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Viewing cable 09ADDISABABA729, S) BIOGRAPHIC NOTE: INFERRING PRIME MINISTER

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Table with 5 columns: Reference ID, Created, Released, Classification, Origin. Row 1: 09ADDISABABA729, 2009-03-27 12:24, 2011-08-30 01:44, SECRET//NOFORN, Embassy Addis Ababa

VZCZCXRO2156 OO RUEHROV DE RUEHDS #0729/01 0861224 ZNY SSSSS ZZH O 271224Z MAR 09 FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4237 INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY RUEHFSI/DIR FSINFATC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY RUEPADJ/CJTF HOA PRIORITY RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000729

NOFORN SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2019 TAGS: PINR PGOV PREL ET SUBJECT: (S) BIOGRAPHIC NOTE: INFERRING PRIME MINISTER MELES'S MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE - ISTJ

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY -----

¶1. (S/NF) After scores of meetings with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Post has strong confidence in our ability to infer Meles's Myers-Briggs type. We strongly believe that Meles is a strong ISTJ.

A STRONG INTROVERT "I"

¶2. (S/NF) We have a high degree of confidence that Meles is a moderate-to-strong "I." He is quiet, deliberative, and certainly not a "man about town." We understand from direct engagements with him, and from those close to him, that he is a voracious reader and very introspective (both personally and about the country). While Meles certainly has to work the members of the ruling party's central committee, these are all long-time, very close friends. He thrives on one-on-one or small group discussions (such as with renown economists, talking about imperial Japanese history, or the U.S. founding fathers), while being far more reserved in larger groups (i.e. large CODEL groups, etc.). As such, we are highly confident of this "I" classification.

STRONGLY SENSING "S8" -----

¶3. (S/NF) Meles is a details man. He knows them inside and out, and he deploys them quickly and precisely to establish and defend his arguments. Whenever we raise concerns, he responds with highly nuanced and highly specific details to counter our arguments. He is particularly adept at using such details to counter points raised by senior USG (and presumably other foreign) officials. On numerous occasions we have observed Meles run circles around visitors who note general concerns by throwing out detailed responses. As some more senior USG visitors may not know all of the specific details regarding a particular dynamic they are asked to raise beyond what may be included in a two-page brief, their ability to offer a detailed retort can be limited or can lead them to stand down without countering Meles's response. As such, we are again highly confident that Meles is an "S."

LIKELY THINKING "T" -----

¶4. (S/NF) We assess that Meles is likely a moderate-to-strong "T," but internal ruling party dynamics require him to operate skillfully as an "F" as well, which he does with

aplomb. As with his deployment of details in presenting an argument, Meles conveys his analysis of internal, economic, and regional dynamics in a clear, logical way focused on ends/objectives far more than on values. While Meles does certainly still rely to a fair extent on "values" (particularly regarding the ideologies of revolutionary democracy and the developmental state), his thinking on these issues has evolved over the years, particularly after engagement with others (Sachs, Stiglitz, western governments, etc.) suggesting that when confronted with a detailed, logical, results-oriented argument he can move away from ideological dogma. A stronger argument for his "T"ness, is actually the argument against his "F"ness as evidenced by the rift within the TPLF in 2001. Meles's absolute and near-visceral break from Seeye Abraha) perhaps his best, closest, and oldest friend) suggests that when push comes to shove, he is far more wedded to tasks/ends than interpersonal relationships. Finally, Meles desperately wants recognition and public accolades for his achievements, consistently focusing us on his accomplishments while being relatively more willing to forego appreciation while efforts remain in process.

¶5. (S/NF) While we are fairly confident that Meles is a moderate-to-strong "T," our confidence is lessened by how effectively Meles can operate as an "F." The TPLF Executive Committee has a lot of strong and dogmatic personalities that would not take lightly to being vetoed frequently. Meles has retained his influence over more than two decades by navigating this dynamic well. Moreover, Meles is an expert in knowing his audience and choosing his language carefully

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to deliver a carefully-crafted, audience-specific argument. Still, the dynamics behind his break with others in the TPLF in 2001 and his logic-, rather than values-, based argumentation that leads us to believe that he is a "T."

DEFINITELY JUDGING "J"



¶6. (S/NF) Meles is certainly a strong "J." Throughout our scores of meetings with the Prime Minister, in which he consistently operates without notes, Meles delivers points on any range of issues that can be precisely diagrammed into an outline. Within each point of his arguments he deploys a precise list of supporting details or arguments. Meles is a linear thinker, starting from the beginning, then reaching the end before broaching a new issue. We are very confident of Meles's "J"ness.

COMMENT

¶7. (S/NF) We hope that this analysis provides useful insights for USG interlocutors who will engage the Prime Minister. Meles's ISTJ type suggests very clearly that the most persuasive arguments to make with the Prime Minister to sway his decisions will be those that are delivered privately, focused on an end objective that he supports or values, highly specific and detailed, and delivered in a clear, linear fashion. Further, if our message is one that he is likely to oppose, our arguments will be much more effective if delivered in a way that emphasize the objective -- Meles particularly understands and appreciates arguments that clearly reflect the explicit pursuit of national interests. Further, USG interlocutors must be thoroughly prepared with details to retort Meles's detailed responses to initial USG points. End Comment.
YAMAMOTO

"All of them, those in power, and those who want the power, would pamper us, if we agreed to overlook their crookedness by wifully restricting our activities." —"Refus Global" , Paul-Émile Borduas 

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Reference id	07ADDISABABA3404 <small>aka Wikileaksid #131846 ?</small>
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Origin	EmbassyAddis Ababa (Ethiopia)
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/28/2017

TAGS: PHUM [\[Human Rights\]](#), MOPS [\[Military Operations\]](#), PGOV [\[Internal Governmental Affairs\]](#), PTER [\[Terrorists and Terrorism\]](#), ET [\[Ethiopia\]](#), SO [\[Somalia\]](#)

SUBJECT: OGADEN: COUNTER INSURGENCY OPERATIONS HITTING A WALL, PART II

REF: ADDIS 3365

Classified By: Political/Economic Section Chief Michael Gonzales for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Introduction: This report is part 2 of a two part assessment of the insurgency/counter-insurgency in the Ogaden. Part 1 (refTel) detailed the current conflict dynamics in the Ogaden; this message provides an analysis of the reasons behind the Government of Ethiopia's (GoE) and Ethiopian National Defense Forces, (ENDF) hard and rough response in the region. It also provides recommendations about a way forward for interaction with the GoE in the search for a sustainable resolution to insecurity in the Ogaden.

Summary

¶2. (S/NF) Although low-level ONLF-ENDF conflict has simmered for years, the ONLF's April 23 attack on a Chinese oil exploration site at Abole triggered the ENDF's shift to the use of extreme force trapping the civilian population between the insurgents and the government forces, and further stressing an already underdeveloped and historically marginalized region. In Post's assessment, unlike the

enduring insurgency, the Abole attack prompted such an extreme, visceral GoE and ENDF response because it threatened the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's (EPRDF) vision for economic development, it posed a fundamental threat to the GoE's authority, and it embarrassed the ENDF making the military and government appear to the outside world as unable to control and secure its own territory. Because, the GoE's core Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) sees in the ONLF an image of itself two decades ago when it overthrew the brutal communist Derg regime, Prime Minister Meles and his Chief of Defense Force, General Samora Yonus, consider it vital to eliminate the ONLF before this insurgent group gains wider support. For the GoE, the Ogaden counter insurgency operation is vital to the survival of the ruling EPRDF. Further, the Ogaden is closely linked to Somalia where Ethiopian troops are bogged down but where the ONLF receives support and safe haven from clans opposed to Ethiopia. Every major clan and sub-clan in Somalia is represented in the Ogaden.

¶3. (S/NF) Given the international media attention and the GoE's response, the ONLF must see that it has struck a chord with the Abole strike. As the international community in Addis recognizes that a sustainable peace in the Ogaden requires political accommodation between the GoE and Ogadeni people, they now face a time to decide if we should explore the possibility of facilitating such an accommodation or refrain to focus only on the humanitarian symptoms of the underlying conflict. End Summary.

ABOLE WAS DIFFERENT; IT'S THE ECONOMY

¶4. (S/NF) Economic Concerns: Being entirely dependent on petroleum imports -- which at the current historically high global prices cost Ethiopia over 75 percent of its export revenues -- Ethiopia is eager to exploit and commercialize its vast estimated oil and natural gas reserves, which mostly lie beneath the Ogaden area. Furthermore, in light of the

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EPRDF's vision for Ethiopia which includes a heavy government role in promoting & accelerated capitalist development,8 the GoE has found in China a cheap, eager, and reliable partner to implement infrastructural expansion without nagging about human rights, social equity, or environmental concerns. By striking a Chinese firm exploring for oil, the ONLF -- either intentionally or inadvertently) threatened two sacred tenants of the behind the government's economic philosophy. That the attack at Abole was one of the ONLF's largest attacks in recent years and shockingly successful -- even surprising the ONLF) posed a further, political threat to the EPRDF and its core TPLF.

¶5. (S/NF) Political Concerns: Not only was the brutal ONLF attack at Abole a brazen act, but it marked a more deadly departure from prior type attacks by the ONLF in the past. Further, the attack was an embarrassment for the ENDF, its failure to protect the oil project site and respond immediately against the attackers. More important, the ONLF attack came at a time when Somalia operations had the ENDF bogged down and extremists vowed to take the war to Ethiopia to cut off supplies and logistical support. The ONLF's public statement following the attack insisting that it would play a role in determining the future and economic development of the region was certainly perceived as a direct threat to the GoE's authority in the region.

IT IS A COUNTER INSURGENCY OPERATION

¶6. (S/NF) The Ethiopian leadership has stressed in public and in private that the Ogaden counter insurgency operation is critical to the security (and survival) of the government, and that the ONLF must be neutralized. Second, the Ogaden is very much tied to Somalia. The ONLF has safe haven in Somalia from clans opposed to the GoE. Prime Minister Meles points to the declaration by extremists in Somalia to take the battle into Ethiopia and argues that the infiltration into Ethiopia by extremist figures like Aden Ayrow justifies GoE's prosecution of a brutal and excessive counter insurgency operation in the Ogaden.

¶7. (S/NF) But the problem with foreign insurgents and extremists, including Eritrea's support for extremist activities in Somalia, are viewed in the context of supporting, or being supported by, the ONLF. The role Eritrea plays in Somalia, for instance, is probably insignificant. Although there is significant speculation and circumstantial evidence of Eritrean support, Post has received no explicit evidence provided by any source outside of the GoE that shows significant Eritrean support for the ONLF, and certainly no evidence of any notable increase in such support in recent months to prompt the observed counter-insurgency response.

¶8. (S/NF) For the GoE, the suspicion that the ONLF has possible connections with extremists and Eritrea underscore the necessity to eliminate them. Post has explained to the GoE that while the ONLF is not a terrorist group, we recognize the probability that there are some individuals within the ONLF that may be supportive of extremist groups. It is not the ONLF as an organization, but individuals within the group.

HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF?

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¶9. (S/NF) It is our assessment that Prime Minister Meles and the GoE leadership likely view the ONLF as a long term threat to the survival of the EPRDF government. A group from a region representing six percent of the population, the ONLF in many ways is similar to the TPLF, which represents seven percent of the population but was able to overthrow the previous Derg regime. It is apparent from our conversations that the Prime Minister, General Samora and other TPLF/EPRDF members view the military defeat of the ONLF now as critical to prevent it from posing a threat to the government in the future.

HOW THE GOE PERCEIVES THE U.S. ROLE

¶10. (S/NF) Ethiopian military leaders appreciate and take seriously our information sharing on international terrorists who have, and may again, operate in the Ogaden, like Aden Ayrow. They want to cooperate with us on counter terrorism activities because it is in their national security interests to do so. General Samora sees the counter insurgency actions against the ONLF as a key first step toward, and a logical extension of, our counter terrorism operations -) elimination of the ONLF will lessen insecurity in the Ogaden and make it more difficult, if not impossible, for the likes of Ayrow to continue to operate in Ethiopia. As such, the GoE would like to enlist U.S. support for Ethiopia's counter insurgency program. This poses problems for the U.S, which considers the ONLF a domestic issue, though elements of the ONLF may very well support extremist operations.

¶11. (S/NF) While Prime Minister Meles praises U.S. support for the ENDF, Ethiopia's position in Somalia, and Ethiopia's development, there are some within the ruling party's central committee who question U.S. relations. General Samora and others have been very clear in their criticism of the U.S. for our lack of support for Ethiopia's counter insurgency against the ONLF. TPLF hardliners have argued that the USG has collaborated with ONLF last year when CJTF-HOA civil affairs teams around Gode encountered ONLF elements at roadblocks but were allowed to pass unharmed. The May 2007 unauthorized diversion of a CJTF-HOA team into a restricted area of the Ogaden further fuels hardliners' conviction of USG support for the ONLF. Hardliners also point to ONLF fundraising in the U.S., meeting with members of Congress and their staffs, and relatively favorable New York Times reporting on the ONLF. This perceived lack of USG support undercuts U.S.-Ethiopia military relations.

WAY FORWARD: PROPOSALS FOR ADVANCING OUR INTERESTS

¶12. (S/NF) The core American interests in the Ogaden region are to prevent human suffering and protect vulnerable populations, ensure that genuine terrorists and extremists do not gain a foot hold in the region, and enhance regional stability and security. The current conflict dynamics, and particularly the humanitarian impacts of the counter-insurgency, fundamentally undermine all three of these objectives. We need to: 1) have a frank discussion with the GoE, in coordination with the international community, on Ethiopia's counter insurgency operations, noting that military action alone will not bring a lasting

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resolution, and 2) sustain a more comprehensive approach which includes a forceful and consistent emphasis on unrestricted humanitarian aid deliveries and on commercial food and livestock trade is essential. Finally, political dialogue with the ONLF could be key to resolving problems and opening political space with the people of the Ogaden.

¶13. (S/NF) The U.S. lead in pressing the Government to open corridors for humanitarian deliveries has met with modest success. The Ambassador passed a copy of General Petraeus, manual on counterinsurgency to the Prime Minister to emphasize U.S. best practices in mounting a counter-insurgency operation while mitigating negative

impacts on civilians. UNOCHA has negotiated opening of 174 feeding sites -) and there are indicators of agreement for access without military escort for roughly half of these sites -- and the World Food Program reports deliveries of over 9,000 tons of food in recent weeks, more than in the past three months. The international community credits the U.S. for its leadership in this effort, but more still needs to be done to avert anticipated mortality from the insufficient deliveries of food since April -- WFP assesses that 52,000 tons of food is urgently needed to meet the needs of the region.

¶14. (S/NF) Finally, the diplomatic corps believes the GoE needs to reach out to the ONLF. The ONLF has refused direct dialogue with the GoE and negotiations through Ethiopian Elders. Pressure and persuasion on the ONLF and private intercession with the GoE to secure their commitment to engage sincerely with Ogadeni leaders on a more sustainable political and economic accommodation may help facilitate a political process. If left unaddressed, the ONLF could forge alliances with, or draw support from, extremists from Somalia, perhaps ultimately undermining the GoE and the EPRDF's grip on power, U.S. interests, and security in the region.
YAMAMOTO

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Table with 5 columns: Reference ID, Created, Released, Classification, Origin. Row 1: 08ADDISABABA2290, 2008-08-21 07:32, 2011-08-30 01:44, CONFIDENTIAL, Embassy Addis Ababa

VZCZCXRO5400 RR RUEHLMC DE RUEHDS #2290 2340732 ZNY CCCCC ZZH R 210732Z AUG 08 FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1757 INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0459 RUEHNV/AMEMBASSY MONROVIA 1745 RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP RUEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 002290

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/RSA EPSTEIN, EAP/CM CARTIN, INR/B

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/20/2028 TAGS: PGOV PREL ECON ET CH SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: "WE'RE FOLLOWING CHINA'S MODEL"

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2234

Classified By: CDA Deborah Malac. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) At a hail and farewell on August 19 for Chinese Economic and Commercial Counselor Liu Yunbiao (reftel) and his replacement, Qian Zhaogang, Ethiopian State Minister for Trade and Industry Tadesse Haile extolled the close and growing commercial relationship between China and Ethiopia and said "We have to sustain high (economic) growth so we can be like China. We're following your (China's) model." Tadesse said that bilateral ties are entering a "mature" phase where both countries will be able to maximize the benefits of the trade relationship. For his part, Qian listed his priorities as facilitating government-to-government communication, working on behalf of Chinese companies, and increasing bilateral trade and investment.

¶2. (C) Emboffs attended the hail and farewell, hosted by new Chinese Ambassador Gu Xiaojie, at the invitation of the Chinese Economic and Commercial Office. Tadesse and ruling Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) heavyweight Sebat Nega were guests of honor. Approximately seventy Chinese diplomats and businessmen attended, along with a smattering of Ethiopian businessmen (no more than ten). Emboffs were the only non-Chinese, non-Ethiopian diplomatic or business representatives. ZTE Corporation, Norinco-Lalibela Engineering and Construction Company, Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd. and China Road and Bridge Construction (CRBC) were among the Chinese firms that turned out for the event. A Huawei employee confirmed that the company is struggling to find its niche (reftel), noting "To be honest, business is not very good. We're kind of at the bottom of the totem pole." A ZTE employee indicated that progress in updating the telephone infrastructure in Ethiopia was progressing at a very slow pace because, the employee said, Ethiopians are "lazy" compared with Chinese workers. The employee also noted that the Ethiopian government is consistently slow to approve ZTE project proposals and other suggestions.

¶3. (C) In a separate conversation (not at the hail and farewell), MFA Chief of Minister's Cabinet told Emboff that the Chinese have contacts with Ethiopian government officials at every level. "There is no one they do not meet," he said, adding, "but they never tell you what they think. Simply, they ask questions and get you to tell them things, then they go and make their decisions." Mid-October, PRC contacts told us they expect a very senior delegation from Beijing may visit Ethiopia in October. Embassy Addis Ababa will continue to track this and other developments and seek ways to build on the good communication enjoyed between the United States

and Chinese missions here in Ethiopia.

Bio Notes: Qian Zhaogang and Zhou Ji

¶4. (C) Qian arrived in Addis Ababa from Chongqing, where he accrued thirty years of expertise in commercial and trade matters. He speaks English confidently. Zhou Ji, a new political officer, also attended the event. Zhou speaks English haltingly but willingly. Zhou graduated from a university in Shandong in 2007 and joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing. He is from Jinan, the capital of Shandong province, and was transferred to Embassy Addis Ababa in mid-2008.

MALAC

Reference id	10ADDISABABA328 <small>aka Wikileaksid #249292 ?</small>
Subject	ETHIOPIAN OPPOSITION LEADERS VOICE CONCERNS ABOUT ELECTION PROCESS TO U/S OTERO
Origin	EmbassyAddis Ababa (Ethiopia)
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SIPDIS

NSC FOR MGA VIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2020

TAGS: PGOV [\[Internal Governmental Affairs\]](#), KDEM [\[Democratization\]](#), PREL [\[External Political Relations\]](#), ET [\[Ethiopia\]](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN OPPOSITION LEADERS VOICE CONCERNS ABOUT ELECTION PROCESS TO U/S OTERO

Classified By: Under CDA John Yates for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

¶1. (C) Leaders of the opposition Forum for Justice and Democratic Dialogue (Forum) coalition told Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero they had little confidence that Ethiopia's May election will be free or fair, and complained that their party activists are being harassed and imprisoned. The foreign relations head of the All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP), which helped draft the recently enacted electoral Code of Conduct (CoC), shared this lack of confidence in the election process but added that his party has had a reasonably positive experience working with the ruling party through the mechanisms established by the CoC.

¶2. (C) The opposition leaders urged the U.S. to publicly condemn what they viewed as a closing of political space in Ethiopia and to privately push the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) to address this issue. U/S Otero replied that the U.S. recognizes that political space in Ethiopia has become increasingly restricted and assured them that the U.S. would continue to press the GoE to ensure a truly free and transparent election, adding that senior USG officials were watching Ethiopia closely. Otero further encouraged the group to provide specific examples of harassment and intimidation of opposition candidates that the U.S. and international community could raise with the GoE. End summary.

¶3. (SBU) Visiting Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero met with opposition leaders on February 1 for 60 minutes. The Forum coalition was represented by three senior leaders: Bulcha Demeksa, Member of Parliament, Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM) Chairman, Forum Co-Chair; Beyene Petros, Member of Parliament, United Ethiopian Democratic Force (UEDF) Chairman, Forum Co-Chair; Seeye Abraha, Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) Vice Chairman, Forum Co-Chair. Yaicob Like, All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) Foreign Relations Chair, also participated. The U.S. was also represented by NSC Senior Director for African Affairs Michelle Gavin, DCM Tulinabo Mushingi, Pol/Econ Chief Kirk McBride, Otero Special Advisor Nicole Goldin, Otero Special Assistant Caroline Mauldin, and Pol/Off Skye Justice (notetaker).

