Holy
To defend what was True
To defend what God Himself values Precious
and Pure

And so on every occasion, every ball game,
parade
When His American Flag would so proudly
wave

There would be my Dad with his eyes fixed
and gazed

His hand holds his heart, for at times it does
bleed

For all those he remembers whose lives
bought Freedom for you and me

His hand holds his heart as it swells deep
from Pride

Remembering with Honor those who sur-
vived

His hand holds his heart as he humbly cries
Giving thanks to His God that
Freedom is still Well and Alive

Yes, I’ll always remember being by my Dad’s
side

Where I learned Honor, Respect, Sacrifice
and Pride

Where Reverence & Allegiance were Values
that grew

Where Love of God and Country and all Man-
kind rang True

Yes, I’ll always remember being by my Dad’s
side

Watching and leaning with tears in my eyes
His reaffirming his Pledge
Re-pledging his Vows

Vowing again and again his Allegiance with
Pride

Giving Honor and Thanks for “Our” Amer-
ican Flag

Just ask any veteran about American Pride
They all tell a story with tears in their eyes
A brotherhood bonded by the willing sac-
rifices of men

Who for God and Country would do it all
over again

God Bless America

May God bless Eldon Powell and all our
Veterans. They truly are American Heroes.

FREEDOM FOR LAMASIEL GUTIERREZ ROMERO

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Lamasiel Gutiérrez Romero, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mrs. Gutiérrez Romero is an independent journalist working so that the world can understand the grotesque reality of Castro’s hideous oppression. Using the limited tools of independent journalism in a totalitarian state, Mrs. Gutiérrez Romero courageously wrote about the bleak, broken society that is the result of the tyrannical policies of the totalitarian dictatorship. Because of Mrs. Gutiérrez Romero’s unrelenting commitment to illuminating the nightmare that is the Castro regime, she has been constantly harassed by the dictator’s thugs.

According to Reporters Without Borders, Mrs. Gutiérrez Romero was sentenced to seven months of house arrest for her journalistic activities. Despite this order, Mrs. Gutiérrez Romero continued her independent journalism. Unwilling to be muzzled by the totalitarian regime, she bravely defied their orders and continued to disseminate the truth about Cuba. Because of her unrelenting courage in the face of horrific oppression, on October 24, 2005, she was thrown in totalitarian gulag.

It is unconscionable that brave men and women can be locked up in the inhuman quarters of Castro’s gulag for their belief in truth, liberty, and democracy. Despite incessant repression, harassment, incarceration and abuse, she does not waiver in her commitment to report the truth and the facts. Mrs. Gutiérrez Romero is one of the many heroes of the peaceful Cuban democratic opposition who are locked in the dungeons of the dictatorship for their beliefs. They are symbols of freedom and democracy who will always be remembered when freedom reigns again in Cuba.

Mr. Speaker, it is unconscionable that journalists such as Mrs. Gutiérrez Romero are locked in dungeons for writing and publishing the facts about the nightmare that is the Castro regime. At the dawn of the 21st Century, it must no longer be acceptable for anyone in the world, anywhere in the world, to be locked in a gulag for writing the truth. It is repulsive to the ideal of freedom that independent journalists are locked in totalitarian gulags 90 miles from our shore. My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate and unconditional release of Lamasiel Gutiérrez Romero and every prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE
PROCESS: POLICING ADVANCES
AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on March 16 I cochaired a hearing on the Northern Ireland peace process, on the advances in police performance and behavior, and on the remaining challenges the Police Service of Northern Ireland faces to its becoming fully accepted as a fair and impartial police service. The hearing was my 11th hearing on Northern Ireland in not quite 9 years, and I shall continue to follow the events on Northern Ireland closely and encourage reform for as long as necessary.

This hearing helped the U.S. Congress and the American people to better understand the current issues in the always complex situation in Northern Ireland. It provided guidance to our efforts as we continue to seek to assist in the realization of a durable peace and the guarantee of fundamental human rights in Northern Ireland. The establishment of peace, justice and prosperity in Northern Ireland, which we have all hoped, worked and prayed for, is still not a reality. There are many encouraging signs, but also disturbing ones, and we are still not there yet.

One of the most encouraging developments is, of course, the IRA’s renunciation of armed struggle, and the decommissioning of its weapons—a remarkable step in the path to peace. The IRA must follow through on its proclamations and cease all criminal activities as well. The most disturbing factor, however, is the alienation of the unionist community. The large majority of decent people on the unionist side, who hope for peace as ardently as nationalists, are skeptical of IRA promises. They are also terrorized by their own paramilitaries. Those paramilitaries need to follow the IRA example, and disarm, and cease their criminal activities. They are right now one of the greatest dangers to peace and stability.

The Government of the United Kingdom has begun all party negotiations to restore the Northern Ireland Assembly and the power sharing executive. It is also preparing legislation to devolve the administration of justice and policing to a restored Northern Irish executive. Mitchell Reiss, President Bush’s Special Envoy to the Northern Ireland peace process briefed us on the current prospects and challenges facing the restoration of self-government in Northern Ireland.

There has been some progress in the continuing reform of Northern Ireland’s police force. Nearly 7 years ago I chaired a hearing on policing in Northern Ireland. Chris Patten, who had just released the famous report that bears his name, testified before us. Now we shall have a chance to hear about the progress that has been made in implementing the 175 recommendations made by the Patten Report. There is a new police force, the Policing Service of Northern Ireland, PSNI; there is a vigorous and fiercely independent Police Ombudsman’s Office, whose chief, Nuala O’Loane, has been a catalyst for reform. The Police Ombudsman’s office has been recognized as an effective mechanism for holding