

Press Release

Embassy of the United States
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U.S. URGES FURTHER ETHIOPIAN ACTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Addis Ababa, December 10, 2009 – The United States congratulates the Government of Ethiopia for its participation yesterday in the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in Geneva. The United States has been a strong supporter of the UPR process and looks forward to the review in 2010 of its own record in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the United States.

While recognizing the complex environment prevailing in many parts of Ethiopia, we commend the Government of Ethiopia for its declared commitments to promote and protect human rights. We appreciate the Ethiopian Government’s willingness to consider country visits by UN Human Rights Council special rapporteurs and mandate holders, and note that the UN Special Rapporteurs on the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, on torture, and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, as well as the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have outstanding visit requests.

The United States expresses the hope that Ethiopia will address positively the recommendations made to its delegation during the UPR session in Geneva. These recommendations included that the Ethiopian Government reassess the Charities and Societies Proclamation in light of concerns expressed by a number of UN member states that it will constrain rather than promote the long-term democratization, governance and stability of Ethiopia. Among other important issues raised, member states also recommended greater humanitarian access to the Ogaden areas of the Somali region so that organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and UN relief agencies can provide assistance to conflict victims.

The United States considers a vibrant and independent media to be one of the pillars of a strong democracy. As such, we are concerned about the recent closure of the Addis Neger newspaper, and the allegations of harassment and intimidation of private media. The outstanding charges against private journalists, editors, publishers, and media houses may also contribute to a perception that space for independent media in Ethiopia is constrained. Ethiopia’s constitution guarantees freedom of the press and that the press shall enjoy legal protection to ensure its capacity to entertain diverse opinions.

On International Human Rights Day, we welcome the Ethiopian Government’s latest pledges and call on the government to work in earnest to address its obligations under international and domestic law.

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