Forum Leaders Share Grim Election Outlook

¶4. (C) Bulcha Demeksa, of the Forum, told U/S Otero that several of his party's candidates had been recently detained by authorities, despite GoE claims that there are no political prisoners in Ethiopia. The GoE will hold an election in name only, he said, and there is no excitement surrounding the election because everyone knows the status quo will not change. Bulcha said "foreign observers should have arrived two months ago," and criticized the European Union and African Union for yielding to GoE demands that they come later than originally scheduled. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has officials and informants from senior ranks of government all the way down to the family level, he said, and the people are afraid to challenge the ruling party. Bulcha criticized the recently enacted CoC as protecting the rights of only certain political parties, and said the Forum would prefer that only the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) govern the electoral process, rather than the structure established by the CoC. (Comment: The AEUP decision to engage the EPRDF and sign the CoC generated considerable animosity between its leaders and those of the Forum. This tension was evident during U/S Otero's meeting, as in Bulcha's comment on the Forum's disdain for the CoC, but the parties remained cordial throughout. End comment.)

¶5. (C) Seeye Abraha, also representing the Forum, noted the continued imprisonment of his UDJ party chairwoman Birtukan Midekssa, and expressed regret that "while the government purports to promote women's rights, it treats women who actually speak out for their rights with extraordinary brutality." He acknowledged that Ethiopia is one of the most

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stable countries in the Horn of Africa, but stressed that "security without democracy is not sustainable." Seeye said holding an election in the absence of respect for human rights, the rule of law, freedom of the press, and freedom of movement - as he assessed was the case in Ethiopia - is meaningless.

¶6. (C) Beyene Petros, also of the Forum, said the GoE's promises to engage in free, democratic discourse have been revealed as meaningless. In 2005, "the door was opened slightly, but has since been slammed shut." After that election, Beyene said, the GoE systematically enacted laws and restrictive parliamentary procedures, such as drastically reducing time limits for member presentations. Procedurally, he added, the EPRDF has made dialogue impossible. "My constituents paid dearly to get me elected," Beyene said, "and what to I give them back? Nothing. I cannot even speak on their behalf."

¶7. (C) Beyene added that he joined the Forum hoping that the EPRDF would negotiate on a broad range of electoral issues, but he has lost hope. The NEBE and public election observers are not independent, he said, but rather were previously registered members of the EPRDF. Foreign observers cannot hope to monitor the entire country, Beyene said, and opposition parties have insufficient access to the media. He said "EPRDF cadres in Eastern Wolaita" (Oromia Region) beat and vandalized the cars of Forum leaders - all senior parliamentarians - attempting to register candidates (septel). Beyene described the electoral process as "a fiasco staged for international consumption," and said the result would be the same as the 2008 local elections (in which the ruling party won over 99 percent of contested seats) unless the GoE makes a dramatic course correction.

AEUP Describes Modest Success with Code of Conduct

¶8. (C) Yaicob Like of AEUP, the largest opposition party to sign the CoC, had a different perspective. Yaicob said his party's experience working with the EPRDF under the CoC had "not been bad." After signing, AEUP submitted a list of 208 political prisoners to the Joint Council of Political Parties established by the CoC, and 118 of them have since been released. He added, however, that harassment and imprisonment of party members has continued. (Comment: When discussing the complaints his party had registered under the CoC, Yaicob referred to the Joint Council, EPRDF, and GoE almost interchangeably. End comment.)

¶9. (C) According to Yaicob, AEUP's office directors in the Amhara and Afar regions were recently beaten and imprisoned by EPRDF supporters and EPRDF-controlled security forces. He said the EPRDF was cordial in reaction to AEUP complaints about these incidents but slow to act. As a result of these experiences, AEUP formed a committee with the Joint Council/EPRDF to travel to Amhara and investigate specific cases. He said the EPRDF had acknowledged that 95 percent of

the AEUP complaints were meritorious and the two parties resolved them on the spot with only two party members in the region remaining in detention. Yaicob further noted that while his party has generally received sympathetic responses to its complaints from senior officials in Addis Ababa, those responses do not always translate to action outside the capital.

Forum Leaders Criticize U.S. Reaction to Abuses, Urge Action

¶10. (C) AEUP's Yaicob told Otero and Gavin that given an opening, the Ethiopian people are ready for change. In the past, he said, change has come quickly in Ethiopia, and with little formal organization. The 2005 election should prove to anyone that change is possible. The AEUP, he said, is ready to move forward under the CoC, and will hold the EPRDF to its commitments. The Forum's Beyene expressed concern with what he perceived as a U.S. message that change does not come overnight, noting that Ethiopians have been waiting for change for 35 years. The CoC "is merely window dressing," he said, and negotiation to date with the opposition has not been genuine, but undertaken by the EPRDF as the easiest means to seem cooperative without actually making substantive

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concessions.

¶11. (C) The Forum's Seeye said it was unfortunate that the world, and the U.S. in particular, were not speaking out about the abuses of the GoE. He reiterated that the Forum promotes peaceful change, but noted that other groups in Ethiopia are willing to overthrow the government by violent means. By participating in the elections, Seeye said, the Forum risks exposing its members to the same violent treatment they received in 2005. He urged the U.S. to continue pushing Meles to open political space in order to allow the Ethiopian people to participate in the elections without fear. He warned that the GoE was interested not in holding free elections but in legitimizing their rule, and the U.S. was perceived by the GoE as the main legitimizer. The Forum's Bulcha acknowledged that the U.S. "can't order a sovereign state to do anything," but urged the U.S. to take stronger action, given its status in Ethiopia. "You should speak out publicly," he said, adding: "People here want to know what President Obama thinks about Ethiopia. Even now, we don't know what the Obama administration thinks about our country."

¶12. (C) In response, U/S Otero told the assembled opposition leaders that the U.S. recognized that political space in Ethiopia was increasingly restricted, and those restrictions would likely continue until after the election. The Obama administration is working to open political space in Ethiopia and all over the world, she said, and our discussion with the GoE and EPRDF are by no means limited to security. Otero noted that during a two-hour meeting the U.S. delegation (to the AU Summit) had held with Prime Minister Meles the previous day, three-quarters of the discussion had focused on democracy. She assured the opposition that the U.S. would continue to press the GoE to open political space, and that senior State Department and administration officials were watching Ethiopia closely. Otero encouraged the group to provide specific examples of harassment and intimidation of opposition candidates that the U.S. and international community could raise with the GoE. NSC Africa Director Gavin quoted President Obama's Accra speech, relaying that governance is the keystone of U.S.-Africa relations, and other U.S. interests in Africa cannot be sustained without good governance.

¶13. (U) U/S Otero and NSC Director Gavin have cleared this message.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000291

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2020
 TAGS: PGOV [\[Internal Governmental Affairs\]](#), PREL [\[External Political Relations\]](#), PHUM [\[Human Rights\]](#),
 ASEC [\[Security\]](#), SO [\[Somalia\]](#), ET [\[Ethiopia\]](#)
 SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: FORMER ONLF LEADER URGES U.S. MEDIATION
 IN SOMALI REGION CONFLICT

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2977

Classified By: CDA John Yates for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

¶1. (C) According to a former leader from the early days of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Ismael Sheikh Abdi, continued conflict between the ONLF and the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) has resulted in the deterioration of humanitarian conditions in Ethiopia's Somali region over the past two years. Ismael said he believes the GoE-created obstacles to humanitarian assistance and trade with conflict areas has led to increased smuggling, raising additional security risks. He criticized the current ONLF leadership for planning and executing raids on humanitarian convoys and concludes that the ONLF's armed struggle is now doing more harm than good for the Somali population. Ismael speculated that the ONLF would be willing to negotiate an end to the conflict and urged the U.S. to mediate such negotiations with the GoE. End summary.

¶2. (C) During a late 2009 trip to Jijiga, capital of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State, PolOff met with Ismael Sheikh Abdi, an ethnic Ogadeni and former leader in the ONLF's political wing during the 1980s and early 1990s, i.e., before the ONLF split with the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). (Note: During the Derg regime, Ismael participated in the armed struggle against the government together with the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) led by present Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. In 1991 he was elected secretary general of the ONLF which, in alliance with the TPLF, effectively governed the Somali region until the adoption of the current constitution. When the EPRDF severed its alliance with the ONLF in favor of the Somali People's Democratic Party (SPDP), Ismael left the government and the ONLF. End note.)

High Expectations, Dashed Hopes

¶3. (C) In a 90 minute conversation, Ismael described the early days of the EPRDF government and the ONLF's role in governing the Somali region. He described strong cooperation between the ethnically segregated ONLF and the TPLF and an atmosphere of hope among Somalis that their participation in the government would lead to increased prosperity and

security. Even at that time, Ismael recalled, divisions within the ONLF and a lack of clarity on many policies -- particularly relating to autonomy, independence, and relations with Somalia and ethnic Somalis throughout the Horn of Africa -- strained party cohesion.

94. (C) Over time, Ismael said, ONLF leaders realized that Meles had no intention of granting them greater autonomy in any form - independence, semi-autonomy, or even greater power within the EPRDF - leading to the eventual departure of the ONLF from government, and its replacement with the SPDP. Ismael candidly described the bitterness and hostility that led many in the ONLF to return to armed conflict. He acknowledged that the ONLF has achieved very little, politically or militarily, after years of fighting. He said his own frustration led him to leave political life altogether.

Conditions Have Worsened, with Blame on Both Sides

95. (C) Turning to the present, Ismael assessed that years of conflict, repression, and withholding of needed development programs and funding had left Ethiopia's ethnic Somalis worse off than they have been in many years. He claimed the GoE's counterinsurgency tactics over the past two years in particular had crippled the local population. He cited many of the same GoE abuses as other regional contacts (especially ethnic Ogadenis) cited in reftel, including warrantless arrests, detention without trial, and extrajudicial killing. According to Ismael, the GoE continues to utilize tactics similar to those it used in the aftermath of violent ONLF attacks on a Chinese oil facility in April 2007, albeit with lesser visibility. Ismael said the only exception to the GoE's continued use of these tactics is village burning and

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rape, which have either ended altogether or reduced to such levels that indicate they are solitary incidents, rather than part of a coordinated GoE policy.

96. (C) Ismael said the GoE's concern that the ONLF is "taxing," stealing, and otherwise benefiting from humanitarian relief supplies brought into the region by the UN and NGOs is entirely legitimate, but he emphasized that it is the local people who are suffering from a curtailment of humanitarian assistance within conflict zones and the closure of trade routes between the Somali Regional State and neighboring Somalia. He added that with the formal closure of these routes, cross-border smuggling has increased, thereby raising the risk of illegal movement of people and arms across the Ethiopia-Somalia border.

Ismael: Somalis Want Peace, Prosperity - Not Independence

97. (C) Asked to describe the current policy goals of the ONLF, Ismael responded that he was not in direct contact with ONLF leaders, but said he believed most Ethiopian Somalis (including ONLF members and supporters) want to be able to trade legally and prosper financially, improve the quality of their lives, live in peace, and be respected by their government and military. They want an end to extrajudicial arrests, killings, and trade blockages. Demands for independence made by the ONLF years ago, Ismael said, were very different from its current agenda, and were in hindsight highly unrealistic. He underscored that the ONLF's armed insurgency, and the local population's support for the use of violence, is merely a means to an end; the end being peace, prosperity, and respect. While not optimistic that peace could be easily achieved, Ismael said if peace is achieved and the GoE promotes trade and development in the region, most ethnic Somalis would abandon the idea of independence or unification with Somalia.

98. (C) Ismael told PolOff he believed the ONLF would be willing to talk to the GoE and negotiate an end to violent insurgency if the situation in the Somali region improved. The GoE would have to recognize the ONLF as a legitimate organization, at least for the purpose of holding talks, if not as a political body. Ismael noted such talks would likely have to be facilitated by a third party who was respected and viewed as neutral by both parties. He stated that the U.S. was the ideal - and possibly only - candidate to facilitate such discussions, and urged the U.S. to consider taking on the role of mediator.

Comment

99. (C) Despite his former affiliation with the ONLF and strongly held views about the illegitimacy of the GoE's counterinsurgency tactics, Ismael was candid about the unrealistic nature of the ONLF's past demands, the ONLF's failure to achieve any appreciable military or political

success despite years of fighting, and the negative impacts of the ONLF's actions on the local population. It is unclear how much contact he currently has with ONLF leadership, and whether his assertions regarding the ONLF's agenda and desire for mediation represent their views, rather than views he or the local populace hold more broadly. End comment.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000371

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2020

TAGS: PGOV [\[Internal Governmental Affairs\]](#), PHUM [\[Human Rights\]](#), PREL [\[External Political Relations\]](#), KDEM [\[Democratization\]](#), ET [\[Ethiopia\]](#)

SUBJECT: FORUM PR CHAIR ON CAMPAIGN STRATEGY AND TIGRAY REGION

Classified By: DCM Tulinabo Mushingi for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

¶1. (C) Summary: Ethnic Tigrayan and opposition coalition "Forum" leader Gebru Asrat told Poloffs the Forum is taking its campaign message directly to the people to obviate distortion of that message through state run media. Gebru described the Forum's political platform as advancing freedom, promoting liberal democracy versus revolutionary democracy, creating an independent economy, and improving the quality of education. Gebru also reported instances of harassment directed toward electoral candidates, some of whom have resigned. Gebru said he complained to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), with no results. Arena Tigray members are working to advance the Forum's political agenda under difficult circumstances, but are determined to make a mark in the political arena. Even if Arena Tigray or Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) were to win one national level seat in Tigray, which is the traditional stronghold of the TPLF, it would be a tremendous upset for the ruling party. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Poloffs met on 4 February with Gebru Asrat, a member of the Arena Tigray opposition party and former President of Tigray Region, to discuss the political strategy and progress in candidate registration of Arena Tigray and the Forum. Arena Tigray is a member of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Forum) and Gebru is the Forum's Public Relations Chairperson.

Persistence in the Face of Difficult Political Environment

¶3. (C) Gebru told Poloffs the Forum does not expect free and fair elections, but decided to continue to run in the national elections. Gebru said it was time for Arena Tigray as part of the Forum to establish itself in the Tigray Region. Despite narrowing political space and inadequate funding, the Forum is finding ways to disseminate its message. According to Gebru, the party is meeting with its supporters face to face to ensure the party's message is received properly.

¶4. (C) Gebru told Poloffs that opposition parties do not have

adequate airtime in the State-run media and said he had "no trust in the Ethiopian media." Gebru said he believed holding meetings, distributing publications, and utilizing independent media was the best way to spread the Forum's political message. The Forum has already distributed roughly 10,000 pamphlets containing the Forum political Manifesto in Tigrinia language in Tigray region. Gebru said the party often relies on the sympathy of printers who will donate print runs free of charge.

Campaign Finance and Fundraising Efforts

95. (C) Gebru told Poloffs the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) informed Arena Tigray by letter on February 2 of its ten percent allotment of campaign finance funds totaling 8,000 ETB (USD 588). Each opposition party making up the Forum will be entitled to a similar ten percent share of campaign funding, plus potential additional amounts based on the number of seats they have in Parliament and the number of female candidates they field. Gebru explained that because Arena Tigray is a two year-old party, it does not have seats in Parliament, and has not yet recruited a significant number of female candidates, so it does not expect additional financing from the NEBE. According to Gebru, a small diaspora in the United States and in Europe provides the Forum member parties with "thousands of dollars" to use in the campaign. He did not specify an exact amount. Gebru told Poloffs that Arena Tigray has diaspora support in Virginia, Washington, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Illinois as well as in Norway. Arena Tigray is developing a website in Chicago to introduce the party to the diaspora community there. He added that Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ), also a Forum member, has the greatest number of diaspora chapters with a total of 17, and by implication, the greatest ability to raise funds from the diaspora. Gebru said the

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Forum plans to fundraise together overseas as well as domestically before the elections but hasn't yet done so. The Forum has already printed donation cards in denominations of 10, 50 and 100 ETB for the joint Forum domestic fundraising effort.

Forum Policy Objectives

96. (C) Gebru told Poloffs the Forum's political campaign includes promoting the necessity of freedom, which would allow people the choice of party membership, as well as liberal democracy, which would allow equal opportunity for all party members to participate freely in politics. The party also advocates for an economy that is not solely controlled by the state and is focused on improving the unemployment rate, reducing inflation, mitigating the consequences of droughts, and focusing on urban development. The Forum's political agenda also seeks to improve the quality of education by removing political activities from schools.

Arena Tigray Registers Forum Candidates in EPRDF "Home Turf"

97. (C) According to Gebru, Arena Tigray and UDJ are the only two Forum parties that will field candidates for the Forum in Tigray region. The two parties are allotted a total of 190 candidate spots, 152 for regional parliament and 38 for the national parliament. Gebru told Poloffs that so far Arena Tigray has filled 33 candidate spots for the national parliament and 82 for the regional parliament, while the UDJ has filled one candidate spot for the national parliament and two for the regional parliament. The Arena Tigray candidates are responsible for arranging meetings and for passing out publications on behalf of the Forum in the local Tigray woredas. Gebru is registered as a candidate for the national parliament in Mekele woreda.

Reported Harassment of Electoral Candidates in Tigray

98. (C) Gebru reported harassment of the Forum's Arena Tigray electoral candidates in the Tigray Region. Federal police allegedly stopped four candidates in Tekeze woreda and told them "not to run" in the elections and confiscated and burned their identification cards, rendering their chance to register null. The four candidates resigned. In Axum in central Tigray, Gebru said that federal police went to the house of a female candidate named Worknesh, who then resigned after they harassed her. Gebru also recounted that federal police visited a Muslim candidate at his home in Humera zone, which is in Northern Ethiopia on the border with Eastern Sudan, and confiscated his identification card. The candidate resigned from running in the elections. Gebru said he complained to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia

(NEBE), with no results. When asked if he registered his complaints with the Joint Council of Political Parties established by the Electoral Code of Conduct, Gebru said he was not aware of joint councils on the regional level and did not report the instances to the Joint Council in Addis Ababa. Gebru told Poloffs that Arena Tigray members, however, have not encountered problems with voter registration and the party is pushing its constituency to register to vote.

99. (C) Comment: Arena Tigray members are working to advance the Forum's political agenda under difficult circumstances. Although Gebru appeared discouraged by the narrowing political space and alleged harassment of electoral candidates, he seemed determined to make a mark in the political arena. Even if Arena Tigray or UDJ were to win one national level seat in Tigray, which is the traditional stronghold of the TPLF, it would be a tremendous upset for the ruling party. Gebru told Poloffs he did not want to focus on the reported harassment, but instead wanted to focus on the Forum's political strategy and policy objectives. Gebru recounted his days as a fighter against the Derg and told Poloffs that "if there is a will among the people, the people will support you."
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 002560

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STATE FOR INR/B

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/12/2018
TAGS: PGOV KDEM PREL PINR ET
SUBJECT: HAILU SHAWAL: NO NEED FOR COALITIONS FOR NOW

REF: ADDIS ABABA 1154

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Ethiopian opposition parties should "get their own houses in order" and not form coalitions at this time, disgruntled former Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) stalwart Hailu Shawal told the Ambassador. Hailu disparaged the efforts of other opposition parties and contended that his All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) was best positioned to challenge the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in the 2010 national elections, based on extensive and "quiet" grass roots outreach. Hailu said that reforms to the electoral process will be needed in advance of 2010 or "there will be no elections and no peace." EPRDF authoritarian tactics are creating rifts in the Ethiopian polity that could lead to disaster, Hailu charged, adding that the growth of Islamic extremism within Ethiopia poses the greatest threat to Ethiopia's stability. The Ambassador encouraged Hailu to reach out to the ruling party and other opposition groups to help create conditions favorable to peaceful, free and fair elections, and urged that the AEUP create an actual platform and proposed governance program as the party prepares for its national campaign. End Summary.

AEUP Will Be The Vehicle For 2010

¶2. (C) On September 9, the Ambassador met with AEUP Chairman and former CUD stalwart Hailu Shawal, who returned to Ethiopia in June after a year's absence. Hailu said that AEUP remains a registered political party in the wake of the post-2005 demise of the original CUD and that AEUP will be the vehicle by which he and his constituents contest the 2010 national elections. AEUP successfully held its party conference in Addis Ababa in June and 800 representatives from the countryside attended, according to Hailu. "It was encouraging," he added, "that despite jail (for AEUP leaders and supporters), and losing friends and property, they are still ready to (campaign)."

Hailu Rejects Coalitions

¶3. (C) Hailu made it clear that AEUP will seek to build a national base and will reject coalitions with other opposition parties for the foreseeable future. He assailed Birtukan Demeksa's new Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ)

party as "just a group of friends, with no constituents," and said the only UDJ member with whom he speaks regularly is Yacob Hailemariam. He added that he had no need to speak with Birtukan because "I (previously) suspended her from my organization (i.e., CUD)." "For the time being," Hailu said, "every opposition party should get its own house in order, then perhaps we can work together. Coalitions have problems if the members have not focused on (the needs of their own constituencies). (In 2005) I made mistakes and my constituents were angry with me because I forced the coalition. I won't do that again." Asked if AEUP would seek to work with the largely Oromo coalition known as the "Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia," Hailu said "I'm not ready to reach out to the Oromos yet, because the government will harass us."

