



No to the Poison Bills - Ethiopia in U.S. Congress

Defeat the S.3199 - Ethiopia Peace and Stabilization Act of 2022 and the H. R. 6600 "Ethiopia Stabilization, Peace, and Democracy Act"

There are two bills in the U.S. Senate and Congress plan that try to codify U.S. efforts to purportedly "support a peaceful, democratic Ethiopia and bring an end to the conflict in northern Ethiopia." The full Senate and congress are expected to vote on the bills soon. Many individuals and Ethiopian Advocacy groups are working to defeat these bills.

Concerned Ethiopians (CE) is also firmly against these two bills for the following reasons:

(1) Senate Bill: The Sense of Congress Section:

- 1.1 (Item 3) TPLF's history of repression of Ethiopians for three decades and that it started the northern Ethiopia conflict is not mentioned. Instead, in a disguised act of innocence or naivete and to appear impartial, "a political solution to the crisis, unfettered humanitarian access, an end to human rights violations, full accountability for all atrocities committed, and a broader all-inclusive national dialogue" is offered. This lack of accountability indicates the bill's motive to treat it as a legitimate Ethiopian political alternative and like inviting the fox to the coop.
- 1.2 (Item 4) Sovereign nations can choose allies and invite them into their territories to help defend themselves. Even though Eritrean forces have been blamed for some atrocities, as all parties to the conflict have been, the focus on demanding the withdrawal of Eritrean forces neglects its effect in tipping the military dynamics.
- 1.3 (Item 5) The term "prolonged blockade" is highly partisan and supports TPLF talking points. Neglecting the invasion of Amhara and Afar regions by TPLF and ignoring that TPLF extended fighting along the routes of Aid trucks and using AID trucks for its war efforts. Looting aid from stores in Wollo shows how one-sided this bill is. In addition, the recent UN statement about the Aid to Tigray shows that once TPLF left the Afar region, aid was able to reach Tigray.
- 1.4 (Item 6): Without a look at why Tigray has not been self-sufficient with food, what TPLF has done to keep food aid an issue and just focusing on "an urgent focus on the provision of emergency food aid to communities that are currently facing famine conditions or food insecurity." Just echoes the devilish reasoning promoted by the terrorist TPLF.
- 1.5 (Item 10) Despite previous U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and U.S. Ambassador Tibor Nagy categorically stating TPLF was responsible for starting the armed conflict in Tigray, the bill omits this important fact. In doing so, it does not hold TPLF accountable for its insurrection. Instead, the bill wants to "hold accountable governments, organizations, and individuals, including those in the diaspora who have incited the civil conflict and related violence in Ethiopia."

- 1.6 In addition, exploring previous versions of the bill is worthwhile. A careful look will give an insight into how this final version was formulated:
 - 1.6.1 The Maikadra massacre by the TPLF youth wing “Samri,” which happened early in the conflict and inflamed ethnic tensions between Amharas and Tigreans, was not mentioned.
 - 1.6.2 Numerous ethnically motivated attacks by TPLF-aligned OLF Shene and other terrorists such as those in Benishangul are omitted.
 - 1.6.3 While pointing out the “three-way tensions between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam,” it glosses over the heavy-handed “arbitration” role the U.S. has played in favor of Egypt. It also ignores the role Egypt has played in destabilizing Ethiopia and calls armed incursion by Sudan into Ethiopia as “tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia over Al Fashaga”.
 - 1.6.4 Deliberately distorts PM Abiy’s statement to rid of Ethiopia of food dependence when he referred to boosting agricultural products and becoming a self-sufficient country, not banning emergency aid.

