April 15, 2018

For Immediate Release

On the passage of H.Res. 128 “Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia.”

Patriotic Ginbot 7 Movement for Unity and Democracy (PG-7) is pleased and encouraged by the passage of H.R 128 “Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia.” in the U.S. House of Representatives on April 10, 2018.

The passage of H.R 128 is a hard-fought victory for which many Ethiopian-Americans dedicated an enormous amount of time, effort, and resources from the drafting stage of the resolution, to its unanimous support in the Foreign Affairs Committee, to its ultimate passage in the House, again with a unanimous vote.

Our admiration and appreciation goes to all Ethiopian American civic organization who tirelessly worked and fought to get this resolution passed. The passage of this resolution showed that the more we Ethiopians unite and work together, we can achieve great results that will lead us to the ultimate victory we all yearned for decades.

The TPLF/EPRDF regime left no stone unturned to stop this resolution from being tabled in the House for a vote, including by hiring an expensive lobby firm (SGR LLC) and even threatening the U.S. administration to withdraw its dubious involvement in the war against terrorism in the horn of Africa. In the end, truth and hard work prevailed; good judgement and support for human rights won the day.

PG-7 would like to extend its appreciation and gratitude to the sponsors and champions of the resolution – particularly Reps. Chris Smith and Mike Coffman – who listened and responded to the plea of their Ethiopian American constituency and
stood firm for respect of human rights in Ethiopia. We also thank all the 114 bipartisan co-sponsors of the Resolution and all House members who voted for its passage.

The passage of HR 128 sends very clear messages: that U.S. law makers will no longer look the other way as the TPLF/EPRDF regime kills and maims peaceful protesters, arrests and tortures journalists, student activists, and opposition political leaders; the U.S. will no longer tolerate state-sponsored violence in Ethiopia against those exercising their democratic rights; and that the U.S. will no longer provide financial, military, and diplomatic support for a regime that continues to have a dismal human rights records.

This Resolution calls on the TPLF/EPRDF regime to:

- Free all political prisoners
- Lift the State of Emergency;
- Bring to justice those responsible for detaining, torturing & killing of peaceful protesters;
- Allow the United Nations to investigate human right conditions in Ethiopia; and
- Repeal those laws that restrict political freedom including the draconian Anti-terrorism Proclamation and the Charities and Societies Proclamation.

The resolution goes further and calls on the U.S. Secretaries of State and Treasury as well as the Administrator of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to:

- Conduct review of security assistance to the TPLF/EPRDF regime
- Develop a strategy to support improved democracy and governance in Ethiopia;
- Improve oversight and accountability to U.S. development assistance, and
- Apply appropriate sanctions on those persons and entities responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross human right violations as provided for in the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act.

Even though coming decades late, this Resolution is certainly a step in the right direction to help Ethiopians in their aspiration to build a truly democratic political system, and to ensure peace and stability in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa.
We are hopeful that the current U.S. administration, unlike previous administrations, will follow up on the practical measures recommended by HR 128. Without practical and immediate pressures, the TPLF/EPRDF regime is highly unlikely to change its behavior.

We take this opportunity to call upon the European Union, Canada, the UK, Norway, and Australia to join the U.S. by passing similar legislation and/or withholding their financial and other forms of assistance to the TPLF/EPRDF regime in support of respect for human rights and peaceful political transition to democratic governance in Ethiopia.

While international pressure on the TPLF/EPRDF regime is sorely needed and appreciated, it must be noted the destiny of Ethiopia ultimately rests in the hands of Ethiopians whose patience has run out and would not entertain much delay in attaining their God-given rights and freedom.

Dr. Abiy Ahmed, the new prime minister who officially took office on April 2, 2018, has a narrow window of time to respond to the popular demand for change. He must take immediate, clear and irreversible steps to transition the country into a new democratic political order.

EPRDF is utterly unable to resolve the current political crisis let alone usher a truly democratic system regardless of who is the prime minister. Moreover, the new prime minister’s powers to bring real political reform will remain constrained as long as TPLF controls and dominates the intelligence, security forces including the armed forces.

The new prime minister must, therefore, welcome and respond to HR 128 by paving the way for an all-inclusive national dialogue to get the country out of the current crisis and chart a pathway for sustained peace, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

PG-7 will not let up its struggle until real political change happens, i.e., until true democracy, justice, and equality are achieved in Ethiopia. However, in the spirit of HR128, PG-7 is ready to engage with the new prime minister in an all-inclusive dialogue and negotiation toward a peaceful transition of the country from TPLF minority dominated one-party EPRDF rule into an inclusive and vibrant pluralist democratic system.

Justice, liberty, and Unity for the people of Ethiopia!

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