Without Pre-Election Reforms, 2010 Will Be "Like Zimbabwe"

¶4. (C) Hailu said AEUP did not contest the April, 2008 local elections because at the time he was not in Ethiopia to organize a campaign and because "we knew it would be a joke." In the initial run-up to the 2010 national elections, AEUP's strategy will be to be "quiet." "It is no longer the time for big shouting matches," Hailu said, noting that AEUP will concentrate for some time on organizing and registering members zone by zone throughout Ethiopia, with particular emphasis on previously neglected communities in Afar and Oromiya. Hailu said there is not enough political space in Ethiopia for opposition parties, but added, "we have to make the space." He expressed confidence that, with persistence,

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the AEUP would be able to open local offices throughout the countryside despite EPRDF harassment. "I don't need access to television and media," Hailu noted, "that's not my strategy - but a (nonpartisan) election board and independent observers are critical. Without those elements, the 2010 elections will be another Zimbabwe."

Hailu Resurrects CUD's Eight Point Plan

¶5. (C) Hailu said that if the CUD's "eight point" plan from 2005 is not implemented fully, "there will be no (2010) election and no peace." Ethiopian elder Ephraim Isaac promised Hailu that the Elders process would create necessary dialogue between AEUP and the EPRDF, but Hailu remarked "I don't think (Ephraim) can deliver, but we'll go through with the process." Hailu said he has no plans to engage directly the EPRDF absent the Elders' mediation. (NOTE: The "eight point" plan sets forth conditions under which the CUD would join the Parliament: a restructured and independent National Electoral Board; free and accessible media for all political parties; a legal system independent of EPRDF influence; an independent commission to investigate "the June 8, 2005 killing of innocent Ethiopians"; politically neutral police and armed forces; the rescinding of Addis Ababa City governance regulations promulgated by the EPRDF-dominated Parliament; the release of all political prisoners and opening of opposition party offices; and the establishment of an independent commission to resolve the foregoing. END NOTE.)

EPRDF Authoritarianism

¶6. (C) Hailu charged that the EPRDF is politicizing formerly neutral, nonpartisan institutions, such as the university system, by, for example, forcing students to pledge allegiance to the EPRDF to receive slots or funding for their education. "It is cronyism over competence," Hailu said, adding, "I told our backers to go ahead and sign the pledge. No one can stop your minds and we (AEUP) know that you have to sign on to EPRDF only because you have no other choice. We know you still support (AEUP)." He also charged that the EPRDF is "wiping out" political opposition by creating "artificial leaders" down to the kebele level. AEUP does not seek to draw attention to these alleged tactics because reporters and others in the media are "scared, and pressured by the police."

"Ethiopia has Artificial Stability"

¶7. (C) "Legitimacy cannot be gained by the gun," Hailu said, expressing concern that the "cruelty" of pro-EPRDF local authorities is sowing the seeds for "retribution." "The Ethiopian people are suffering, things are going down, getting out of hand. 'Revolutionary Democracy' (the EPRDF's

ideology (reftel) is the same Leftist rubbish from the Dergue times. There's no transition to democracy. There's no bridge to capitalism. We have artificial stability in Ethiopia and what concerns us is what's festering underneath. When it explodes, it will be very dangerous. This country won't exist when it explodes." Hailu contended that "(AEUP) messaging can prevent chaos," but emphasized that EPRDF authoritarianism is "strengthening the enemy."

Hailu Plays The Islamic Threat Card

¶8. (C) Asked to define the greatest threat to Ethiopian stability, Hailu said the rise of extremist Islam is a clear and present danger. "The money is now in Muslim hands," he said, adding that "(the ruling) Tigrayans are fighting for their cut but they get very little. EPRDF companies are mismanaged and inanimate. Even backed by the Central Bank they have no capacity for management and are not growing." Hailu said Ethiopia's (traditionally moderate) Muslim communities are falling under the sway of "those who want to put Ethiopia under (extremist) control." He added, "Many are not aware of the (strength of) the Islamic movement and are not doing anything about it." Throughout the countryside, young Christian women are converting to Islam, Hailu alleged. The EPRDF takes no actions against Islamic extremists

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because, Hailu explained, "as a Marxist government they see religion as secondary, and they perceive the threat as long-term, not immediate. Also, they control the Orthodox Church and the Muslim Council, and therefore think they control the people. But clerics and priests in the countryside think very differently." Hailu added that "the (Ethiopian Orthodox) Patriarch is the most hated in living memory because of his ties to the EPRDF" and because the Patriarch is replacing Church leadership with Tigrayans. Hailu said Ethiopian Christians must work to appeal to moderate Muslims, but he worried aloud that, "when crunch time comes, the Muslims will band together." He described the imperative in "Clash of Civilization" terms, arguing that "Ethiopia is where Christianity and democracy have to stand firm; if not, forget about security along the equator. (Extremists) can travel freely anywhere in the Muslim world, which will stretch from West Africa to Indonesia. The tendency of Islam is dictatorial. (Christian countries) face a big contagion."

Bio Note: Hailu Shawal

¶9. (C) Now roughly 78 years old, Hailu walked with a cane due to recent back surgery that has not healed as well as he expected, and is still causing him discomfort. Hailu said that, while in the United States, he had been diagnosed with diabetes, but he is effectively managing the disease. He noted that he could not easily get the necessary medications (presumably insulin) in Ethiopia, but friends inbound from abroad bring him the prescriptions he needs.

Comment

¶10. (C) The Ambassador took every opportunity to impress upon Hailu the need to engage with other political parties and the EPRDF in order to steer the country toward greater political space in advance of 2010. He also underscored that the United States will continue to work to promote democratic gains and help build credible national institutions in Ethiopia, in the interests of long term stability. However, it is clear from the tone and tenor of Hailu's discursive remarks that Hailu is unwilling at this point to pursue meaningful dialogue with other stakeholders. Showing no signs of having moderated since he pledged to "bring down this government" on September 20, 2005, after losing the elections, Hailu remains politically hostile and wedded to a cult of personality politics in which he is unable to distinguish himself from his party. Despite minimal local evidence of continued public support for either Hailu or AEUP, in future meetings Post will encourage Hailu and the AEUP to discuss (and develop) an actual platform and proposed governance strategy. On the positive side, we are encouraged that Hailu believes AEUP will be able to open political offices and otherwise pursue its election strategy even in the face of EPRDF harassment. End Comment.
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001416

SENSITIVE SIPDIS

E.O.12958: N/A TAGS: KDEM PINR PGOV PREL PHUM ET SUBJECT: PARTY-HACK ANOINTED MAYOR OF ADDIS ABABA

SUMMARY -----

¶1. (SBU) Following its landslide victory in the April 2008 local elections, the ruling Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) appointed Defense Minister Kuma Demeksa, an opportunistic 50-year old party loyalist, as mayor of Addis Ababa. In a conference held at the City Hall on May 20, the EPRDF also selected the Deputy Mayor, as well as the Secretary General, the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the City Council.

¶2. (U) The 137 EPRDF city council members-elect appointed Kuma Demeksa Mayor of Addis Ababa in a ceremony held at the City Hall on May 20. Other EPRDF members selected for office include: Kefyalew Azeze--Deputy Mayor; Woizero Sinkinesh Atale--Speaker of the Addis Ababa Council; Elias Seid--Deputy Speaker of the Council; and Woizero Negede Lema--Secretary General of Addis Ababa Council. The EPRDF also selected ten heads of the various bureaus in the city administration: Abate Setotaw, Youth and Sports; Dulamo Otores, Education, Tsegaye H/Mariam, Justice and Security; Belaynesh Teklai, Finance and Economic Development, Fikru Merga, Trade and Industry; Getachew H/Mariam, Works and Urban Development; Daba Debele, Capacity Building; Dr. Hussein Mohammed, Health; Gebretsadik Hagos, Culture and Tourism; Ejigayehu Akberot, Women's Affairs. END SUMMARY.

BIO ON THE MAYOR -----

¶3. (U) The newly-elected mayor, Kuma Demeksa, a.k.a. Taye Teklehaimanot, was born in Oromiya Region of Amhara parents in 1958. He completed his elementary and secondary education in Gore town, Illubabor Zone of Oromiya Region. Kuma joined an elite police force in the early 1970's and was promoted to the rank of captain after the 1974 revolution that brought the "Dergue" military regime of Mengistu Hailemariam to power. As a member of the elite police force, Kuma served in Eritrea, where he was captured and made a prisoner of war by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) guerilla forces.

¶4. (SBU) In an agreement reached between Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and EPLF in 1981, the guerilla forces handed Kuma over to TPLF. TPLF "re-educated" Kuma and allowed him to join the Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement, EPDM (the non-Tigrayan, junior partner of TPLF). In 1990, Kuma Demeksa quit EPDM to form the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Oromo wing of EPRDF. When the EPRDF coalition came to power in 1991, Kuma was appointed as Minister of Interior in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991-1995). Kuma's leverage at the helm of the Interior Ministry was overshadowed by the effective control held by Tigrayan security chief Kinfe Gebre Medhin (assassinated in May 2001). When Ethiopia's federal government was established in 1995, Kuma was elected head of the executive committee of Oromiya Region. Kuma remained President of Oromiya region until July 2001.

¶5. (SBU) Kuma temporarily fell out of favor following the split within TPLF in the Spring of 2001 because he supported the dissident TPLF group led by Seeye Abraha, who was later jailed for six years for corruption. In July 2001, Kuma was officially removed from his position as president of Oromiya region and Secretary General of OPDO because of allegations of corruption, abuse of power and anti-democratic practices. He laid low for more than a year.

¶6. (SBU) In late 2002, Kuma re-emerged and was appointed as one of the three State Ministers at the Ministry of Capacity Building under the supervision of the austere party ideologue, Tefera Waliwa. He served as state minister until October 2005. Embassy contacts say that Kuma convinced the TPLF leadership that he had been "reformed" and demonstrated unconditional loyalty to the party while serving as State Minister under the watchful eyes of Tefera Waliwa. Kuma was subsequently appointed as Minister of Defense in October 2005 when Prime Minister Meles reshuffled his cabinet in the wake of the 2005 national election.

¶7. (U) Kuma has been married twice and is a father of seven, with three children from his first wife and four from his current wife. Kuma received his first and second degrees from the London-based UK Open University while working as State Minister at the Ministry of Capacity building.

COMMENT

¶8. (SBU) Kuma's critics describe him as a colorless party-hack who has "been everywhere and has reached nowhere." Kuma is quite and reclusive and rarely meets with non-party members. However, he is

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committed to the party and very loyal to Prime Minister Meles. Kuma is said to be a survivor because he respects authority, is reclusive and keeps a low profile. He is not well regarded in Oromiya region, where he served as President for over six years, and has been labelled indecisive and ineffective. Kuma's appointment as Mayor has puzzled many residents of Addis Ababa. Observers expected that the EPRDF would appoint a sharper and more apt Mayor to address the multi-faceted social, political and economic problems of the city in order to win the hearts and minds of residents who voted overwhelmingly in favor of the opposition in 2005, and largely stayed home during the 2008 local elections. END COMMENT.

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000745

SENSITIVE SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A TAGS: PHUM PGOV CASC PREL ET SUBJECT: LUCY CLAIMS ASYLUM

SUMMARY -----

¶1. (SBU) In a move that shocked the paleo-human rights community, Lucy -- the 3.2 million year old hominid fossil discovered in rural Ethiopia in 1974 -- claimed asylum in Seattle during the second leg of her North American tour. The move has illuminated socio-political dynamics among our ancestors and taken a political tone within the diaspora while also illuminating cultural quirks of twenty-first century American society.

POLITICAL OVERTONES -----

¶2. (SBU) Immediately upon issuing her asylum plea, Lucy became a cause celebre among the politically restive Ethiopian Diaspora who immediately began using the move for its own anti-government ends. Within hours the blogosphere erupted with comment. Dr. Hailu Hailu, President of the Washington State chapter of the Alliance for the Reliberation of Ethiopia said, "Lucy is proof of the Ethiopian government's mistreatment...when she got off the plane in the U.S., she was just a skeleton!" In a breaking news interview with Voice of America, the Ethiopian Ambassador said "whatever she said, she's lying." Hominid Rights Watch (HRW) posted a statement on its website noting "If she is saying that the Ethiopian government mistreated her, we support her."

A BARE BONES ACCOUNT -----

¶3. (SBU) While Lucy has attained global renown -- the first Ethiopian to adopt the Indonesian practice of going by a single name -- relatively little is known about her early years. Now that she has discovered language, however, Lucy is eager to share her story. "America truly is the land of hope and opportunity," she stated at a Starbucks store in Portland recently. "In a gesture of primate-hominid solidarity, a gorilla named Coco taught me to sign. Now, I can finally tell my story!" And telling her story she is...Lucy signed a deal with Scholastic Press for a biography to be ghost written by Kitty Kelly entitled "The Skinny on Lucy" to be released before the Christmas season.

¶4. (SBU) In an exclusive interview with Mother Jones' Bones magazine, Lucy shed some light on her tail. "When they assumed power in 3.2 million B.C., the Australopithecus Hominids' Liberation Front (AHLF) were brutal. They taunted us and called us 'primitive.' One of them singled me out, depriving me of food for what felt like a million years, until I was just ... bones. We tried to resist, but finally we were driven underground. But, still they walked all over us. Nevertheless, every few hundred millennia, I would poke my head out to see if the climate was more hospitable

to stand up for proto-humans' rights. One day, I tried to speak out, but this Australopithecus robustus took my mandible. Still, Homo habilis were the worst. They taunted me constantly with those opposable thumbs. First they would scatter a few vertebra here and there, but once they took my femur I could stand no more. I loved what Ethiopia used to be; I left my heart in Ethiopia. Actually, I left most of my body there."

CELEBRITY ATTENTION AND ADJUSTMENT CHALLENGES

¶5. (SBU) Since Lucy's asylum claim became public, she has received significant public attention as well as outreach of many kinds from various celebrities. On NPR's Morning Edition, Dr. Donald Johanson said, "What have I done? When I first encountered Lucy, she was raving something wild. I just thought she was just hopped up on khat, so I named her after this groovy tune on the radio. Had I only known what she has been through, I would have named her something more empowering, like Aretha." In a short-lived business endeavor, the dining chain TGI Friday's offered Lucy a role in a television commercial. Despite stressing that she "needed the bones," she turned the offer down noting, "I love the food, but it goes right through me."

¶6. (SBU) In a trying visit to Los Angeles, Lucy also found difficulty. "Walking down Rodeo Drive, Ms. MacLain kept asking me if I was sure we hadn't met before, while the self-styled king of pop kept offering to buy me," Lucy vented. "I went to Disneyland, hoping to get cheered up, but seeing those intact skeletons in the Pirates of the Caribbean ride just made me more depressed." "I've never been religious," Lucy admitted, "having been born well before we had religion. But, in an attempt to find solace, I visited a

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church. I ran into a group in the basement who greeted me with cheers when I said 'Hi, I'm Lucy.' Turns out the AA sign on the door did not stand for Australopithecus Aferensus!" "I finally felt at home in San Francisco," Lucy said. "The music is great, but I'm torn between the Oldies, Bob Geldof, and the Grateful Dead."

COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST

¶7. (SBU) Lucy stressed to PolOff that the trauma of being unearthed, then locked in a museum box for 24 years, only to be subjected to public gawking and political jockeying has left her feeling like a "picked over carcass." Post will continue to try to flesh out further details on Lucy's story and dig up any other skeletons in Ethiopia's proverbial closet. Still, in light of the fragility of this unique situation, Post requests that DRL and OES deploy a paleo-asylum review team to review Lucy's case.

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Reference id	09USUNNEWYORK857 aka Wikileaksid #227208 ?
Subject	(U) AMBASSADOR RICE'S MEETING WITH ETHIOPIAN PRIME MINISTER MELES ZENAM ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2009
Origin	USUN New York (United Nations)
Cable time	Mbn, 28 Sep 2009 09:46 UTC
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SUBJECT: (U) AMBASSADOR RICE'S MEETING WITH ETHIOPIAN PRIME MINISTER MELES ZENAWI ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2009

USUN NEW Y 00000857 001.2 OF 002

[#1](#). Classified by Ambassador Susan Rice. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d)

[#2](#). (U) September 21, 2009; 2:30 p.m.; New York, NY.

[#3](#). (U) Participants:

U.S.
 Ambassador Susan Rice
 Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson

Ethiopia
 Prime Minister Meles Zenawi
 Charge d, Affairs Negash Kebret Bortora

[#4](#). (C) SUMMARY. USUN Ambassador Susan Rice and African Affairs Assistant Secretary (A/S) Johnnie Carson met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on September 21 on the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). In an amicable discussion, Meles offered his thoughts on how Somalia,s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) can move forward and opined that the Government of Kenya,s (GOK) efforts to support a takeover of the southern Somalia port city of Kismayo from U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) al-Shabaab will fail. While noting that he values Ethiopia,s relationship with the Obama Administration and would like to continue its dialogue with Washington, Meles did not fully agree with the priorities laid-out by Ambassador Rice and A/S Carson concerning free and fair national elections, political space for the opposition, and an open economy. Meles said he doubted that Ethiopia,s border dispute with neighboring Eritrea would be resolved so long as Eritrean President Issais remains in power, and supported the idea of a new UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) sanctioning Eritrea for its illegal activities in Somalia and Djibouti. END SUMMARY.

 SOMALIA: THE TFG, AMISOM AND KISMAYO OFFENSIVE

[#5](#). (C) Meles summarized the current situation in Somalia by stating that &things are going as well there as can be expected.8 Meles said he believes the TFG will &hang on8 as long as the Ugandan contingent of the African Union

Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is present in Mogadishu. While stating that the September 17 suicide bombings in Mogadishu that targeted AMISOM's base at the airport & did not diminish the will of the Ugandans or Burundians, Meles commented that the Ugandans and Burundians are poorly trained and were not prepared for the September 17 suicide bombings.

¶6. (C) When prompted for his views concerning how the TFG can move forward, Meles said it is important that President Sheikh Sharif and the TFG work more closely with the Suffi religious group Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma; broaden its support base to include other clans, especially Hawiye sub-clans; seek additional Arab support, particularly from Saudi Arabia; and improve the recruitment and training of its security forces.

¶7. (C) Regarding the ongoing effort by the Kenyan Government (GOK) to assist certain sub-clans in southern Somalia in liberating the port city of Kismayo from al-Shabaab, Meles admitted that he discussed the issue briefly with GOK officials and does not think the GOK-led effort will be successful. He justified his conclusion by noting that it will be extremely difficult to unify the Darod/Marehan clan, as the GOK is attempting to do, and that the GOK and former TFG president Abdullahi Youssef previously attempted the same effort and failed. Meles expressed concern that the GOK may be supporting groups in its effort that are opposed to the Government of Ethiopia and that may also be opposed to the TFG.

DOMESTIC AGENDA

¶8. (C) Ambassador Rice stressed to Meles the importance of Ethiopia holding free, fair and transparent national elections, and of giving the opposition political space. She also highlighted the need for Ethiopia to open its economy, and A/S Carson urged Meles to focus specifically on the

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banking, finance, insurance and agriculture sectors. While stating that he does not necessarily agree with all of the priorities raised by Ambassador Rice and A/S Carson, Meles noted the need for continued dialogue between our two countries as he values Ethiopia's relationship with the Obama Administration. Particularly, Meles expressed an interest in broadening our bilateral relationship beyond the military and security fields.

ERITREA: BORDER DISPUTE AND NEW SANCTIONS REGIME

¶9. (C) Noting that there is a presumption, rightly or wrongly, that Ethiopia has not lived up to its international obligations in resolving its border dispute with Eritrea, Ambassador Rice encouraged Meles to take a fresh look at how to resolve the issue. Meles underscored his view that the border dispute is unlikely to be resolved as long as Eritrean President Issais is in power, as he is opposed to any Ethiopian leadership on the issue and is not likely to take further initiative himself.

¶10. (C) Ambassador Rice asked Meles, views on a potential UNSC resolution creating a stand-alone Eritrea sanctions regime, separate from the existing Somalia sanctions regime (UNSCR 1844) under which Eritreans can be designated for threatening the peace and stability in Somalia, and violating Djibouti's border, among other sanctionable actions. Meles strongly backs this approach.

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 003400

NOFORN SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/05/2017 TAGS: PGOV KDEM PREL ET SUBJECT: ANECDOTES ON RULING PARTY RIFTS

REF: A. ADDIS 3011 B. ADDIS 3188 C. ADDIS 1554

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) In a series of recent conversations with individuals close to the government and/or to individuals within the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition, we have heard reports of several looming rifts and internal tensions within each EPRDF sub-party. While we cannot confirm the truth behind these anecdotes as internal ruling party dynamics are among the most closely held Ethiopian secrets, each appears plausible and consistent with other personnel shifts in the recent past.