(2) The Statement of Policy Section (Both Congress and Senate Bills):

- 2.1 The lack of military, economic and diplomatic support and vigorous denunciation of armed resistance to a legitimately elected government make the “Statement of Policy” about “support a peaceful, democratic unified Ethiopia...” ring hollow. The Congress Bill also assumes it can bring outcome by promoting “an inclusive national dialogue”. The fact that Ethiopia has convened a national dialogue commission (it encountered criticisms from the opposition) is ignored.
- 2.2 The statement “supporting a credible, inclusive political process to unify the country that is convened by a mutually agreed upon party ...” neglects that Ethiopia has an elected government and gives parity between former leaders that were despised for their rule and are now insurrectionists labeled as terrorists by the Ethiopian legislature with the current government that once enjoyed enormous popularity.
- 2.3 The statement “countering malign foreign influence and disinformation exacerbating the civil conflict and intercommunal violence” appears to target Eritrea and the Ethiopian diaspora since it does not list out countries such as Egypt whose parliamentarians have openly discussed destabilizing Ethiopia. The Congress bill similarly identifies and deters external material support. Both are meant to threaten allies of the Ethiopian countries such as UAE, Turkey, and Eritrea.
- 2.4 The Congress bill to “ensure the safety and security of United States Embassy staff and United States citizens and legal permanent residents in Ethiopia, including contingency plans to evacuate, as needed, these individuals from Ethiopia” appears to create a pretext for military intervention.

(3) The Support for Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia and Conflict Resolution, Mitigation and Management, and Reconciliation Sections:

- 3.1 These sections do not mention that Ethiopia faces a security challenge from internal armed groups assisted by external forces. Without helping Ethiopia fight terrorists and eliminate the economic causes that nurture insurrection, “supporting democracy and human rights” is cold comfort to those who have suffered from TPLF and OLF Shene forces.

(4) Actions in Support of Peace and Stability in Ethiopia Section:

- 4.1 In general, this section is highly deficient as it is based on parity between insurrectionists and an elected government. Despite protestations of legislators that they are not taking sides in this conflict, the lack of accountability that should have been put on TPLF and OLF Shene forces described in the above sections, make the actions in this section highly partisan.

- 4.2 All of the actions in this section are partisan and punitive and do not encourage or incentivize Ethiopia to do better for its citizens. The sanctions and penalties on property and visas, omitting TPLF from limitations on arms and dual-use items while including Eritrea and Ethiopia, and cutting the support by the US International Development Finance Corporation are all harsh. The old adage of carrots and sticks is thrown out, and this section is all about sticks.
- 4.3 The Congressional bill threatens sanctions for “any technical training, financial resources or services, advice, other services or assistance related to the supply, sale, transfer, manufacture, maintenance, or use of arms, spare parts, and related material. By adding this related material phrase, it makes Ethiopian American fear sanctions.

(5) Determination of Genocide, War Crimes, or Crimes against Humanity:

- 5.1 It is highly questionable why this item is being put in a bill when the US has chosen not to fully acknowledge, let alone accept investigative reports by EHRC and UNOCHA while latching on to biased reports from journalists with questionable reporting. It seems the US is cherry-picking reports and demanding additional ones until it gets predetermined “crimes” against the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments.

The above point-by-point discussion of the two bills' deficiencies indicates that the US has other interests behind the "Ethiopia Stabilization, Peace, and Democracy Acts." Good evidence about this is why President Biden gave when he signed the order removing Ethiopia from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). That proclamation states that the action is "for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." Prior to that proclamation, the executive order from September stated, “the situation in and in relation to northern Ethiopia ... constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. I hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat.”

Concerned Ethiopians are reasonably asking what US National Interest was threatened by the conflict in northern Ethiopia. We also question how these bills will serve US Interests. One lesson Ethiopian Americans have learned from the actions of the Biden Administration is that their idealist view of the US is not real. Ethiopian-Americans now realize that the US's ideals of democracy, liberty, and justice are known for taking a back seat to perceived American interests.

