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**For Immediate Release**

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## **ZENAWI TAKES MORE POLITICAL PRISONERS HOSTAGE IN H.R. 2003 MARK-UP BATTLE**

**CHAIRMAN LANTOS DECLARES "WE WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD  
THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE WAY IT  
TREATS ITS CITIZENS"**

**PAYNE FIGHTS TOOTH AND NAIL TO GET  
H.R. 2003 MARKED-UP IN COMMITTEE**

Prof. Ephraim Isaac says H.R. 2003 "has many good ideas in it."

**PHONE/FAX CAMPAIGN A MASSIVE SUCCESS IN FIRST TWO DAYS**

**PLEASE **STOP** MASSIVE  
PHONE/FAX CAMPAIGN**

The Coalition for H.R. 2003 has just learned that H.R. 2003 will be up for consideration during the September session of the House Foreign Affairs Committee meeting. House Foreign Affairs Chairman Tom Lantos in a press release today following the Committee meeting declared:

"This bill will not be considered by the full committee for now, but this does not mean the matter of progress in political and other rights in Ethiopia is closed. The United States relationship with Ethiopia will continue to be conditioned on Ethiopian support for human rights and the rule of law. We will continue to hold the Ethiopian government accountable for the way it treats its citizens."

Lantos explained:

"The full committee did not consider the measure at today's markup because I wanted to give Ethiopia's elders, government officials, courts and opposition leaders an opportunity to work out a pardon arrangement for the more than 30 remaining political detainees. Late last week I notified other members of Congress, including the House leadership, of my decision. I continue to be concerned about the detainees, and hope for their release soon." (Full text of press release below.)

### **Payne Fights “Tooth and Nail” for H.R. 2003 Mark-up**

In a moving speech during Committee deliberations today, in which Cong. Payne was given first priority to speak, Cong. Payne told his colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee that H.R. 2003 is not just about the release of a handful prisoners. He said while the release of all political prisoners in Ethiopia is of the highest priority and importance, there are many other equally important issues. He asked his colleagues to focus on the facts in Ethiopia, the massive and continuing violations of human rights, the lack of accountability by the regime for the lives lost during the regime’s killing spree in the post-election period and the massive number of arrests of political opponents.

Payne reminded his colleagues that the mark-up of the bill was delayed last time to give the regime an opportunity to do the right thing and release all political prisoners. Yet the same delaying tactic is being used to further delay the mark-up.

### **H.R. 2003 “has many good ideas in it.”**

As Prof. Ephraim Isaac, Chair of the Shimagle Committee that worked to get the Kality prisoners of conscience released, correctly concluded after reading H.R. 2003 (VOA Amharic Program, July 30, 2007), that “there are many good ideas in it.”

Among the many good ideas in H.R. 2003 include, among others, provisions for the release of all political prisoners, strong protections for basic human rights, development of independent courts and legal institutions that ensure due process of law for all citizens, prosecution of all human rights abusers, including those responsible for the killing and injury of unarmed protesters in the post-2005 election period, elimination of censorship in the functioning of free and independent press institutions, creation and expansion of institutions that will produce fraud-free elections and competitive political parties, dialogue and negotiation in the resolution of political disputes, and strengthening of the Ethiopian American partnership against global terrorism.

Inquiry by Coalition sources tends to confirm comments made by Prof. Ephraim Isaac in the media in the past few days that mark-up of the bill should not be a cause for

the delay of a negotiated release of prisoners. Members of Congress are being told that there will be no further release of political prisoners if the bill is marked-up.

This marks a second hostage situation with political prisoners in Ethiopia and the mark-up of H.R. 2003. It appears the regime's strategy is to string along Congress and the American legislative process at the end of a long chain of political prisoners. It appears the regime will use all of its resources to delay the mark-up of the bill for as long as possible by threatening to keep an ever increasing population of political prisoners in prolonged detention.

### **Phone/Fax Campaign, A Massive Success**

The first two days of the phone/fax campaign for H.R. 2003 have been a massive success. The response of H.R. 2003 supporters was so massive and unrelenting, the capacity of the congressional offices to hand the calls/fax was overwhelmed. We thank all who took the time to engage in this grassroots activity. Your continued efforts will ensure success for this bill.

**Please stop the massive phone/fax campaign for now.**

The Coalition for H.R. 2003 will continue in its work to ensure a successful September mark-up date.

Our deepest thanks and appreciation goes to Chairman Tom Lantos and Chairman Donald Payne.

### **FULL TEXT OF LANTOS PRESS RELEASE**

## **House Committee on Foreign Affairs Congressman Tom Lantos, Chairman**

**July 31, 2007**

### **Lantos Addresses Erroneous Reports About Legislation on Ethiopia**

**Washington, DC** - *To correct erroneous reports about the Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Accountability Act (H.R. 2003), Chairman Tom Lantos of the House Foreign Affairs Committee issued this statement today:*

"The full committee did not consider the measure at today's markup because I wanted to give Ethiopia's elders, government officials, courts and opposition leaders an opportunity to work out a pardon arrangement for the more than 30 remaining political detainees. Late last week I notified other members of Congress, including the House leadership, of my decision. I continue to be concerned about the detainees, and hope for their release soon.

"This bill will not be considered by the full committee for now, but this does not mean the matter of progress in political and other rights in Ethiopia is closed. The United States relationship with Ethiopia will continue to be

conditioned on Ethiopian support for human rights and the rule of law. We will continue to hold the Ethiopian government accountable for the way it treats its citizens."

*Lantos is the founding co-chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.*