THE TIGRAYAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT (TPLF)

¶2. (S/NF) According to UK citizen Patrick Gilkes (strictly protect) who is now a strategic planning advisor to the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, in the summer 2008 TPLF party Congress, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi did not receive the most votes for party Chairmanship. Allegedly, former Mayor of Addis Ababa and currently the State Minister for Works and Urban Development Arkebe Equbay, long a TPLF Politbureau member, received more votes than both Meles and Seyoum Mesfin, the Foreign Minister and TPLF Vice Chairman. Gilkes argues that, recognizing the center of gravity surrounding Meles, Arkebe declined the party Chairmanship and Vice Chairmanship. Gilkes reported that the vote of dissent stemmed largely from lingering frustrations among the party over the still-unresolved territorial dispute with Eritrea over Badme (which the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission awarded to Eritrea in 2002, but Ethiopia continues to claim and occupy) as well as over the economic down turn which has taken a huge toll on the Tigray region.

THE AMHARA NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (ANDM)

¶3. (S/NF) Former TPLF Central Committee member and former Defense Minister Seeye Abraha told us on November 3 of an emerging rift in the senior leadership of the ANDM. Seeye, who despite being out of favor with the government retains a lot of long-held friends and contacts within the ruling coalition, suggested that Deputy Prime Minister Adissu Legesse and Advisor to the Prime Minister Bereket Simon feature prominently in an emerging &status-quo8 faction, while Capacity Building Minister Tefera Walwa may be prominent among a dissenting faction. The ANDM ousted Tefera from his Vice Chairmanship -- and according to some news

reports from the Executive Committee -- in September, replacing him with Meles-confidant Bereket Simon. Seeye suggested that the dissenters may be frustrated by the pre-eminence of the TPLF in the Ethiopian Government (GoE) and EPRDF without giving the ANDM a larger share of the pie. He also argued that on-going tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan, which has cost the Amhara region a large chunk of territory, combined with the GoE's response of sweeping the issue under the rug may be another aggravating factor driving the dissenters. Gilkes confirmed this information to Pol/Econ Chief on December 18.

THE SOUTHERN ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

¶4. (S/NF) In early 2006 as ethnic tensions in southern Oromiya and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR) began to erupt, the Sidamo people -- numbering roughly seven million -- began expressing frustration within the SEPDM and EPRDF about not having adequate representation in government. Patrick Gilkes argues that to placate the Sidamo, the federal government orchestrated the removal -- officially a resignation -- of ethnic Welayta SEPDM Chairman Hailemariam Desalegn as SNNPR Regional President in March 2006, allowing ethnic Sidamo SEPDM Politbureau member Shiferaw Shikute (alternate spelling "Shigute") to take over the post. While the move did respond to some Sidamo complaints, the Sidamo reportedly still feel disenfranchised by the fact that the GoE has not yet established the Sidamo region as a formal administrative zone, which would provide greater self-rule and access to targeted federal resource transfers. At the same time, while Hailemariam's move to an

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Advisor position, with the rank of Minister, within the Prime Minister's Office in April 2006 and as EPRDF Chief Whip in Parliament in November 2008 (Ref. A), maintained him in prominent positions, many Welayta allegedly still feel aggrieved by the TPLF for his 2006 removal from the regional presidency. Both Seeye and Gilkes suggested that the SEPDM's removal of ethnic Gurage Dr. Kassu Ilala, a former Deputy Prime Minister, Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister, and former SEPDM Party Chairman, may have also displeased the small but influential Gurage community.

THE OROMO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (OPDO)

¶5. (S/NF) Some have argued that the OPDO's backing of Prime Minister Meles in the 2001 TPLF split was critical to his survival and earned the OPDO Meles' debt. As reported in Ref. B, however, recent efforts to reconcile the banned Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) with the GoE appear to have spurred concern among the OPDO regarding the EPRDF's support for the party. The September return to Ethiopia of Ababiya Abajobir, and rumored plans for OLF former leaders Leencho Lata and Dima Negewo to return to Ethiopia in the spring of 2009, however, may cause further uncertainty within the OPDO in the months to come.

EPRDF-AFFILIATED PARTIES: FROM BENISHANGUL...

¶6. (S/NF) While the EPRDF is a coalition of the four, above-noted parties, several other parties have affiliated themselves with the EPRDF and vote as a block with the ruling coalition. While the EPRDF has not approved full member status to many of these parties, their loyalty to the ruling coalition has earned them a fair degree of autonomy to govern their more distant regions. In the far west, the Benishangul-Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF) has enjoyed broad discretion in administering its region. The outbreak of brutal ethnic conflict, apparently orchestrated by some Benishangul-Gumuz (B-G) regional officials against the Oromos outside of Nekempt town in May (Ref. C), however, embarrassed the central government. The arrest of the regional vice president in response to the clash presented a tolerable response by federal authorities. Gilkes, however, argues that the GoE's October 22 dispatch of National Security Advisor Abay Tsehaye, Hailemariam Desalegn, and then Federal Affairs Minister Siraj Fegessa to the B-G capital to force the resignation of regional President Yaregal Ayisheshum over the incident has sparked antagonism among the BGPDUF who resent the encroachment on their loyal autonomy.

...AND THE SOMALI PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SPDP)

¶7. (S/NF) An SPDP regional councilmember based in Dire Dawa

recently described for us SPDP intraparty tensions related to the SPDP leadership's adherence to EPRDF policies and practices. The councilmember said that "in general the (EPRDF established) Ethiopian Constitution is acceptable, but the reality on the ground is different. There is no intraparty democracy. The top leaders dictate, based on loyalty. If you criticize, you are branded as the opposition. Nor is there any intraparty dissent. SPDP leaders trample their own regulations and by-laws. If you point it out, they can sack you, prevent you from work, make you subservient." The SPDP regional councilmember said the SPDP leadership's autocratic tendencies simply reflect the EPRDF's authoritarian practices. "We are hoping for free and fair elections and a level playing field," he said, "but we are not there now. It would be better if Ethiopia followed global practices. The National Electoral Board is not free and fair. The recent census was sad and unreliable. I don't even know how many people elected me." The SPDP regional councilmember added that "The police should be independent, but they are not. They serve the EPRDF, not the public. If the ruling party tells them to arrest someone, they do; if ruling party says release them, they release them. The judiciary is also not free and fair and just does the bidding of the ruling party. People are prosecuted for their way of thinking, not their actions. The police trump up charges, such as 'colluding with anti-peace elements' and they can even revoke the immunity of regional councilmembers. Roughly 17 members of the Somali Regional Council are in jail simply

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for expressing their views. I asked (SPDP leadership): 'how is it possible the party can be judge, jury and executioner?' and they replied 'because we said so.' So, many of our regional council member self-censor."

¶8. (S/NF) The SPDP regional councilmember cautioned that many in the SPDP are beginning to resent the EPRDF and their own leadership. "The Somali region was historically neglected," he said, "but in the past 17 years there have been few tangible changes and lately conditions are regressing. The government has taken no action to solve the problem of water shortages. We are all nationalist Ethiopians but within the SPDP rank and file the mind-set is changing. Instead of cooperating and helping Somali Region development, the EPRDF (and SPDP leadership) dictates, arrests and intimidates."

COMMENT

¶9. (S/NF) Again, while we cannot independently confirm the anecdotes reported above, the corroboration of many by separate, unconnected sources and their correlation with other known developments renders them quite plausible. Independently, few if any of these dynamics is likely to pose an immediate impact on larger scale GoE or bilateral dynamics. At the same time, they do suggest an increasingly tenuous degree of tension at the center for the TPLF to hold things together. The competing priorities of clientelism and ethnic patronage risks the GoE (and specifically the TPLF) spreading itself too thin in responding to disparate demands without adequately being able to respond fully to any. Concessions within the ruling coalition also risks further squeezing the opposition to please allies, which may further contribute to the already palpable political tension in Ethiopia as we move toward the run-up to the 2010 national elections. As such, in the absence of outside encouragement for the GoE to ease the crack-down on political dissent, internal dynamics are likely only to lead the ruling party to pursue its increasingly fragile current approach to governance and control. Another concern is that Meles himself was almost overthrown by the TPLF Central Committee in 2001 and remains highly sensitive to criticism and changes in TPLF attitudes toward him. End Comment.
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 001770

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/25/2019 TAGS: PREL PGOV KDEM ET SUBJECT: MELES: ETHIOPIA FOLLOWING DIFFERENT "DEMOCRATIC" PARADIGM

REF: A. ADDIS 1347 B. ADDIS 1587 C. 2008 ADDIS 1154

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY -----

¶1. (S) Prime Minister Meles Zenawi told Ambassador Yamamoto on July 23 that Ethiopia is pursuing a "democratic" paradigm fundamentally different from that accepted by the United States. Meles stated that he rejects President Obama's assertion -- as posed in the President's July 11 speech in Ghana -- that "development depends on good governance" and democracy. Rather, Meles argued for economic performance-based criteria for assistance, as he asserted at the G-20 summit in April. Meles argued that history does not support this assertion and that this "Western paradigm" of democracy and development cannot be imported from abroad and applied to other countries. Meles argued that the United States' "old paradigm" is "wrong and closes off the emergence of organic democracy in Africa." The Prime Minister asserted that the United States' approach to development assistance through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) simply creates "another network of patronage" that prevents doing away with patronage in Africa. The Ambassador emphasized the United States' concern about Ethiopia's passage of restrictive laws (including those regarding civil society, the press, the financial services sector, antiterrorism, and political party registration) over the past two years. Meles responded that while the West may not appreciate these laws, they fundamentally expand possibilities for the people of Ethiopia and are not in conflict with Ethiopia's approach to democracy. The Prime Minister argued that the United States (and international community) must acknowledge that Ethiopia is pursuing a "rival paradigm" regarding democracy and development and the differences with the western paradigm are "fundamental, not technical." This fundamental schism between our "rival paradigms" further highlights the need for senior bilateral dialogue between the U.S. and Ethiopia as Embassy Addis has advocated (Ref. A). The Prime Minister's comments should serve as a foundation around which such a dialogue should be built and should inform how the United States engages Ethiopia in the future. End Summary.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR SENIOR BILATERAL DIALOGUE -----

¶2. (S) In his final call on Prime Minister Meles as Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Yamamoto noted the United States' interest in holding senior, interagency dialogue with Ethiopian officials this Fall. The Ambassador emphasized

that the existing tensions between our two countries are areas for discussion, but do not define our relationship. The Ambassador highlighted President Obama's comments in Ghana: Africa needs strong institutions, not strong leaders. The Ambassador suggested that senior bilateral discussions should focus on the nature and form of U.S. foreign assistance to Ethiopia, political stability in Ethiopia, and political space in Ethiopia -- particularly in light of a series of concerning laws passed by the Ethiopian Government (GoE) since 2005. The Ambassador noted that it will be important for the U.S. leaders to hear the philosophy behind Ethiopia's pursuit of these laws and whether they build or detract from strong institutions. He noted that if these laws, when taken together, close political space, it will be an issue.

THE WEST CANNOT IMPOSE DEMOCRACY ON OTHER COUNTRIES

¶3. (S) Prime Minister Meles responded that he agreed with President Obama's statement that Africa needs strong institutions, but disagreed with the president's argument that "development depends on good governance" and democracy. Meles argued that there is "no proof that democracy and/or good governance are either necessary or sufficient for development." He argued that "democracy and good governance cannot be imported" because such an effort would be "wrong" and would "close off the emergence of organic democracy in Africa." The Prime Minister argued that the United States' approach to development assistance through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is, in fact, attempting to impose a

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certain form of democracy on other countries and simply creates "another network of patronage." By doing so, Meles argued that the United States' approach actually "prevents doing away with patronage in Africa and impedes democratic progress." Meles continued to argue comments he made at the G-20 summit in London on behalf of the African Union: that economic performance-based must be the criteria for assistance and is a better measure of development.

ETHIOPIA HAS CHOSEN A "RIVAL DEMOCRATIC PARADIGM"

¶4. (S) Taking up the issue of laws recently passed by the GoE, Meles argued that "none of these laws restrict people's rights in any way," but rather that they actually "expand possibilities for the Ethiopian people." While acknowledging that provisions in these laws which western and donor countries perceive as restrictive are counter to, and in conflict with, the "old paradigm" of democracy, the Prime Minister stressed that they are not in conflict with democracy in Ethiopia. "Our approach is unified, not piecemeal, and these laws are consistent with our approach," the Prime Minister argued. Meles specifically stressed that the differences between these paradigms are "fundamental, not technical." As such, "it will not help if we address each individual issue (in bilateral discussions);" Meles said, "we must address our rival paradigms. Where we agree, we will continue. Where we disagree, it is fine, as long as (the disagreement) does not threaten (Ethiopia's) strategic interests." The Prime Minister went on to note that he "cannot imagine any action (by the GoE) that is not consistent with U.S. strategic interests." Meles went on to argue that bilateral dialogue should "leave out the minute policy issues" and stressed that we must discuss the fundamentals. "While you may not agree with us," he stressed, "you will understand where we are coming from, and vice versa."

¶5. (S) The Prime Minister noted that Ethiopia wants "a new paradigm in Washington regarding development" but lamented that the current approach is "well-entrenched." "U.S. assistance -- despite its many failures -- has delivered some help," Meles said, "but we know it can do much better." The Ambassador confirmed that Ethiopia will continue to be a focal point for many U.S. development initiatives, but stressed that the United States wants to move beyond the persistent delivery of food aid to Ethiopia.

LINGERING FRICTIONS

¶6. (S) Meles stressed President Obama's point that democracy is a process before venting about U.S. criticism of Ethiopia. "We do not accuse the U.S. of having a double standard, but we have problems when you mix apples and oranges," Meles noted. "The U.S. just does not acknowledge that we have made a different choice. We were created equal, so treat us

equal. Do not lump us in league with Sudan or North Korea." The Prime Minister noted that he understands that "some in Congress do not like us, but the Administration also has not countered that. Resolutions (critical of Ethiopia) pass Congress because the Administration does not push back." Meles argued that Ethiopia is in brackets with Sudan because of "unfair criteria." "If you used the same criteria, you would focus on others who are far below us, but they are ignored by Congress." Meles argued that President Obama says that democracy is a choice, but if it is imposed, that is a contradiction. "You should hold us to a standard consistent with the approach, and peer group, that we choose."

WE WILL NOT CHANGE OUR LAWS

¶7. (S) The Ambassador referenced his conversation with Meles Advisor Berhanu Adello, in which Adello suggested that the U.S. should relax its concerns over seemingly-restrictive provisions in recently adopted laws, as the implementation of those laws remains to be seen (Ref. B). Meles quickly contradicted his advisor with "regardless of their implementation, that does not change the content of those laws. Restrictions on foreign funding to NGOs is not going to change. Those with hesitations about the text of those laws will have problems with their implementation. The bulk of the criticism (about these laws) is about their substance

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and that is not going to change."

COMMENT

¶8. (S) In Ambassador Yamamoto's final call on Prime Minister Meles as Ambassador to Ethiopia, Meles finally acknowledged verbally Ethiopia's fundamental difference with western approaches to democracy and development. The Prime Minister's frank statements confirm Embassy Addis Ababa's consistent argument over the past two years: Ethiopia's political strategy is fundamentally different from any sense of "democracy" as commonly understood in the United States or western countries. Despite the second word in the GoE's prevailing ideology, "Revolutionary Democracy" (Ref. C) reflects an approach to governance and development that, while arguably FOR the people, is neither OF, or BY, the people. Instead, Ethiopia is clearly (through its actions) and intentionally (as confirmed by the Prime Minister) pursuing a top-down approach through which political, economic, and even social activity must be either directed or condoned by the government (and ruling party). That which is not will be suppressed. As we argue in Ref. A, this trend fundamentally has eroded stability -- and, hence, U.S. interests -- in Ethiopia. While we accept the Prime Minister's (and President Obama's) argument that we should not impose any system of governance on Ethiopia, it is critical for us to understand the deep differences between our countries and recalibrate our engagement to protect, and better advance, U.S. interests in this fragile region. End Comment.
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/30/2019
TAGS: PREL PGOV ASEC SU ET
SUBJECT: MELES ON SUDAN: ICC AND U.S. ENGAGEMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (S/NF) In a January 30 meeting, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles told Acting AF Assistant Secretary Phil Carter and AF/SPG Director Tim Shortley that with the expected ICC indictment of Sudanese President Bashir either 1) someone within Khartoum would take advantage of the move to attempt to remove Bashir, or 2) such an attempt will either fail or be aborted. While Meles gave the chances of success for option 1 as nearly zero due to the close knit ties among senior National Congress Party (NCP) officials, he argued that the result would leave the Bashir government a "wounded animal" that is more desperate. Meles argued that to the NCP leadership, their approach is "perfectly rational." He explained that the Government of Sudan (GoS) thought it had moved left bad relations with the U.S. behind when they signed the Naivasha Agreements, only to, in their view, have the USG move the goal posts As a result, Meles suggested that the NCP believes that the "U.S. will get them one way or the other" and if they see their options as either "to die today or die tomorrow, they will chose to employ delaying mechanisms allowing them to die tomorrow." As such, they have no need to resolve problems with the South because it will bring no benefit to them. Facing such calculus, Meles analyzed the GoS approach as to 1) postpone a vote on the South, 2) buy time in Darfur, and 3) "hope for a miracle in 2011." Meles suggested that if he were the U.S., he would either 1) remove the NCP regime or, if that weren't an option, 2) make clear to the GoS that the U.S. is not out to get it and explicitly lay out what is expected of the GoS on Darfur and the South to avoid continued challenges. End Summary.

DESTABILIZING EFFECTS OF ICC INDICTMENT

¶2. (C) Prime Minister Meles told Acting A/S Carter that the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of Sudanese President Bashir could provide a signal to someone in Khartoum to attempt to remove Bashir through a coup. Although noting that he has been hearing many rumors of such desires from within Khartoum, Meles said that he did not give too much credence to most of these, but highlighted the implications that such rumors have for the climate in Khartoum. Still, Meles argued that such an option, if attempted, would likely have a 100 percent chance of failing due to the close connections and mutual support for one another among senior NCP officials which would suppress any

coup attempt. If Bashir remains in power, either because no such coup attempt is made or an attempt fails, the indictment will leave the Bashir regime a wounded animal that is more desperate than ever.

THE PERSPECTIVE FROM KHARTOUM

¶3. (C) While acknowledging Carter's point that Khartoum's actions seem to undermine their own long-term interests, Meles argued that from their own perspective, the NCP's actions are perfectly rational. While the "Islamic agenda" may have motivated the regime ten years ago, today they are interested only in money and power, Meles posited. While the GoS thought that they had moved away from a climate of bad relations with Washington when they signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Naivasha, they perceive the United States as having shifted the goal posts on them since. As a result, Meles argued that the GoS believes that "the U.S. will get them one way or the other," and from that perspective, they are already in a corner. Believing they will lose, they perceive no benefit to them of resolving the problems of South Sudan. Instead, Meles argued that the NCP's strategy is to postpone a vote on the South, buy time on Darfur, and "hope for a miracle" in 2011. Seeing the U.S. position leaving them with the options of either "to die today or die tomorrow, they will chose to employ delaying mechanisms allowing them to die tomorrow."

¶4. (C) Meles was explicit that the GoS does not trust the United States, but acknowledged that "to some extent they are

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immune to" a rational discussion with clear benchmarks that allow them an out. Still, Meles claimed that the GoS has suggested that if they get a way out, they may take it. While acknowledging that the GoS "may try to string (the U.S.) along," Meles argued that the real issue is whether there is a possibility of U.S.-NCP negotiations. If that is an option, Meles advised, it could lead to rational discussions.

ETHIOPIA'S ADVICE FOR MOVING FORWARD

¶5. (S/NF) Meles offered that if he were the United States, he would look at two options. First, which he clearly conveyed as the preferred choice, would be to "remove the Bashir regime." Acknowledging that such an option was unlikely, Meles advocated for making a clear representation to the GoS that the United States is not/not "out to get them" and laying out clear benchmarks of actions expected of the GoS on both Darfur and South Sudan that would be necessary to "avoid continued challenges" with the U.S. Meles concluded the discussion by highlighting that "they don't trust the Obama Administration," and "they trust the Obama Administration less than the Bush Administration," and with a clear reference to U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice and former Senior NSC Director for Africa Gayle Smith "...especially some friends of mine."

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2019 TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM EAID ET SUBJECT: MELES COMPLAINS OF SHIFTING U.S. POLICY

REF: ADDIS 459

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY -----

¶1. (S/NF) Prime Minister Meles Zenawi called in Ambassador February 25 to discuss Ethiopia's perception that the U.S. has taken a tougher policy shift towards Ethiopia, stressing human rights concerns over shared objectives on regional stability, counterterrorism and development. The meeting reinforced Foreign Minister Seyoum's February 20 demarche to the Ambassador (reftel), protesting Congress's listing of Ethiopia among 20 countries, including Sudan, Zimbabwe and Iran, requiring congressional notification before development and other types of assistance can be disbursed. The Prime Minister said Ethiopia wants predictability in the bilateral relationship and clarity on where Ethiopia stands with the U.S. The Prime Minister went so far as to say that the head of the military, General Samora, and Intelligence Service chief, Getachew Assefa -- two hawkish, yet significantly influential, ruling party members on foreign policy -- lack the confidence that the U.S. shares Ethiopia's security concerns.