The US Foreign Policy in the Horn of Africa (HOA) is in chaos. HOA envoys do not stay in their jobs for more than a few months. Sudan’s transition to civilian leadership is stuck. South Sudan has an uneasy truce. Somalia’s presidential election was full of corruption, and the US is sending a few hundred soldiers to help fight Al Shabab. Somaliland in the north is contemplating independence. There is a conflict between Kenya and Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan, and Eritrea and Ethiopia. Egypt is meddling in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. With all this, the US, rather than helping an elected government against insurrectionists and terrorists, wants to legislate sanctions that would weaken Ethiopia. Why? As CE has stated before, it is for these three main reasons:

- (1) Appease Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)
- (2) Curtail Chinese Influence in Africa
- (3) To a lesser extent, Humanitarian concerns

Some well-meaning Ethiopians who oppose the government of PM Abiy or are disillusioned with him support these two bills. CE believes this is a misguided approach. The bill will harm Ethiopians. Sanctions have not proven effective in Zimbabwe, Iran, and other countries but cause deep economic pain to ordinary citizens. Those pro sanctions bills in effect are working together with TPLF Lobbyists. Supporting the bills is like cutting off your nose to spite your face.

Ethiopia has a long history of independence and resisting colonization. Therefore, any support for foreign meddling in the internal affairs of Ethiopia will be seen as being a traitor or "banda" the Ethiopian expression. There is evidence that Ethiopians have soured on the US for its apparent support of TPLF. Stomping on the US flag, flying the Russian flag, and trying to register to fight for Russia against Ukraine show that the Ethiopian Sentiment index is unfavorable to the US. In addition, recent US elections in the Virginia governor race has shown that Ethiopian Americans have galvanized against democrats due to President Biden's heavy-handed policy against Ethiopia.

Democratic and Republican administrations have supported TPLF for the last 40 years. They looked the other way when TPLF/EPRDF abused human rights, committed ethnic violence, repressed its people, and destabilized the horn of Africa. TPLF complains about a siege when it has taken the whole of Tigray hostage. Under the guise of breaking a siege, it attacks neighboring regions along the roads used by Aid Groups. It unashamedly then blatantly admits that it has to feed its soldiers using Aid provided by international organizations. A Reuters report has also documented the forced conscription of Tigrayans youth by TPLF. IN AN NPR INTERVIEW, the US Senate minority leader said that the Ukraine war is between good and bad and right and wrong. Ethiopians consider TPLF the "bad and the wrong," and the US knows it. Why does the US have double standards when it comes to Ukraine and Ethiopia? Even the pro-TPLF William Davison from ICG had tweeted "TPLF was primarily a U.S. security ally. It became a liability as domestic opposition surged, due not least to EPRDF authoritarianism." Why did the US suddenly find religion in democracy and stability for Ethiopia? We believe the answer is due to US interests related to Egypt and China. The US administration is pursuing a misguided Horn of African policy. The use of legislation to pursue this policy harms the long-term national interest of the US and its image around Africa and causes disproportionate damage to ordinary Ethiopians.

The two bills will:

1. Freeze Ethiopian-Americans' right to use social media to express their despise of TPLF
2. Make Ethiopian-Americans think twice before sending money to their family and legitimate causes they support
3. Restrict Ethiopia's access to International Financial Institutions
4. Attempts to restrict Ethiopia from buying weapons to defend itself

Ethiopian-Americans do not want their right to use social media, send money to family, support causes they believe in Ethiopia, or aid Ethiopia gets from international institutions to be curtailed to serve ambiguous US national interests.

While disheartened by the Biden administration, Ethiopian-Americans think the U.S. can manage a positive role in Ethiopia. The U.S. can help bring awareness to the plight of journalists such as Tamrat Negara and prominent Ethiopians such as General Tefera Mamo and Meskerem Abera. They are kidnapped and arbitrarily arrested in contravention of the Ethiopian Law. It can also provide aid to many Ethiopians affected by drought and, most importantly, help ordinary Ethiopians affected by the war through the support of development activities. The means and methods to achieve this are through diplomacy, not through U.S. legislation.

Concerned Ethiopians (CE) opposition to the two bills aligns with individuals and Ethiopian Advocacy groups working to defeat these bills. The Ethiopian-American Development Council (EADC) and The American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee (AEPAC) are working hard to get the voices of many Ethiopian-Americans heard in the halls of congress. We are firmly against these two bills and support the efforts of individuals and groups working diligently towards getting the bills defeated.