

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 6, 2004

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi
Embassy of Ethiopia
3506 International Dr. NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Prime Minister:

The United States has long been Ethiopia's partner in its struggle to overcome the ravages of war, poverty and drought. It is in this spirit of partnership that we raise a matter of urgent concern. We have received consistent and credible reports that widespread human rights abuses are occurring in the Gambella region of Ethiopia, where the humanitarian situation appears to be worsening. As Members of the US Congress, we are committed to supporting efforts to ensure that civilians of all ethnicities are adequately protected from harm and that their basic humanitarian needs are met.

The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau (DPPB) estimates, that approximately 25% (roughly 50,000 people) of Gambella's population has been displaced from their villages. According to the reports of the DPPB and other agencies, thousands of people have lost their houses, crops, livestock, and farming implements due to the current conflict.

Many of those who have been displaced from their homes, including returnees from Sudan, have not been able to plant crops this year. The coming rains could spell disaster for a desperate population already lacking adequate shelter and food. Numerous reports that have emerged from Gambella since the recent round of fighting began in December of last year provide consistent and credible accounts of military units being involved in mass killings that took place in Gambella Town.

We are disturbed by these reports, and we hope that, if true, any military or government personnel involved in such severe abuses of human rights, especially the killing of unarmed civilians, is held accountable by your government and brought to justice. With the approach of the rainy season in August, it is extremely urgent that humanitarian aid providers, including the United States Agency for International Development, are able to access the Gambella region, conduct unhindered assessments of the situation, and freely distribute food, medicine, and shelter to those in need. While it is essential that your government supports an expansion of humanitarian efforts in Gambella, it is equally critical that unfettered access to Gambella is granted to journalists and international human rights organizations.

We appreciate the completion of the independent commission's investigation of these alleged human rights abuses, and we look forward to receiving and reviewing a copy of

the commission's final report and hope that an English version can be provided. The situation in Gambella is clearly complicated, and it will likely be some time before the root causes of the violence can be fully addressed. However, we would like to stress that the US Congress will be very interested in seeing that your government's response to the crisis in Gambella protects the human rights of all civilians and meets their basic humanitarian needs.

Thank you for your immediate consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,



Hon. Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress



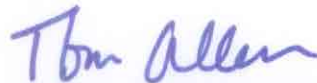
Hon. Tom Lantos
Member of Congress



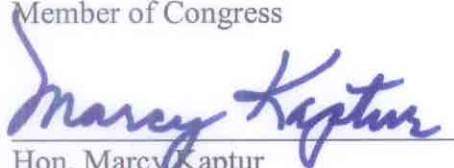
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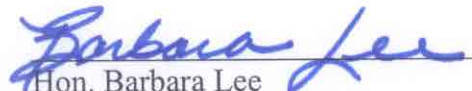
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Hon. Ed Royce
Member of Congress



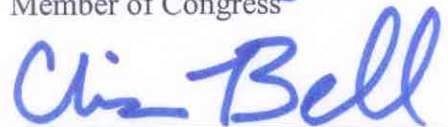
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