¶2. (S/NF) Meles echoed Seyoum's protest of their perception that the "listing" of Ethiopia with countries considered hostile to the U.S. in one short paragraph (section 620) of the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill passed last summer as confirming a U.S. policy shift. Despite the Ambassador's assertions that the Ethiopian Government is misreading signals that do not exist, some members of the powerful executive committee of the ruling party have met on how to respond to the perceived adjustment in U.S. policy towards Ethiopia. Foreign Minister Seyoum called for senior level bilateral meetings to get relations back on track. Such talks would be important for the U.S. side to make clear that talking about human rights and democracy does not detract from, but enhances, our common commitment to regional stability, security, and development. End Summary.

ETHIOPIA CONVINCED OF A U.S. POLICY SHIFT -----

¶3. (S/NF) Prime Minister Meles called in Ambassador for a private meeting February 25, to press Foreign Minister Seyoum's demarche to Ambassador the previous week, complaining of a perceived U.S. policy shift toward Ethiopia. Citing a short paragraph (section 620) buried in the middle of last summer's Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill that listed 20 countries requiring congressional notification before development and other types of assistance can be

disbursed. Meles, like Seyoum, complained that Libya, Sudan, and Zimbabwe were the only other African countries listed and that Iran and Cuba are also on the list. These countries oppose U.S. policy, and other countries on the list, except for Mexico, are not considered close allies of the U.S. Of all the countries listed, Meles noted, Ethiopia is the only country constantly and consistently referred to by senior U.S. military and civilian officials as a reliable core partner on counterterrorism and supporting regional stability. Ethiopia has consistently volunteered troops for peacekeeping operations in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Burundi, Darfur and now eastern Congo. Information sharing is one of the most robust on the continent and development assistance for Ethiopia from the U.S. is one of the largest in the world. Based on these factors, the Prime Minister expressed a mix of feelings from deep disappointment to confusion over Congress's inclusion of Ethiopia within this list in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill.

¶4. (S/NF) The Prime Minister said Ethiopia's inclusion in the section 620 language in this bill was not insignificant, but rather that it sends a clear message that the U.S. is taking a sharper and more pointed approach to Ethiopia that stressed human rights and democratic issues over shared interests on regional stability, security through a common counterterrorism agenda, and cooperation on development. The Prime Minister defended Ethiopia's human rights and democracy record. The approach is different but Ethiopia's position is based on clear legal terms and the rule of law that protects human rights and advances democracy, Meles argued. It may be applied differently from America's approach to democracy, but

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Ethiopia's values are based on core democratic principals.

A PREDICTABLE AND SUSTAINABLE RELATIONSHIP IS KEY

¶5. (S/NF) Meles said the U.S. is extremely important to Ethiopia for security and development. Ethiopia wants a predictable relationship, and a "baseline" of issues and values that does not change and is not questioned. Ethiopia thought the "baseline" was the program of information sharing, cooperation on counterterrorism issues, coordination on regional problems from Somalia to Sudan, and a common commitment to specific development goals and objectives. But if this "baseline" has now changed and the "baseline" includes U.S. doubts and questions about Ethiopia's human rights record and commitment to democracy, then this signals that Ethiopia is no longer a "core country" nor an important ally in Africa and the region for the U.S. Meles argued that America's new policy shift on Ethiopia is based on misinformation and misunderstanding of Ethiopia. Meles became agitated in defending Ethiopia's right to pass a Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO law) which sets limits and restrictions on civil society groups, to protect the people of Ethiopia from undue foreign influence on Ethiopia's political environment. He defended his government's record on democracy and human rights.

¶6. (S/NF) Meles said he and his government are not happy at being labeled and listed among very bad countries. He wants U.S. recognition that Ethiopia is a country committed to democratic values. This is the "baseline," not the questioning of Ethiopia's commitment to democracy and human rights. If there are differences over democratic and human rights issues, that would be acceptable so long as the U.S. accepted Ethiopia as a country dedicated to democratic values. The Ambassador pressed the Prime Minister and others as "misreading" and "misinterpreting" a short paragraph buried in the appropriations bill, and that Congress can, and does, pursue issues and raises views that are different from the Administration. The Prime Minister was convinced that while he understands the separation of powers, the U.S. always has a consistent foreign policy and it is clear to Ethiopia that Ethiopia is now being viewed differently and more negatively.

DOUBTS OF U.S. COMMITMENT TO SHARED GOALS

¶7. (S/NF) Meles changed the conversation to discuss the U.S. perception of Chief of Defense Staff General Samora and National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) head Getachew Assefa as "quirky" or anti-U.S. Meles underscored that both men support the important U.S. strategic relationship on security because the U.S. is critical to Ethiopia's security. But both men do not have the confidence and, to a degree, the trust of the U.S. commitment to shared goals and objectives on security. Meles reflected on the

2005 incident in which a CJTF-HOA force protection team from Camp Lemonier in Djibouti met with ONLF rebels in the Ogaden, near the Somali border. Meles also complained of a similar incident in 2007 in which a CJTF-HOA J2X team traveled to a "no-go zone" in the Ogaden and met with the ONLF as part of their force protection function. Meles argued that this indicated that the U.S. does not fully trust Ethiopia and may not fully share Ethiopia's views on security. Meles underscored that the ONLF is a threat to Ethiopia's security and so the U.S. should recognize this and accept it. The actions of the J2X raises issues of trust.

COMMENT

¶8. (S/NF) While Meles's comments about Getachew and Gen. Samora are clearly disingenuous, we do believe that this posturing reflects a genuine fear on the part of the GoE that this "shift" will weaken their position domestically and internationally, thus opening the door for their "enemies" to gain more power and/or traction. This is not an unreasonable conclusion on their part given the de facto cover that the USG has provided them over the past few years -- particularly after 2005 -- and what it might mean if that cover was reduced. We should expect that the general irrationality in their behavior will be amplified in their actions in the months to come as a result. We should also look for ways to

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use this fear to pressure the GoE to make the changes that we think they need to make to advance stability, democracy, economic growth, and sustainable development. Such an approach, however, will require a delicate balancing act.

¶9. (S/NF) Meles's message was clear. Ethiopia wants the new Administration to recommit to Ethiopia as a core country on security, regional stability, and development issues in Africa. We have explained to Ethiopia's senior government and ruling party leadership that we do share Ethiopia's goals and objectives but we also want a strong and stable government which depends on democratic values and protection of human rights. While the government may wish to ignore these topics, these are the very issues that Ethiopia's people want to discuss. Foreign Minister Seyoum's request for senior level bilateral talks makes sense not only in explaining misperceptions and misunderstandings, but for the U.S. side to make clear that talking about human rights and democracy does not detract from, but enhances, our common commitment to regional stability, security, and development. End Comment.
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 ¶E. ADDIS ABABA 1223
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 ¶G. ADDIS ABABA 381

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (S//NF) A paradigm shift must occur in the United States' discourse with Ethiopia on foreign assistance. Over the past year, the United States Government (USG) has delivered on all Ethiopian government (GoE) claims of "broken promises" in order to enhance the security of the Ethiopian state and to help Ethiopia combat terrorism. However, even as the USG met its promises and repeatedly addressed GoE priority requests, Ethiopia consistently rebuffed USG efforts to pursue other priorities, notably political and economic reform, and also turned down a significant number of programs designed specifically to enhance trust, communication and security cooperation between our militaries. The GoE even rejected many of the programs it requested. Specifically, the GoE barred the operation in Ethiopia of key USG implementing partners in democracy and governance, refused to cooperate with the U.S. Treasury Department on anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorism finance (CFT), failed to support USG efforts to launch a chamber of commerce, and rejected 29 of 41 security assistance programs, including three War College slots. At the same time, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) moved forward with increasingly statist and authoritarian policies and practices, to the potential detriment of Ethiopia's long-term stability (and thus USG interests). As a result, the foreign assistance conversation must now be framed as "Ethiopia's broken promises." Embassy Addis Ababa will make it clear to the Ethiopian government at the highest levels that the U.S.-Ethiopia strategic partnership requires reciprocity and that, for the United States, counterterrorism and security cooperation do not occur in a vacuum. The Ambassador will

take every opportunity to highlight for Ethiopian leadership the linkage between democratic governance/free market economy and social cohesion and stability, and urge the GoE to reconsider the current statist and authoritarian trajectory of its policies. End Summary.

Promises Met, Scant Reciprocity

¶2. (S/NF) For the past year, the USG worked diligently to strengthen mil-to-mil relations with Ethiopia based on shared interests in counterterrorism and regional stability and to address GoE perceptions of "broken promises" (Ref A). The USG has now delivered on every military promise made to Ethiopia, including delivery of C-130 parts, reimbursement for Somalia-related training and, most recently, support for Ethiopian peacekeepers. However, while U.S.-Ethiopia counterterrorism exchanges over the past year scored notable successes, such as unprecedented cooperation on Somalia, USG engagement has yet to produce reciprocal GoE cooperation in other key areas, most notably in Ethiopian political and economic reform.

Democratic and Free-Market Reforms Suspended

¶3. (S/NF) As the ruling EPRDF has consolidated and extended its authority (Ref B), the GoE has rejected a wide range of USG assistance programs, both military and non-military, and rebuffed programmatic efforts by USG agencies and other international partners to facilitate democratic and market-oriented reforms. Simultaneously, the GoE has

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accelerated statist policies and authoritarian practices. EPRDF moves to crush mainstream political opposition (Ref C) and tighten party control of the economy (Ref D) not only run counter to USG policy and interests, but also, potentially, risk Ethiopia's long-term stability.

Democracy: No We Can't!

¶4. (SBU) The EPRDF has sent strong indications that it is closing the door to multiparty democracy. In March, 2005, Ethiopia became the first country in 20 years to expel the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), effectively eliminating USG programming in political participation. IRI, NDI and IFES have not been allowed to return. Likewise, the National Electoral Board's refusal to take timely action to allow election observation training effectively sidelined the Carter Center from training the limited domestic observer organizations in the run-up to the April 2008 local elections despite the ready allocation of USD 1.358 million in USG funding and additional support from others. The EPRDF refused to participate in our Voluntary Visitor program planned in Fall 2007 on multiparty democracy for a cross-section of political party representatives. Finally, a draft civil society law currently under consideration would ban any foreign funded international or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from working to further democratic reform (Ref E). Ethiopia was until earlier this year the only African country to jam persistently Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts (and has done so off and on since the mid-nineties), as well as Deutsche Welle and occasionally the BBC, and in 2005 charged five American citizen VOA staff members with capital offenses for alleged support for opposition groups.

Mil-Mil Efforts, Other Security Cooperation Rebuffed

¶5. (S/NF) While Ethiopia willingly accepted USG equipment donations for its peacekeepers and reimbursement for some Somalia-related expenses, it has rejected 29 of 41 security assistance training offers designed to strengthen mutual understanding and enhance future cooperation, including three War College slots. The War College slots were offered in response to Chief of Defense Staff (CHOD) Samora's complaint that Ethiopian troops in international peacekeeping operations are commanded by non-Ethiopians because Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) officers lack War College experience. Ethiopia also turned down Special Operations Forces training, perhaps the only country to do so in the recent past, spurned a number of high-level seminars and turned down, by not acting on U.S. offers, Exercise Related Construction (ERC), Defense Reutilization Marketing Service (DRMS), and combat engineer assistance -- all programs

specifically requested by the ENDF.

¶6. (S/NF) The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) barred Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) civil affairs teams from the Ogaden in 2006 (they have not been allowed to return) and expelled United States Defense Department counterterrorism and border security trainers from Bilate and Hurso training camps in 2007, despite USD 3 million in USG-funded infrastructure upgrades at the camps. Earlier this year, the GoE rejected a USG-proposed bilateral agreement designed to address the threat of Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) in Ethiopia, and has repeatedly refused USG access to a North Korea-supported munitions factory in Ambo. The Ethiopians told the Embassy that they cannot support the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program due to their current military operations tempo, yet accepted some 60 training slots in Russia. Ethiopia also declined a USG offer of assistance for direct support for developing a non-commissioned officer

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corps. Finally, in another area of security-related cooperation, Ethiopian State Security refused Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) attempts to question a detained person of interest despite five weeks of FBI attempts to gain access to the individual.

Transparency and Reform Rejected

¶7. (SBU) The United States Treasury Department was forced to suspend its Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) intermittent advisory program after the GoE refused to take action to develop AML and CFT regulations and legislation despite ten months of negotiations with OTA (Ref F). Although the GoE signaled its interest in OTA assistance, Senior National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) officials declined every opportunity to support necessary reforms. Likewise, for more than a year the GoE has delayed the registration and launch of an American Chamber of Commerce in Ethiopia and rejected Embassy advocacy for the diversification of the telecommunications sector. By way of contrast, the GoE, consistent with its statist tendencies, over the same span awarded a Chinese company a USD 1.5 billion monopolistic contract for telecommunications, granted the Chinese government the right to develop a USD 700 million special economic zone for Chinese companies in Ethiopia, and announced that another Chinese company would be granted a no-bid contract to build a highway in Ethiopia.

Foreign Assistance Squeezed

¶8. (SBU) Even as the USG has directed significant resources toward Ethiopia to assist with HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, food security and disaster response, the GoE is raising numerous bureaucratic barriers for U.S. foreign assistance programs, deterring the efficient operation of USG implementing partners. Earlier this year, the GoE requested "re-negotiation" of Ethiopia's tax exemption for programs funded by U.S. foreign assistance. Without further dialogue or negotiation, the GoE has unilaterally begun taxing the approximately USD 700 million in U.S. Foreign Assistance-funded procurements and subjected implementing partners' procurements to full import duties, value added tax and additional taxes. The GoE now requires a USD 200,000 deposit by U.S.-funded NGOs into a blocked Ethiopian bank account before considering work permit applications for expatriate staff. The GoE has restricted access of USG-funded NGOs to conflict-affected populations in the Ogaden area of the Somali region and placed at least one American citizen working for an international NGO (INGO) under house detention (Ref G). As above, the draft civil society law proposes to restrict severely development-related projects by INGOs, including USG implementing partners. Already this year, the GoE has informed USAID that it will no longer register USAID implementing partners. Women's Concern International (WCI) and the American Bar Association (ABA) have both been refused registration in recent weeks despite being requested by the Ethiopian Parliament and Supreme Court respectively to provide assistance. The Foreign Ministry advised USAID that, notwithstanding the GoE's earlier request for judicial assistance, the ABA is a "consultant" to USAID therefore and USAID should arrange for ABA's phone lines, bank accounts and other basic services during the life of the three-year program.

Comment

¶9. (S/NF) A paradigm shift must occur in the United States' discourse with Ethiopia on foreign assistance. Over the past year, the USG has delivered on all GoE claims of "broken promises" in order to enhance the security of the Ethiopian state and to help Ethiopia combat terrorism. However, even as the USG met its promises, Ethiopia consistently rebuffed

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USG efforts to pursue other priorities, notably political and economic reform, and also turned down a significant number of programs designed specifically to enhance trust, communication and security cooperation between our militaries. The GoE rejected many of the programs it specifically requested. Effectively, the Ethiopian government cherry-picked areas and programs for cooperation at a time where the cross-cutting nature of political, economic and security concerns has never been more evident. At the same time, the ruling EPRDF moved forward with increasingly statist and authoritarian policies and practices, to the potential detriment of Ethiopia's long-term stability (and thus USG interests). As a result, the foreign assistance conversation must now be framed as "Ethiopia's broken promises."

¶10. (S/NF) Comment Continued: Embassy Addis Ababa will make it clear to the Ethiopian government at the highest levels that the U.S.-Ethiopia strategic partnership requires reciprocity and that, for the United States, counterterrorism and security cooperation does not occur in a vacuum. Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) Central Committee members, as well as ENDF leadership, often criticize the West for placing human rights and other conditions on the provision of military and economic programs to Ethiopia. They cite Israel, China and Russia as (more) reliable partners who provide affordable equipment, always deliver and never raise conditionality.

¶11. (S/NF) Comment Continued: The Ambassador will take every opportunity to highlight for Ethiopian leadership the linkage between democratic governance/free market economy and social cohesion and stability, and urge the GoE to reconsider the current statist and authoritarian trajectory of its policies. If the GoE persists in rejecting United States priorities in such critical areas as transparency (especially AML and CFT), governance (especially civil society support for political), market reform (especially necessary diversification) and security cooperation, the long-term risks to USG interests posed by robust support for the EPRDF government, as well as the level and breadth of our foreign assistance programs, may have to be reassessed. End Comment.
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2019
 TAGS: PHUM KJUS PGOV KDEM PREL ET
 SUBJECT: INSIDE ETHIOPIA'S JAILS

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Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Recent interviews with individuals who have been held in non-traditional detention facilities have shed anecdotal light on beatings and abuse by Ethiopian security officials against civilians in country. While we cannot confirm the scope or persistence of such mistreatment, these first-hand reports do offer a unique insight into abuse of detainees and dynamics regarding Ethiopia's non-traditional detention facilities. A handful of released political and other prisoners in Ethiopia have recently reported to PolOff that they and other detainees have been tortured in police station jails in attempts by security officials to elicit confessions before cases go to trial. Depending on the detainee, abuses reported include being blindfolded and hung by the wrists for several hours, bound by chains and beaten, held in solitary confinement for several days to weeks or months, subjected to mental torture such as harassment and humiliation, forced to stand for over 16 hours, and having heavy objects hung from one's genitalia (males). Based on what our sources have reported, torture seems to be more common at police station detention centers (most notably Ma-ekelawi police station in Addis Ababa), while less is reported at Kaliti prison. Released prisoners have also reported to PolOff cases of prisoners being detained for several years without being charged and without trial, prisoners held in jails despite having been released by the courts, and police interference with court proceedings. End Summary.

Eliciting Confessions from Political Prisoners

¶2. (C) Two political prisoners who were arrested for "inciting violence" following the 2005 elections described to PolOff various forms of torture to which they were subjected during the three months spent at Addis Ababa Police Commission's Criminal Investigation Division, located on the same compound as the federal police. In an effort to elicit confessions, police beat them, tied their hands and legs with chains, and tied a water bottle to the male prisoner's genitals. They were given one meal every two days, and were not allowed to shower or change clothes. The same sources told PolOff that three prisoners with whom they were detained (Tsegaye Ayele Yigzaw, Gedlu Ayele Hulu-Ante, and Argata

Gobeña Maru) died in jail as a result of the beatings, poor conditions and absence of medical treatment, and one pregnant woman (Webit Lengamo) miscarried after being severely beaten. They reported that many fellow prisoners (with whom they are still in contact) left prison with permanent injuries to the ears, heads, hands, legs, and/or genitals.

¶3. (C) The two prisoners referenced above have said they expect to be convicted at their next trial date on April 8. The prisoners said that police officers have testified that they had admitted guilt and that the police presented forged confessions to the judge. The prisoners deny having signed the confessions or admitting guilt. Under Article 27 of the Penal Code, a confession is sufficient for conviction (no evidence is needed). While out on bail, one defendant ran into a judge from the case and the judge told her, "we know what you did. We're just going through the procedures before we lock you up. You should contact Pastor Dan and start working on a pardon." (NOTE: Pastor Daniel Gebreselassie of Prison Fellowship is one of the "Ethiopian Elders" who helped to broker the pardon of political prisoners who had been jailed in the aftermath of the 2005 national elections. END NOTE.)

¶4. (C) One opposition official recently released on bail told PolOff that he spent one month and 18 days in Ma-ekelawi in a small, dark, 4x4 meter room with 12 other prisoners. He reported that medical treatment was not available, and prisoners were not allowed any visitors. He also said that the younger prisoners were beaten most severely, and then denied medical treatment. After the beatings the younger prisoners returned to the same cell where our source was being held. He reported that older prisoners (including him)

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were subjected to mental torture and certain kinds of physical torture, such as being forced to stand for several hours. The opposition official also said he was forced to stand for over 16 hours and when he collapsed, he was taken to a solitary confinement cell where he was held for eight days. According to him, a fellow prisoner claimed that he was forced to stand for 36 hours.

¶5. (C) According to a British national recently released from Ma-ekelawi, the jail is divided into two sections, the "open" side and the "underground" side. In the "open" side, there are 12 cells, six on each side of an open courtyard about two meters wide. There are eight toilets and two showers, for an average of 100 prisoners at a time. In the "underground" side, there are two types of solitary confinement cells. One type of cell is reportedly not physically uncomfortable, while the other type of cell is extremely small and prisoners are forced to stand.

Held Without Trial

¶6. (C) The opposition official mentioned above also reported that some prisoners told him that they have been detained for several years without being charged and without trial. For example, he spoke with four people who were arrested in Hargeisa, Somaliland two years ago and accused of being members of the Oromo Liberation Front, a banned insurgent movement. They have been held for two years without trial, and their families do not know of their whereabouts. Also, he spoke with one of four people who were arrested 14 years ago following the assassination attempt against Egyptian President Mubarak and held incommunicado without trial. Of the four, two have already died in prison and the two others are in very bad condition. A British national who recently spent almost one month in Ma-ekelawi jail reported to PolOff that several foreign prisoners (from Nigeria, Somalia, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Chad, Eritrea, Belgium, Egypt, Liberia, and the Congo) charged with overstaying their visas continue to be held at Ma-ekelawi after having been released by the courts. While both were still in jail, a Bangladeshi man told the British national that he had been released by the courts but continued to be held at Ma-ekelawi for three additional months. Also, several prisoners told the British national anecdotal stories of other prisoners' family members being forced to pay bribes to police to get prisoners released from Ma-ekelawi. One person told our source that her brother was in jail and had to stay there until they could figure out to whom they should pay the bribe. In another case a foreigner told our source that he was asked for a USD 50 bribe from the investigator in order to speed up the process.

Police Interference with Court Proceedings

¶7. (C) The British national reported that police from Ma-ekelawi deliberately tried to interfere with his court proceedings. After having been granted bail by the high court in the late afternoon one Tuesday, he was taken to the high court again on Wednesday morning, though he did not have an appointment. The police walked him around the court for two hours and then they returned to the jail. The British national feels that he was removed from the jail because his lawyer planned to come that morning with the paperwork to get him out on bail. Later that afternoon, he was taken against his will to the high court again, this time for a first hearing in his trial, which would make the bail he was granted the day before invalid. His lawyer was not informed of the trial and was not present. The British national feels the police deliberately dodged the lawyer.

Comment

¶8. (C) There have long been "reports" about the Ethiopian Government's propensity to detain individuals extra-constitutionally and extra-judicially, and the tendency of law enforcement and security forces to delay and interfere in judicial proceedings and harass detainees. Unfortunately,

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it is difficult to obtain corroborating information about the type of and extent of these practices, especially related to the allegations of torture. Individuals who may be subject to torture are most likely to be held indefinitely and incommunicado, and we have had minimal access to them to hear their stories. Our recent access to several former detainees, however, provides our most nuanced and in-depth insight into what has happened to at least some individuals. These reports underscore the continuing need to press the Ethiopian Government (GOE) to grant the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to all detention facilities in country and to maintain a dialogue with the GOE on human rights. To the extent possible, we will continue to gather reports from individuals who have spent time in Ethiopian prisons and detention facilities. End Comment.
YAMAMOTO



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Viewing cable 08ADDISABABA3011, PARTIAL CABINET RESHUFFLE

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08ADDISABABA3011	2008-11-03 08:09	2011-08-30 01:44	UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY	Embassy Addis Ababa

VZCZCXRO1376
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 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2616
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 003011

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O.12958: N/A
 TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM ET
 SUBJECT: PARTIAL CABINET RESHUFFLE

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) On October 30, the Ethiopian parliament approved the appointment of nine ministers presented by Prime Minister Meles. Five of the nine ministers were members of the former cabinet and four are newcomers. Four of the outgoing ministers remain without role in the government. The following individuals shifted position:

-- (U) Adissu Legesse - Deputy Prime Minister. Chairman and founder of the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) party within the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition, Adissu has been with the government since 1991. He served as Amhara Region president from October 1995 until his appointment as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in October 2001. Adissu will remain Deputy Prime Minister, essentially a ceremonial position, but has been stripped of the Agriculture Ministry portfolio.

-- (SBU) Berhan Hailu - Justice Minister. An ANDM central committee member, Berhan has been with the party since 1991. He served as head of the Information Bureau of the Amhara region from October 2001 until his appointment as Minister of Information in early 2006 replacing Bereket Simon. While many have viewed Berhan's position as Information Minister as merely a token after Bereket's initial May 2005 electoral defeat (he was later re-elected in the opposition-boycotted-by-election in August 2005), his appointment may be more an indicator of government dissatisfaction with departing Justice Minister Assefa Kesito over the roll-out and public engagement regarding the contentious draft civil society organizations proclamation.

-- (SBU) Siraj Fegesa - Defense Minister. A Central Committee member of the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) within the EPRDF since 2005, Siraj has served as Minister of Federal Affairs since October 2005. Siraj fills the Defense Minister position after a five month vacancy. While Ethiopia watchers had hoped for the appointment of a strong personality to counter the influence of the powerful Chief of Defense Staff Gen. Samora Yunus, the appointment of Siraj suggests business as usual with the military.

-- (U) Hailemariam Desalegne - EPRDF Chief Whip in Parliament. Chairman and Central Committee member of the SEPDM, Hailemariam was an academic and Dean of Arbaminch Water Technology from 1998 until his appointment as president of the Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS) in 2001. He became Public Organization and Participation Advisor to the Prime Minister in October 2005.

-- (U) Demeke Mekonnen - Minister of Education. A Central Committee

member of the ANDM, Demeke served as Secretary of the Amhara Region under Addisu Legesse from 1995 until October 2001. After 2001, he ran the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Bureau in the Amhara region until his appointment as Vice-President of the Amhara Region in October ¶2005.

-- (U) Junedin Sado - Minister of Science and Technology. A Central Committee member of the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO) within the EPRDF coalition, Junedin has been a member of OPDO since 1992. He served as President of Oromiya Region from October 2001 until his appointment as Minister of Transport and Communication in October 2005. There is debate as to the meaning of Junedin's move to lead Junedin will be the first Minister to lead the newly -formed Ministry of Science and Technology.

-- (U) Diriba Kuma - Minister of Transport and Communication. An OPDO Central Committee member, Diriba has been the North Shoa Zone Administrator of Oromiya Region until his appointment as Head of the Oromiya regional Agricultural Bureau in October 2005. New to the sector Diriba's portfolio will include the important telecommunications, aviation, and roads sectors.

-- (U) Muferiat Kamil - Minister of Women's Affairs. At the age of 32, Muferiat is the youngest of the newly appointed Ministers. She was born in Jimma from Silte Parents. She Graduated from Haramaya University with BSc. degree in Agriculture in 2000. She worked as the women's Affairs head of Silte Zone, SNNPRS from 2002 until her appointment as Public Relations Advisor to the SNNPR President in ¶2007. She was transferred to the EPRDF office in Addis Ababa in April 2008 and worked as a junior public relations officer until her recent appointment as Minister of Women's Affairs. She is a member of SEPDM.

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-- (SBU) Tefera Deribew - Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. An ANDM Central Committee member, Tefera has a Master's of Science Degree in Agricultural Economics with 14 years of grass-roots experience in agriculture and rural development. He worked as head of North Gondar Zone Agriculture Department from 1997 until his appointment as head of the Amhara regional Agricultural Bureau in October 2005. The separation of the Agriculture and Rural Development portfolio -- which includes responsibility for humanitarian disasters and relief efforts -- from the less accessible and effective Deputy Prime Minister Adissu, offers grounds for optimism that the Ministry may become more responsive to humanitarian issues. The move also likely indicates a lack of confidence in Adissu for his handling of humanitarian and disaster responses as well as less-than-targeted growth in agricultural productivity.

-- (U) Dr. Shiferaw Tekle-mariam - Minister of Federal Affairs. A Central Committee member of SEPDM, Dr. Shiferaw is an ethnic Hadiya who was appointed as State Minister for Health in April 2007. Prior to his appointment, he served as a member of the House of Federation where he was a member of the Standing Committee on Budget Subsidy and Revenue Affairs. He additionally served as the head of the SNNPRS regional Health Bureau from 2000 until his appointment as State Minister in 2007.

¶2. (SBU) Assefa Kesito former Justice Minister, Sentayehu Woldemichael former Minister of Education, Shiferaw Jarso former Chief Whip of the EPRDF at the Parliament, and Hirut Delebo, former Women's Affairs Minister now have no role in the government.

¶3. (SBU) EPRDF Foreign Affairs Department Head Sekutere Getachew informed Pol/Econ Chief on October 31 that in addition to these changes, the government will dissolve the Ministry of Information and re-mold it into a new Ministry of Public Relations. Sekutere confided that former Information Minister and current Public Relations Advisor to the Prime Minister Bereket Simon will be appointed as the first Minister of that to-be-formed Ministry.

COMMENT

¶4. (SBU) Following the Seventh EPRDF Congress in September, it was apparent that some members of the cabinet were out of favor. The Prime Minister as well as top leaders of EPRDF were displeased with the lackluster performance of some of the ministries and a reshuffle was anticipated. While the government has maintained the delicate balance among its ethnically-based EPRDF coalition partners, it is notable that none of the core Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) members were affected by the shift. The appointment of new Ministers of Agriculture, Transport and Communication, and Women's Affairs will hopefully breathe new life and responsiveness into those ministries. The injection of new blood will definitely invigorate the performance of the cabinet, but the appointment of very young ministers with little experience is a matter of concern to observers.



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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07ADDISABABA1277	2007-04-24 14:18	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Addis Ababa

VZCZCXRO5168
 PP RUEHROV
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 001277

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E AND DRL
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2017
 TAGS: PHUM PTER PGOV ET ER
 SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: RELIABLE REPORTS OF TORTURE OF SOME
 POLITICAL PRISONERS

REF: ADDIS ABABA 02629

Classified By: P/E Counselor Kevin Sullivan
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: In a recent meeting, respected local NGO leader Pastor Daniel Gebraselassie (strictly protect) confirmed reports by Amnesty International of arrests and police beatings of a group of teachers. However, he told Poloff and officials from European Embassies that the numbers were much larger than originally thought, and that the prisoners, who are all also supporters of the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy party, had been tortured by police using methods commonly utilized by security forces under the Derg regime. Though most of the prisoners were eventually released thanks to efforts by Pastor Daniel Gebraselassie, he fears their arrest is part of a larger GoE program to identify and suppress (illegal) opposition groups in the Oromiya and Amhara regions since the start of operations in Somalia. Pastor Dan suggested that such orders are not coming from senior leaders, but rather that these practices exist among lower-level security officials. Post is still trying to assess how widespread torture has been and to what extent senior officials were aware of it. In any case, Post intends to elevate human rights issues as a point of concern in all official Embassy meetings. END SUMMARY.

AMNESTY REPORT TOUCHES TIP OF ICEBERG

¶2. (S/NF) On January 4, 2007, Amnesty International issued a report that three representatives of the largest Ethiopian trade union, the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA), had been detained by police in December and had been subjected to torture in prison. The three were allegedly being held at Maikelawi, the central investigation bureau in Addis Ababa. Though the prisoners had appeared in court, no visitor had been allowed to visit them. (NOTE: The ICRC does not have access to federal detention facilities. END NOTE) The ETA is generally viewed by the GoE as having close ties with opposition political parties and has been subjected to harassment and arrests of its members since the EPRDF came to power in 1991 (reftel).

¶3. (S/NF) Pastor Daniel Gebraselassie (Pastor Dan) (strictly protect), head of the local NGO Prison Fellowship) Justice for All, and a close Post contact, was recently granted access to visit the ETA prisoners following persistent requests. Pastor Dan subsequently invited Poloff and

colleagues from the German, British and Dutch Embassies who represent a multi-Embassy human rights working group, to hear the findings of his visits. Pastor Dan, who maintains very friendly relations with the GoE, nonetheless said that 45 detainees in total were being held, not three as reported, and that 25 of them were representatives from the ETA. Others, he said, were simply factory workers or government employees. All of the 45 were being held on suspicion of involvement with the Ethiopian Patriotic Front, a rebel opposition group with alleged ties to Eritrea. However, the real common thread among all the detainees, according to Pastor Dan, was that they are Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) supporters, and come from Addis Ababa or the Amhara region - strongholds of CUD support. Pastor Dan told the group that some of the prisoners had been observers in the 2005 elections; others were CUD members and organizers, some of whom received support from CUD North America.

¶4. (S/NF) Over the course of several weeks, Pastor Dan (strictly protect), in collaboration with the head of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Ambassador Kassa Gebrahiwot, met with GoE representatives ("actors behind the scenes") to secure the release of these prisoners. Indeed, following their efforts, the first instance court ruled that there was insufficient evidence and ordered the prison to release them. Though the prison officials initially did not heed the courts ruling, continued pressure from Pastor Dan and Ambassador Kassa led to all being released. Four, however, have been detained once again on new charges that they are members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and currently remain in jail. Pastor Dan is working on their re-release.

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PRISONERS REPORT SEVERE TORTURE

¶5. (S/NF) Through meetings with these prisoners while detained and following their release, Pastor Dan learned that they were subjected to severe torture while in prison. (NOTE: Prisoners refuse to meet with Ambassador Kassa, saying that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission is not independent of the GoE. END NOTE) Pastor Dan told Embassy officers that prison officials used Derg-era techniques) e.g. hanging prisoners from the ceiling in arm shackles, beating the soles of their feet and hanging boards from their testicles) to try to extract confessions. One of the prisoners reportedly died from injuries sustained while in prison, though prison officials maintain that he is "sick in the hospital." Another of the former prisoners reported that when he was arrested, police dragged him out of his place of work and was pistol-whipped by plain clothes security forces on the way to the detention facility. The released detainees told Pastor Dan that others detained after them on similar suspicions are still held in Maikelawi. In follow-up meetings with prison officials, Pastor Dan was told that such reports are incorrect and that the prisoners were never tortured. However, in a meeting with the Federal Police Commissioner, he was told that some low-level interrogation officers lack the proper training and can sometimes use unsanctioned methods. Pastor Dan told the group of Embassy officers that "officials at the PM cabinet level" do not condone torture either, and that in the past seven years nearly 200 prison employees had been fired for improper behavior.

45 LIKELY PART OF INCREASED OPPOSITION ROUNDUP

¶6. (S/NF) In discussing the possible impetus to arrest these 45 prisoners, and others allegedly still held, Pastor Dan told the group that since around the time of Ethiopian operations in Somalia, the GoE has increased its operations against opposition groups in the Amhara and Oromiya regions. This corroborates the contentions Post has heard from Oromo political party members, many of whom accuse the government of using the OLF as an excuse to harass its members throughout the region. Pastor Dan also theorized that this activity would not end soon, as he said some are interpreting recent rhetoric from the GoE as prepping the public for military activity with Eritrea.

¶7. (S/NF) Clandestine sources have also reported large numbers of arrests in the December 2006 to March 2007 time period of CUD and alleged OLF supporters. Some of those arrested are brought to Maikelawi for interrogation. However, many opposition politicians maintain that many arrested in such suspicions are never brought to federal

facilities, and are instead handled at the local level. Clandestine sources also report that many detainees at Maikelawi are held for extended periods for interrogation prior to any court appearances, sometimes for up to a year. In addition, clandestine sources report torture of prisoners at Maikelawi, as well as the recent case of two suspects arrested on suspicion of links to the OLF who were shot dead in their cells after confessions were extracted.

COMMENT: RED FLAG FROM PASTOR DAN

¶8. (S/NF) Pastor Dan sits on the President's pardon board, and through his work with his NGO Prison Fellowship, is often given access to visit prisons when no other outsiders are allowed. Though some opposition figures believe he is too close to the GoE, Post has found him to be one of the few Ethiopians who can be truly be considered politically neutral. (NOTE: He is also one of the "Elders" that are leading negotiations with the CUD detainees. END NOTE) Post deems him to be a reliable source and his decision to brief a group of Embassy officials on this highly sensitive subject is noteworthy. During the brief, Pastor Dan was visibly upset in describing his discoveries and while he notes the need to act on this information, he recognizes that this is particularly difficult. Post and other Embassies, if addressing the issue, cannot name Pastor Dan as a source for

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such information without compromising the level of access he maintains. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission may be the only institution that can hold the government's feet to the fire for such activity. However, many do not believe the Commission is independent and that it would never implicate the GoE for torture. (NOTE: In a recent meeting with EU Ambassadors, the Commission declared that torture does not occur in Ethiopian prisons. END NOTE)

¶9. (S/NF) The GoE appears to be clamping down on the two groups that conceivably pose the greatest political threat) the OLF and the CUD. While elements of Eritrean-backed, armed, illegal insurgencies continue to operate in Ethiopia, as well as in Somalia, the legal opposition caught in the crossfire will suffer the most in this fight. Many reportedly moderate opposition members have been harassed or arrested on the accusation of being part of insurgent groups. If the general population is given no choice other than support of the EPRDF or illegal opposition groups, democratic development in Ethiopia will remain stalled.

¶10. (S/NF) Post is still attempting to assess how prevalent the use of torture is in GoE facilities, as well as whether senior GoE leaders are aware of such practices. Pastor Dan has suggested that high-level instructions for the use of torture were not given. Regardless, human rights issues remain this Embassy's top concern, and we will now go one step further and raise human rights issues in all meetings by Embassy officers regarding all matters, including assistance. In addition, we will discuss these incidents with EU colleagues in order to coordinate responses.
YAMAMOTO

Reference id	10ADDISABABA372 <small>aka Wikileaksid #249948 ?</small>
Subject	PM MELES PUSHES FOR UNITED STATES TO PREVENT GENERALIZED CONFLICT IN SUDAN
Origin	EmbassyAddis Ababa (Ethiopia)
Cable time	Mon, 22 Feb 2010 13:36 UTC
Classification	CONFIDENTIAL
Source	http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10ADDISABABA372.html 
History	First published on Thu, 1 Sep 2011 23:24 UTC
Media 	
Comments	0 Comments

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2020

TAGS: PGOV [\[Internal Governmental Affairs\]](#), PREL [\[External Political Relations\]](#), PTER [\[Terrorists and Terrorism\]](#),
 ASEC [\[Security\]](#)

SUBJECT: PM MELES PUSHES FOR UNITED STATES TO PREVENT
 GENERALIZED CONFLICT IN SUDAN

Classified By: Classified by CDA John Yates for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) During a February 1 meeting with U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Gration, Prime Minister Meles emphasized the importance of beginning post-2011 negotiations and convincing the Government of Sudan to accept the outcome of the referendum. He believed that an unsuccessful referendum could spawn generalized conflict across Sudan, and so the Darfur peace process must be sped up to reach agreement. In negotiating post-2011 issues, Meles said IGAD would support Mbeki's role on behalf of the AU, but that the United States must play a key role. Meles said that the United States had uniquely powerful influence in Sudan, but warned that internal divisions in the US Administration threatened to diminish its stature. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan General J. Scott Gration traveled to Addis Ababa from January 27-February 2, 2010 to attend the AU Summit with the U.S. delegation.

Referendum is More Critical than Elections

¶3. (C) Meles began by prioritizing the referendum over elections as the most critical issue for the future of Sudan. He believed the elections, while important, are not the definitive act of democratic transformation. The Government of Sudan, Meles said, believes it can win the elections fairly, and so they appear to have a stake in making the elections fair and transparent. The Government of Sudan also expects "serious dividends" out of the elections, such as easing the strains created by the Darfuri rebels and the International Criminal Court indictment against Sudanese President Omar el-Bashir.

¶4. (C) Still, Meles argued, the referendum is more critical than elections. Going forward, the post-referendum plan must be negotiated and the Government of Sudan must be convinced that separation is not only an option, but the most likely one. In the likely event of separation, Meles believed there

was a 90 percent chance the South would become a failed state.

¶5. (C) Meles said he raised his concerns during the AU Summit with the Government of Sudan and President Bashir, saying that the Government should work through post-2011 issues in advance and allow for the possibility of separation. Meles questioned Bashir's sincerity, but reported that the Sudanese President stated that he preferred unity, but would accept separation.

Referendum Could Spawn Generalized Conflict Across Sudan; Speed up Darfur Peace Process

¶6. (C) Meles warned that if the South explodes after the referendum, Darfur would follow. To prevent the referendum from spawning "generalized conflict" across Sudan, Meles said it is incumbent to address issues in Darfur now. He believed the 15 January 2010 agreement between Chad and Sudan represented a fundamental change in attitude, but that the agreement may not hold. Chad, Meles said, may not want to "bank on an agreement" and may "hedge its bets", which could be interpreted as hesitation in Khartoum, and the agreement could fall apart. To increase the likelihood that the agreement will succeed, Meles believed that Chad needed reassurances that the United States and others would handle whatever "regional consequences they fear" and primarily with Libya.

¶7. (C) On the Darfur peace process, Meles said that negotiations were hindered by inefficiencies that made it slow to reach agreements. To increase the efficiency of the process, Meles believed that (a) the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) must recognize that the 15 January Chad-Sudan agreement as a game changer and (b) "declare Doha a tremendous success, close it down, make it a sideshow if

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necessary," relocate talks to Darfur, and assign a deadline. Meles believed that moving the Darfur peace process to Darfur proper would help "clear the deck" and "get fingers out of the pie" by cutting out the meddling of the Qataris, Egyptians, and other regional players-meddling which Meles believe occurred because the United States was absent. The Government of Sudan, he said, was not enthusiastic about holding talks in Qatar in the first place, but allowed them because they did not want to offend the Emir and because they thought the Qataris could influence JEM to be flexible. He believed the if the United States could get the Europeans on board with the idea of relocating talks, then the Africans would also be on board, and the peace process could move more quickly.

Post-2011 Talks: Mbeki to Lead, IGAD Takes Back Seat

¶8. (C) Though both North and South say they are ready to negotiate post-2011 issues such as borders and citizenship rights, Meles said that "nobody would call their bluff or hold their feet to the fire." Therefore, he believed it was critical to get the parties to sit down and test their will to negotiate.

¶9. (C) On the role of IGAD in negotiating post-2011 discussions, Meles believed that IGAD needed to be involved, but that Mbeki could play the lead role on behalf of the AU and IGAD. He warned that unless the parties in Sudan know Mbeki has the backing of the United States, Mbeki would not make much headway. Discussing the background of AU and IGAD involvement in post-2011 negotiations, Meles said, was looking to have a say in the process and that IGAD, enshrined in the CPA, was simultaneously staking its claim. Despite some jockeying between the AU and IGAD, Meles said that "now it's no longer a game. It's serious: it's about making peace." He concluded that if the AU and Mbeki were present in negotiations, IGAD would take a back seat, but that the United States could not be absent.

US Holds Key Chips, but Internal USG Divisions Could Diminish Influence

¶10. (C) Meles believed the United States would play a critical role in these negotiations. He said both North and South are pragmatic and respect power, which they see in the United States and not elsewhere. For Khartoum, Meles argued, "the United States is the party to the conflict; the South is a sideshow." He explained that the real issue for the North is not just oil, but the haranguing of the United States about the South and Darfur. Meles concluded that the United States holds the key chips with Khartoum, but that it cannot successfully negotiate with the Government of Sudan without including the possibility of "getting the United States off their back," which Khartoum knows will not happen unless Darfur is also resolved.

¶11. (C) Meles said that the United States is being asked to step in so that Sudan has a real chance of avoiding

catastrophe. He emphasized that while African countries are not concerned that the United States will impose solutions, it should "back home-grown solutions with full force," including the AU High-Level Panel's report on Sudan, and play a quiet, but active role behind the scenes.

¶12. (C) At the conclusion of the meeting, Meles warned that internal divisions in Washington threatened to diminish US influence, and "the United States would be bit players like everyone else." Africans, he said, do not understand the full power of Congress, but worry about the unity of the executive branch. If they see that the Administration is behind the strategy and that "both feet of the United States are in the same place," they will ignore what advocates and some Congressmen are saying against the strategy and the United States will be able to assume a greater role.

Participants in Prime Minister Meles Meeting:

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¶13. (U) General J, Scott Gration, U.S. special Envoy to Sudan
Cameron Hudson, Director of Operations, Office of the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan
Miriam Estrin, Special Assistant to the Special Envoy, Office of the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan
Charge D'Affaires, Ambassador John M. Yates
Kathryn Pongonis, Deputy Political/Economic Counselor, U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa, Control Officer

¶14. (U) SE Gration's Office has cleared on this cable.
YATES

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Origin	EmbassyAddis Ababa (Ethiopia)
Cable time	Mon, 22 Feb 2010 09:42 UTC
Classification	CONFIDENTIAL
Source	http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10ADDISABABA365.html 
History	First published on Thu, 1 Sep 2011 23:24 UTC
Media 	
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000365

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2020
 TAGS: PREL [\[External Political Relations\]](#), MASS [\[Military Assistance and Sales\]](#), MARR [\[Military and Defense Arrangements\]](#), SO [\[Somalia\]](#), SU [\[Sudan\]](#), ET [\[Ethiopia\]](#)
 SUBJECT: PM MELES URGES U.S. TO PLAY STRONGER LEADERSHIP
 ROLE ON SUDAN

Classified By: CDA John Yates for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

¶1. (C) With few exceptions, Meles conveyed to visting AFRICOM Commander General Ward what has become his standard message on regional security: First, Sudan is the greatest threat to stability on the continent, and civil war there is Ethiopia's "nightmare scenario." Second, although al-Shabaab is weakened, Sheikh Sharif's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is Somalia's only hope, and is in desperate need of support. Meles urged the U.S. to play a stronger leadership role in Sudan, follow the road map established by the African Union, and encourage other international partners to play a supporting role. He told Ward the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is developing an accountability mechanism to boost donor confidence that donations to the TFG will be used as they were intended to be, and said IGAD is encouraging all donors to provide support directly to the TFG. Meles told Ward he appreciated the U.S.'s continued cooperation on security issues, and specifically thanked him for AFRICOM assistance after the crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight 409. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Visiting AFRICOM Commander General William Ward met with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on February 9 for 60 minutes. Meles was joined by Special Assistant Gebretensae Gebremichael. The U.S. was also represented by Charge John Yates, U.S. Defense Attache Col. Bradley Anderson, and PolOff Skye Justice (notetaker).

Appreciation for Strong Security Cooperation

¶3. (C) General Ward opened the meeting by expressing pleasure with the strong security cooperation between the U.S. and Ethiopia, thanking Meles for his assistance moving forward on 1206 programs, and expressing condolences over the loss of many Ethiopians on Ethiopian Airlines flight 409. Meles told Ward Ethiopia was grateful not only for planned assistance, but also for unplanned assistance, as in the case of flight ¶409. He said he appreciated the open communication the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) enjoyed with the U.S. regarding security matters, which helped the Ethiopian military function more effectively, and helped the two countries work more effectively together.

Meles Urges U.S. to Play Stronger Role on Sudan

94. (C) Asked by Ward to share his analysis of the way forward in Somalia and Sudan, Meles said: "The one that gives me nightmares is Sudan." Sudan "could realistically blow up within a year," he said, "and if it does, its impact will be many times bigger than Somalia." Reiterating what has become a standard theme, Meles stressed Sudan's history of extremism and jihadism, and strong impact on stability across the African continent. A peaceful divorce between north and south must be engineered before the 2011 referendum, Meles said, and tensions in Darfur and the east cannot be ignored. He added that beyond merely accepting southern independence, Khartoum must work with Juba to resolve resource, citizenship, and boundary issues before 2011.

95. (C) Meles strongly urged the U.S. to take a more aggressive stance leading the way forward in Sudan. Using a medical analogy, Meles said "there are too many doctors in the operating theater" that is Sudan, and "someone needs to be the lead surgeon." The U.S. must play a strong leadership role as it did with the CPA, he said, with other international partners "chipping in as needed." Meles added, "Every African's nightmare scenario is civil war in Sudan, and the U.S. should treat it as such." Asked by General Ward what resources were most needed to ensure peace in Sudan, Meles said the military and financial cost will be low so long as problems are addressed before a crisis. However, coordinating international partners will require major diplomatic resources, as the U.S. must tell other countries active in Sudan to step aside as the U.S. takes a more prominent role. Meles further urged the U.S. to move forward using the action plan set out by the African Union, adding that African leaders were fully supportive of that plan.

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Somalia is Less Worrisome, but TFG Needs Support

96. (C) Describing Somalia as "a known quantity" less worrisome than Sudan, Meles assessed that al-Shabaab had become more and more politically isolated, and had been hurt by the occupation of its "heartland" by moderate Islamist groups. Al-Shabaab's leaders are increasingly foreign, he said, and no longer have strong clan connections. The positive side of this is that weakened ties will make it easier to defeat al-Shabaab militarily, Meles said, while the negative side is that a group promoting an international extremist agenda will neither respect the will of the Somali people nor act with their best interests in mind.

97. (C) Meles reiterated the TFG's need for financial support, and criticized donors other than the U.S. for not responding to this need. He assessed that many Gulf states were not pleased to see moderate Muslims in Somalia allied with non-Muslims to fight against extremist Muslims they support, and were "neutral at best, and at worst working against peace in Somalia." Meles said Egypt was uncomfortable with the TFG's relationship with Ethiopia and Kenya, but the root of this discomfort was the Nile rather than conditions in Somalia. He assessed that the Saudis were waiting to see whether the TFG remains in power, but would eventually support it.

98. (C) Meles strongly criticized European nations for funding international and non-governmental organizations with massive overhead, and relayed that he had told Spanish Premier Jose Luis Zapatero "the cost of corruption in the TFG can't possibly be as costly" as NGOs. He noted that the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was developing an accountability mechanism with the TFG to give donors assure donors that funds they provide to the TFG would be used for the purposes for which they were intended. IGAD foreign ministers plan to travel to Europe in the near future to make the case for direct funding of the TFG, Meles said, and the decision by the TFG to hire an international accounting firm to monitor accountability should boost donor confidence.

YATES

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000797

NOFORN SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2019 TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM ET SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER MELES PRESSES ON HIGH LEVEL SENIOR MEETINGS AS CRITICAL TO THE HEALTH OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

REF: A. ADDIS 578 B. ADDIS 459 C. ADDIS 594 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY -----

¶1. (S/NF) After a brief meeting with Senator Inhofe and his delegation on April 7 (septel), Prime Minister Meles took Ambassador to the side and privately raised three issues: 1) the need to "improve" the State Department Human Rights Report (HRR), which he felt was filled with errors; 2) allegations that the U.S. Embassy leaked Ethiopia's draft counterterrorism law to Human Rights Watch (HRW); and 3) the need for senior-level bilateral meetings to resolve misunderstandings and enhance U.S.-Ethiopia relations. For his part, the Ambassador again raised U.S. objections to the Ethiopian Government's (GoE) re-arrest and pardon revocation of opposition leader Birtukan Midekssa. Meles replied emphatically that Birtukan's case is a criminal justice case that GoE leadership cannot get involved in. End Summary.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT -----

¶2. (S/NF) Meles requested that the U.S. Embassy discuss with the Foreign Ministry any and all allegations of human rights abuses throughout the year -- and certainly prior to the issuance of the annual HRR -- to ensure accuracy and, if there are problems, to allow the government to investigate and correct such abuses. Meles argued that much of the HRR is inaccurate with the United States covering its own failure to credibly investigate allegations by couching reports in language such as "alleged," "it appears that," "based on unverified reports." "The HRR hurts relations," the Prime Minister said, and he asked for the Embassy and MFA to go over this year's HR report and to hear the MFA's analysis of the report. Meles concluded that the vast majority of the HRR is misleading, inaccurate and draws the wrong conclusions. The Ambassador noted that the U.S. does not review the HRR with host governments prior to its issuance and normally does not discuss the content of the report, even as it is developed during the year, with the host nation. We can begin to consult the MFA on cases of concern and will review issues with the MFA.

THE DRAFT COUNTERTERRORISM LAW -----

¶3. (S/NF) The Prime Minister was concerned over the draft

counterterrorism law being leaked to Human Rights Watch, which drafted a scathing analysis of the draft law. The Prime Minister said it was a draft and still under debate. He said his officials told him that only the U.S. and U.K. were provided copies of the draft law and it was believed that the U.S. leaked the report to HRW. The Ambassador said he would investigate and get back to the Prime Minister, but assured that any information passed to the U.S. in confidence would be kept in confidence. (Note: We did share the text of the draft law with Washington agencies as well as with some other embassies in Ethiopia. End Note.)

SENIOR BILATERAL MEETINGS

¶4. (S/NF) The Prime Minister again requested senior level bilateral meetings to resolve misunderstandings and promote as well as improve bilateral relations (Refs A and B). Meles said he felt there was far too much anxiety on the Ethiopian side on the state of relations and direction of relations, and noted that bilateral relations were facing severe challenges which must be met, otherwise relations could sour and become contentious.

BIRTUKAN

¶5. (S/NF) The Ambassador raised the case of jailed opposition leader Birtukan Midekssa (Ref C) with the Prime Minister, repeating Washington's objection to her re-arrest and pardon revocation. Meles replied that Birtukan's is a criminal

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justice case and that it is a legal issue which he and his government cannot and will not get involved in. It is now with the justice system and it is the system which will determine her legal fate and treatment. He added that he will not, and cannot, release Birtukan yet again. Her release in July 2007 was her opportunity to start a new life. As he told Senator Inhofe earlier, Birtukan decided to politicize her pardon in 2007. Meles cut off discussion of the matter before the Ambassador could 1) request her release from solitary confinement, 2) protest plans to move her from Kaliti prison near the capital to Ziway prison three hours south of Addis, or 3) request USG or ICRC access to assess her condition.

COMMENT

¶6. (S/NF) Post is ready and willing to review the 2008 Human Rights Report with the Foreign Ministry as well as to relay specific and credibly allegations of human rights abuses with the MFA throughout the year as long as doing so does not pose further risk to victims. While we have no intention of pre-vetting future HRRs with the GoE prior to their release, raising specific cases could give the GoE the opportunity to show if/how seriously it investigates such claims and holds individuals accountable. While we do raise human rights issues, such as alleged abuses in the volatile Ogaden region, with the leadership regularly, this proposed approach would be more formalized and allow us to raise cases at a greater level of specificity. Our openness to such consultations would also allow us to put more pressure on the GoE to allow our human rights outreach visits throughout the country to go unimpeded.

¶7. (S/NF) Meles' increasingly aggressive responses to pro forma USG actions (such as the HRR, language in the 2007 appropriations bill, etc.) in recent months almost certainly stems from GoE anxiety over how the Obama Administration may engage Ethiopia. At the same time, the Prime Minister's obstinacy on cases like Birtukan's, the CSO law, mythic economic growth, and Ethiopia's human rights practices -- to name but a few -- genuinely reflect the GoE's entrenchment in the country's current trajectory which is increasingly at odds with U.S. interests and values in both the political and economic realms. As such, we continue to advocate for senior level bilateral meetings as soon as the AF Assistant Secretary is in place. They make sense and would help ease Ethiopia's anxieties and underscore our concerns as well as reinforce our support for the relationship. End Comment.
YAMAMOTO



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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000082

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DEPARTMENT FOR EEB/IFD/OIA - NHATCHER AND AF/EPS - AADLER

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: EINV ETRD ECON EFIN ET

SUBJECT: PRIVATIZATION OR MONOPOLIZATION IN ETHIOPIA?

¶1. SUMMARY: An examination of available information on privatized enterprises in Ethiopia shows that companies owned by, or affiliated with, Ethio-Saudi billionaire Sheik Mohammed Al Amoudi have purchased the vast majority (in terms of value) of enterprises. Nearly every enterprise of significant monetary or strategic value privatized since 1994 has passed from the ownership of the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) to one of Al Amoudi's companies. While the privatizations of these enterprises were for the most part competitive tenders, the dominance of Al Amoudi brings into question the true competitiveness of the process. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Privatization of state-owned enterprises began in 1994 when the Ethiopian Privatization Agency (EPA) began disposing of businesses either started by the GoE or seized during the Marxist Derg regime. While complete data are lacking, an examination of EPA's website along with press reports and other information provided by EPA reveals a pattern of nearly all enterprises of significant value being awarded to companies owned by, or associated with, Sheik Mohammed Al Amoudi, an Ethio-Saudi billionaire and the world's 80th wealthiest person. While the vast majority of enterprises in terms of numbers-- 233 of 254 -- have been either sold to employees in a Management/Employee Buyout (MEBO) arrangement or purchased by individual Ethiopians, these are mostly small shops and hotels. In dollar terms, nearly 60 percent of enterprises have been awarded to Al Amoudi-related companies.

¶3. According to information provided in December by EPA, 254 enterprises have been privatized to date, 21 of which went to Al Amoudi companies. EPA declined to give price information to post. However, based on information up to 1999 provided on EPA's website and press reports, price information was located for 19 of these, with a total purchase price of 2.34 billion birr, or nearly USD 254 million at the current exchange rate of 9.2 birr per dollar.

¶4. EPA informed post in December that privatizations have garnered the GoE over USD 460 million. Thus, the 19 Al Amoudi enterprises with price data available account for approximately 55 percent of total privatization revenues. Moreover, based on the price of similar enterprises, the two businesses lacking price data, a hotel and a meat packing plant can be estimated a 1.5 million birr or about USD 157,000. Even without precise data, it is clear that Al Amoudi has purchased the overwhelming bulk of value privatized thus far.

¶5. The enterprises purchased by Al Amoudi are wide ranging and held by a variety of companies affiliated with the Sheik. A list of enterprises and USD values at 9.05 birr per dollar follows:
 Purchased by Ethio-Leather Industry Company (ELICO)-
 Universal Leather (USD 1.76 million)
 Awash Tannery (USD 13.89 million)
 Ethiopian Pickling (USD 3.86 million)

Purchased by Equatorial Business Group:
Dil Paint Factory (USD 3.80 million)

Purchased by Ethio-Coffee and Tea Plantation and Marketing:

Wush Wash and Gumaro Tea (USD 24.36 million)
Gojjam Gonder Agricultural Development (11.28 million)

Purchased by MIDROC:

Ras Hotel Debre Zeit (USD 946 thousand)
Ethiopian Meat Concentrate Factory (USD 3.99 million)
Dire Dawa Meat Factory (USD 5.1 million)
Kombolcha Meat Factory (USD 1.68 million)
Melgue Wondo Meat and Vegetable Factory (USD 6.77 million)
Poultry Development Enterprise (USD 6.77 million)
Live Stock Market (USD 8.13 million)
Cheffa Farm (USD 873 thousand)
Gonder Meat Factory (price unknown)

Purchased by Moha:

Pepsi Bottling (USD 11.45 million)

Awarded to National Mining (NMC):

Legedembi Gold Mine concession (USD 140.30 million)
Abijata Soda Ash Factory- 54% share (USD 3.59 million- estimated
from press reports)

Purchased by Star Technical:

Addis Ababa Gas and Plastic Crates Factory (USD 2.44 million)
Wanza Woodwork (USD 3.48 million)

Purchased by Zewd Village:

Awassa Wabe Shabelle Hotel #2 (price unknown)

Additionally, National Mining was initially awarded a concession for the Kenticha Tantalum Mine at a price of USD 23.45 million. This concession was later revoked because NMC failed to deliver a scheduled payment. Currently, MIDROC is in negotiations with EPA to purchase the National Tour Operation at an unknown price.

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¶6. COMMENT: While companies related to Sheik Al Amoudi have purchased a small number of the total privatized entities, the Sheik has cherry-picked the best of the companies sold to date. For example, Legedembi is the only large scale gold mine in the country, and Wush Wash is the sole plantation-style tea producer. There are no overt indications of impropriety in the bidding process, and the Sheik is likely the wealthiest entity to have a significant interest in the Ethiopian economy. However, Al Amoudi is known to have close ties to the ruling TPLF/EPRDF regime, and rumors persist of favorable treatment. Regardless of these unproven accusations, the Sheik's influence in the Ethiopian economy cannot be underestimated. Post will continue to track privatization and monitor future awards for any indications of a more inclusive process. END COMMENT.



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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E , AND INR/AA LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER CJTF-HOA AND USCENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/13/2018 TAGS: PREL PBTS MOPS KPKO ET ER SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: PURGED AIR FORCE COMMANDER SAYS MILITARY SUFFERS FROM ETHNIC DIVISION

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reason: 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY. Alemshet Degiffe, an Oromo Major-General purged in 2006 while serving as commander of the Ethiopian Air Force, told the Ambassador on May 12 that the Ethiopian military suffers from ethnic division and Tigrayan dominance. Alemshet said Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles cannot afford to fight a war against Eritrea because the military lacks the will to fight and a war would exacerbate the growing cracks in the Ethiopian state. Lastly, he noted based on his continuing contacts with some military officials that the Ethiopian military was limiting itself to small-scale tactical operations in Somalia only and was not conducting any major offensive operations. END SUMMARY.

----- PURGED AFTER 2005 ELECTIONS -----

¶2. (C/NF) General Alemshet opened by explaining that he was "purged" from the Ethiopian military in 2006, in the fall-out of the 2005 national elections, while serving as commander of the Air Force because he was Oromo and that the government, particularly Chief of Defense (CHOD) General Samora, wanted him out. Alemshet said that although he had supported Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles in the 2001 split in the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) Central Committee, he had also been a supporter of ousted CHOD Lieutenant General Tsadkan and that Samora had never forgiven him for that. (Note: The Ethiopian military conducted a major purge of over 1,000 mostly Oromo officers from the military on ethnically based suspicion of their loyalty to the ethnic Tigrayan-led ruling party.)

¶3. (C/NF) After the 2005 elections, the government accused him of conspiring with the political opposition and claimed he was the leader of opposition activities within the military. Alemshet insisted that he had no contact with the opposition and to this day has no contact with them. He said after he was purged he was kicked out of his government house and that the Ethiopian security services followed him for six months. He stated that he is unable to get a job because potential employers fear retribution from the government if they hire him. Alemshet said some day he hopes to be a contributor again to his country, but for now, to stay safe and out of prison, he must keep a low profile and stay away from the opposition.

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¶4. (C/NF) Alemshet added that in the lead up to the 2005 elections the military expected a change in government and that the military would serve whatever government was elected. He noted that after the election the military understood that the Tigrayan government served itself and only itself.

ETHIOPIAN MILITARY SUFFERS FROM ETHNIC DIVISION

¶5. (C/NF) Alemshet said, "there is no one army in Ethiopia." He stated that the Ethiopian military was "built the wrong way" when the current government came to power and that it was fractured along ethnic lines. Alemshet, who fought in the 1977-78 Ogaden War, and against the Eritrean rebels, and later in the 1998-2000 Border War, said ethnicity in the military was much less a factor in the Derg army than it is now. He commented that the current government had 17 years of practice at "systematic segregation" and that they were good at it.

¶6. (C/NF) Alemshet continued that the Amhara and Oromo in the military know they serve the Tigrayan elite and not the broader interests of the Ethiopian state. He estimated that since the purge in late 2006, Tigrayans constituted 60-70 percent of the officer corps. He said the soldiers continue in military because they need the jobs to get paid. Nevertheless, he said they resent the way they are treated and they are unhappy. Before the 2005 election the soldiers voiced their complaints, but since the election they have

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learned to keep quiet or face discharge from the service or imprisonment.

¶7. (C/NF) The general thought that the status quo would continue in the military in the short term where soldiers accept their position and the problems with it, but in the longer term he did not know what could happen and he feared for the integrity of the army. He noted that every Oromo and Amhara soldier knows they have limited prospects for advancement.

"BORDER STATUS QUO WILL CONTINUE, WAR UNLIKELY"

¶8. (C/NF) Alemshet, referring to the Ethiopian military's deployment along the Eritrean border, said "the weapon is there, but its morale and political condition will not allow it to fight." He added that neither Eritrean President Isaias nor Prime Minister Meles can afford to fight a war. He said Isaias fears he would lose and Meles fears that the level of dissatisfaction in the military and the country is too high. Alemshet speculated that Meles fears a war could widen current Ethiopian "economic and political cracks" to where Meles could no longer hold the country together.

MILITARY ONLY CONDUCTING TACTICAL OPERATIONS IN SOMALIA

¶9. (C/NF) The Ethiopian military is limiting itself to tactical operations only in Somalia, Alemshet said based on continuing contacts with military officers, rather than conducting large offensives. He stated that most of the military's casualties were coming from ambushes and roadside bombs. He said that the army could deploy another one or two divisions from the Eritrean border to Somalia without weakening the border, but that there was no need for the redeployment because the army wasn't that active. Alemshet, who was involved in the initial planning for the Somalia operation, added that Meles never intended for a lengthy deployment to Somalia. He did not know how long the military might stay.

COMMENT

¶10. (C/NF) Alemshet's comments about the Ethiopian military provide a rare insight into an institution that is by nature secretive and difficult to access for outsiders. His reporting of widespread dissatisfaction for the Tigrayan dominated government within the military is consistent with the views of the government held by the broader non-Tigrayan population. The morale problems within the military are certain to worsen in the next several years unless the

government changes course and becomes more inclusive,
something that at present they appear to have little interest
in doing. END COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO



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Viewing cable 09ADDISABABA2126, RELIGIOUS CONFLICT FUELED BY GOVERNMENT

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VZCZCXRO6535 RR RUEHROV DE RUEHDS #2126/01 2450444 ZNY CCCCC ZZH R 020444Z SEP 09 FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6064 INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC RUEPADJ/CJTF HOA RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 002126

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/01/2019 TAGS: KIRF KISL PGOV PHUM KDEM ET SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS CONFLICT FUELED BY GOVERNMENT NON-RESPONSIVENESS

Classified By: ADCM Michael C. Gonzales for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary -----

¶1. (C) A recent visit by PolOff to Dessie sheds light on a violent clash that erupted between Orthodox Christians and local police in Dessie town in late June. The local government granted the Orthodox Church a plot of land to build a church in 2006, but later prevented Christians from building a church on the site after Muslims claimed it was their burial ground and located in a Muslim-dominated area. The Orthodox Church made several attempts to appeal to local and regional government, but the government did not follow-up in addressing their concerns. After three years of mounting frustration, Christians defied the government orders and proceeded to build a church. When police tried to stop them, violence erupted and police shot and killed three people and wounded ten. Both sides expressed dissatisfaction in the government's response to the situation, and blame the government for conveying conflicting messages to each side. South Wollo Zonal Administrator Seyoum Mekonnen claimed that "there was no conflict between the Orthodox Church and the government, and the problem is already solved." End Summary.

Land Granted, Government Reneges -----

¶2. (C) General Manager of the Orthodox Church for the South Wollo Diocese, Gebreselassie Belay (protect) told PolOff that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church began submitting requests to the government for a particular plot of land in Dessie in ¶1998. The government did not respond to the requests until 2006, when it approved the request in writing. (NOTE: PolOff observed the letter from the government granting the land to the Orthodox Church. End Note.) On June 21, 2006 the Church leadership planted a cornerstone at the site, and began fundraising to complete the church. One year later, they began construction of the church but were stopped by local authorities, who said they could not build there because Muslims claimed that the site is their burial ground. The local government offered to give the Christians another piece of land to build a church, but the offer came too late as construction was already underway. The local administration told the Orthodox Church representatives to air their grievances to Regional President Ayalew Gobeze in Bahir Dar. Ayalew said that he would come to Dessie soon to resolve the matter. After one year passed and he never came, Christians resumed construction of the church and were not impeded by local authorities.

Violence Erupts

¶3. (C) In April, 2009, Regional President Ayalew finally visited Dessie, accompanied by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Meles announced to the angry crowd of Christians that the local administration was at fault for being non-responsive, and that Christians and Muslims should discuss the problem together to reach a solution. The Christians and Muslims never discussed the matter, however, and one month later the zonal administration told the Orthodox leaders that the church would be demolished. Orthodox followers became very angry and requested permission to host a demonstration, but the zonal administration denied the request. On June 30, Christians organized a meeting at a downtown church to discuss a course of action. (NOTE: Orthodox leaders claimed that they were not involved in planning the meeting or the demonstrations that followed. End Note.) The Christian followers decided that they would finish constructing the church that very day, and collected 60,000 birr on the spot. They bought materials and began construction. Police did not take any action at first, but later blocked a truck carrying some materials to the church. An argument ensued and police opened fire, killing three people and wounding ten. The Ethiopian National Defense Force was quickly deployed to the region to restore calm. While the Orthodox representative claimed that Muslims attacked Christians who were forced to leave the church, a Muslim elder held that Muslims took no part in the violence.

¶4. (U) Following the incident, General Manager of the Orthodox Church in the South Wollo Diocese Gebreselassie

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Belay was arrested and charged with "being part of the demonstrations." He was released on bail after seven days, and no future court appointment has been scheduled. Nobody was held responsible for the three persons who were killed. Police continue to prevent people from visiting the church site, and construction materials have been returned to the Orthodox Church office. Orthodox Church leaders have again appealed to the Regional President, but have received no response to date.

Bad Feelings between Muslims and Christians?

¶5. (C) The land in question is reportedly a burial ground for Muslims. A Muslim elder claimed that the plot of land is located in an area where 99 percent of residents are Muslim. He said that Muslims do not understand why the Christians want to build a church in a Muslim-dominated area. He further explained that the conflict was not between the Muslims and Christians, but rather that each group blames the government for giving conflicting messages to either side. He said that Muslims and Christians continue to be friendly and neighborly towards each other.

¶6. (C) The Dessie area is traditionally very religiously tolerant, and is one of the only places in the country where mixed marriages are common and tolerated. However, Orthodox General Manager Gebreselassie expressed some discontent, stating that while formerly Orthodox leaders had a good relationship with Muslim leaders, they no longer have contact with them. He also pointed out that while there are 130,000 members of the Orthodox Church, there are only 14 churches in Dessie. He contrasted this with figures of 49 mosques for 75,000 Muslims.

Comment

¶7. (C) The non-responsiveness of the government to resolve the land dispute led Christians to resort to defying local authorities in order to build the church. It is difficult to determine why the government failed to respond to the issue, as it is usually quite proactive in resolving religious matters, as demonstrated earlier this year when the government initiated a series of interfaith dialogues following a religious conflict in Gonder. The Prime Minister was conspicuously silent on the issue once the conflict erupted, though he had intervened earlier and his directives were essentially ignored by the local administration. Though there seems to be some animosity on the part of the Christians towards the Muslims, it seems that most anger is directed towards the government. The long-standing harmonious relationship between Christians and Muslims in Dessie seems to have been preserved, indicating a high level of tolerance that is not easily shattered. End Comment.
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DEPARTMENT FOR CA/VO/L/A:JGORSKY, CA/VO/L/C, CA/FO JSTUFT, AF/E AND DRL:S.JOSEPH LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER CJTF-HOA AND USCENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/23/2017
TAGS: CVIS PHUM KJUS KDEM PGOV ET
SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR ADVISORY OPINION: PARDONED ETHIOPIAN OPPOSITION LEADERS

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 02284 AND PREVIOUS
B. STATE 107869

ADDIS ABAB 00002635 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: ACTING DCM: MICHAEL C. GONZALES FOR REASON 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Per 9FAM 40.21(a) N10 "Political Offenses," Post requests formal determination from CA/VO/L/A that the convictions of Birtukan Mideksa, Gizachew Shiferaw, Hailu Araya and Biruk Kebede constitute "political offenses." These individuals have applied for NIVs, but are pending review due to prior criminal convictions. The applicants are leaders of Ethiopia's largest opposition party, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), and were accused, convicted, sentenced and pardoned for several crimes in a trial (ref A) deemed as entirely political by Post and many others in the international community. Post requests that these convictions on purely political charges not interfere with their visa applications as they can be deemed as "obviously based on fabricated charges."

¶2. (SBU) These four individuals applied for NIV visas on August 22, 2007.

¶3. (C) A similar request was made for reinstatement of LPR status for fellow former detainees Berhanu Nega and Yacob Hailemariam. CA/VO/L/A responded favorably (ref B).

BACKGROUND: 20 MONTHS OF POLITICAL TRIAL DESTABILIZES ETHIOPIA

¶4. (U) Ethiopia's third general elections under the current government took place in May 2005. The pre-election campaign period was widely hailed by the USG and others in the international community as the most democratic period in Ethiopia's history. Though there was some evidence of irregularities and voter interference, the elections were considered generally credible. The official results showed that the number of seats in the Parliament held by opposition groups rose from 12 to 172. The results indicated that the largest opposition group, the CUD, won 109 of the 172 seats. In addition, the CUD won 137 of 138 seats in the Addis Ababa city council. Despite this, opposition groups, including the CUD, alleged the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary

Democratic Front (EPRDF) engaged in vote rigging. Several CUD parliamentarians and many in the Addis Ababa city council boycotted and refused to take their seats until the situation was remedied, which was to include reform of key federal government institutions.

¶5. (U) Though the government had instated a ban on public demonstrations immediately following the elections, separate incidents of demonstrations turned violent in early June and early November 2005. Demonstrators were met in the streets by police and special forces of the military, leading to deadly clashes. A subsequent investigation by the GoE found that 193 civilians and 6 police officers were killed as a result. After months of threatening to arrest senior opposition leaders, GoE security services arrested ten of thousands of people suspected of organizing or participating in the demonstrations. Most were released within weeks, but a few hundred were detained and had formal charges filed against them by the GoE. These defendants included all of the top leadership of the CUD (including the applicants), several journalists and members of civil society. The charges filed against them included: "Outrages Against the Constitution," "Obstruction of the Exercise of Constitutional Power," "Inciting, Organizing or Leading an Armed Rebellion," "Impairing the Defensive Power of the State," "High Treason," and "Attempted Genocide."

¶6. (U) The prolonged trial of these high-profile detainees was closely followed by the international community and in particular by Post, who had an observer present at nearly every court session. Post, and other diplomatic missions and international NGOs repeatedly called for the immediate release of these prisoners and have publicly labeled them "political detainees."

ADDIS ABAB 00002635 002.2 OF 002

SPECIFIC CHARGES AGAINST THESE APPLICANTS

¶7. (C) While some of the charges were eventually thrown out by the court, including "High Treason" and "Attempted Genocide," and some of the lower-profile detainees released, the leaders of the CUD were convicted on June 11, 2007 and sentenced to life in prison on July 16. These four applicants were among a larger group convicted of "Outrages Against the Constitution," "Obstruction of the Exercise of Constitutional Power," and "Impairing the Defensive Power of the State." Most defendants, including the CUD leadership, chose not to defend their case on the grounds that they felt that the court was under the influence of the GoE and was "illegitimate." Despite this, in Post's opinion, the evidence presented by the federal prosecution did not in any way prove that the defendants had any role in leading, organizing or taking part in the demonstrations of 2005, and that the verdicts concluded what was an entirely political trial for the CUD leadership.

¶8. (SBU) A group of negotiators, known informally as the Ethiopian Elders, quietly worked behind the scenes for many months to secure the release the detainees. Immediately following the sentencing of the CUD leadership, the GoE announced plans to grant a pardon to those convicted and who had signed a "letter of regret." Of those detained, 71 signed this statement, including all of the CUD leadership, and 38 of convicted detainees were released on July 20, including the applicants. The remaining detainees were released on August 18.

YAMAMOTO



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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/25/2018
 TAGS: KDEM PGOV PREL ET
 SUBJECT: REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRACY!

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Understanding Ethiopia's domestic political (and economic) actions, and developing a strategy for moving the ruling party forward democratically, requires understanding the ruling Tigrean People's Liberation Front's (TPLF) prevailing political ideology: Revolutionary Democracy. Hard-line TPLF politburo ideologues explain the concept in antiquated Marxist terms reminiscent of the TPLF's precursor Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray. Western leaning TPLF members and more distant central committee members from non-TPLF parties within the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition generally shed the Marxist rhetoric of the hard-liners. Still, these interlocutors unanimously describe Revolutionary Democracy as a top-down obligation of convincing rural Ethiopians of what is in their best developmental and governance interest and providing the structures to implement that until the people can do it for themselves.

¶2. (C) Discussions with ruling party officials over the past few months highlighted an EPRDF perception that the 2005 national election results and turmoil stemmed from the party taking the peasantry for granted and not adequately bringing them into the discussion of democracy. In detailing response tactics, however, party officials emphasized to Embassy officers a grass-roots outreach program combined with top-down control of the political environment. Discussions with Ethiopian Government (GoE) and ruling party leaders in the past two weeks show a re-emphasized commitment to the ruling party "taking the lead" only emboldened by what it will view as a mandate from the pre-determined results of this month's local elections. End Summary.

THE REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE PALACE

¶3. (C) An early November 2007 meeting with TPLF co-founder and politburo elder Sabhat Nega shed the clearest (and most authoritative) light on the meaning of Revolutionary Democracy as embraced among the TPLF hard-liners. Sabhat described Ethiopia as a "pre-capitalist society" with virtually no middle class and only a minimal working class. It is incumbent on the TPLF to exhibit the leadership required to transform Ethiopia into a capitalist society. The limited middle class fuels competition within the economy which "can undermine political stability," Sabhat explained. But, the real "enemies" of the state are the "rent

collectors." Therefore, "the revolutionary nationalist elite intellectuals" in the TPLF have the burden of creating an environment among the peasantry to foster the emergence of a "liberal bourgeoisie" and its affiliated political parties ("after a few elections") which will achieve Ethiopia's development objectives and thereby eliminate the need for the TPLF/EPRDF's role altogether. "Without this strategy," Sabhat concluded "Ethiopia will disintegrate."

¶4. (C) Sabhat Nega's views represent the ideological extreme -- albeit still tremendously influential -- among the TPLF elites. EPRDF Central Committee members from non-TPLF component parties shed much of Sabhat's rhetoric while still clinging adamantly to the top-down imperative approach of bringing democracy to the people. Hailemariam Desalegn, chairman of the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM), has argued to Post that due to poor education and illiteracy the Ethiopian public is too underdeveloped to make a well reasoned, informed decision, and so Revolutionary Democracy is the political bridge by which the "enlightened leaders" can lead the people to democracy. Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) Deputy Chairman, and Trade Minister, Girma Birru emphasizes the "necessary" state role in the economy to establish an economic incubator fostering "agricultural-industrialization led development" and growth as the necessary pre-condition for democracy. On his part, Amhara Nation Democratic Movement (ANDM) Executive Committee member Bereket Simon emphasizes the merits of the EPRDF's Revolutionary Democracy by arguing that the opposition, writ large, is not ready for democracy because it is bent on street action, all-or-nothing politics, and rejecting the political system rather than the ruling party. The future of multiparty democracy in

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Ethiopia, Bereket told AF/E Office Director James Knight on April 11, lies with "the sons of the private sector" and the EPRDF "must nurture the private sector so that it can establish its own political party to move the country forward."

REVOLUTION FOR THE PEOPLE, AGAINST DETRACTORS

¶5. (C) When asked the lessons learned by the EPRDF from the 2005 election results and ensuing turmoil, the ruling party officials ranging from Bereket Simon, to EPRDF Foreign Relations Head Sekutire Getachew, to the West Wollega OPDO Chairman Kebebew Taferi all reply that the EPRDF learned that it had taken the people for granted, assuming that the people understood what the party was doing because the party had been taking actions in the people's interests. As such, these interlocutors unanimously explain that the EPRDF's response has been outreach to the grassroots, focused in rural areas, to inform the people of their actions as a means to win back public support. Party officials never mention eliciting input or listening to the will of the public rather than informing them of the party's platform.

¶6. (C) Immediately after clarifying that he is not a member of the ruling party, State Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu told Ambassador and AF/E Director Knight on April 10 that "the stability of Ethiopia over the foreseeable future requires inextricable relations between the government and EPRDF." In moving Ethiopia toward 2010 national elections, Dr. Tekeda acknowledged that the ruling party has to lead the way, but noted that the opposition must become committed to relations with the EPRDF based on greater trust than the opposition currently has in foreigners and diplomats. Regrettably the opposition is more committed to themselves than they are to Ethiopia, Tekeda lamented, and the "authoritarian and bellicose" Eritrean Government's role in funneling money and planting people within the Ethiopian opposition only undermines prospects for positive progress. Furthermore, how the opposition views, and expresses its position, about foreign policy matters will determine the EPRDF's confidence in them, Tekeda noted. Tekeda specifically argued that the opposition's position on Ethiopia's involvement in Somalia makes the EPRDF question their commitment to Ethiopia. Bereket told AF/E Director Knight on April 11 that in looking to 2010, the EPRDF must focus on two tracks: 1) encouraging an opposition based on a platform of issues, and 2) nurturing the private sector.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) On the positive side, the GoE's strict adherence to a prevailing political ideology aids Embassy Addis and the USG in understanding GoE motives and -- as long as the ideology

is accurately understood -- enhances our ability to devise strategies for engaging the GoE to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals. Additionally, the insights shared by ruling coalition officials over the past several months helps clarify that the TPLF and EPRDF truly are committed to democracy and economic development, within the rigid confines of their interpretation of revolutionary democracy. The challenge, however, is how to expand those same rigid confines.

¶8. (C) Sabhat Nega's point that Ethiopia will disintegrate in the absence of the TPLF's revolutionary democracy strategy highlights the rigidity within the ruling party. In the TPLF's collective mind-set, any alternative to its top-down approach of "democracy" threatens the existence and future of the Ethiopian state. The opposition presents even more of a threat to the state -- in the TPLF/EPRDF's eyes -- in light of their view of the opposition as being infiltrated with Eritrean government hacks, bent on all-or-nothing politics, or (in a most generous interpretation) simply committed to a populous-driven bottom up view of democracy. Some GoE officials now are beginning to acknowledge that a functioning state much differentiate between its ruling party, the government, and the state. Still, there is no historical basis in Ethiopia or understanding in the public (or ruling party leaders') psyche of such a separation of roles in Ethiopia. Without such a distinction, ruling party elites appear genuinely to view threats to the ruling party -- such as those posed by otherwise legitimate political opposition

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groups -- as being threats to the state. The late 2005 "Treason" charges against scores of opposition leaders is only the most overt demonstration of this perception. The challenge in moving Ethiopia's democracy forward, therefore, is to identify a strategy that acknowledges the EPRDF's commitment to democracy, work with the opposition to present less of a threat to the EPRDF, and find the delicate balance whereby the mutually exclusive approaches to democracy can be vetted with, and subjected to the will of, the Ethiopian people. Post will soon propose a road-map for engaging the GoE and Ethiopia to advance democratic reforms while navigating this delicate balance. End Comment.
YAMAMOTO



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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2017 TAGS: PHUM KJUS KDEM PGOV ET SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: PRIME MINISTER MELES TO RELEASE POLITICAL DETAINEES, DESPITE INTERNAL OPPOSITION

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 01420 AND PREVIOUS ¶B. ADDIS ABABA 01818

ADDIS ABAB 00002005 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASON: 1.4 (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On June 22, the many months of shuttle diplomacy on the part of Professor Ephraim Isaac to secure release of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) political detainees reached an important milestone. Nearly two weeks after the High Court announced their conviction on criminal charges, the 21-member CUD Supreme Council agreed unanimously to sign a document admitting their "mistakes," thereby complying with the Prime Minister's condition for granting clemency. Almost all of the remaining 40 detainees in GOE custody, including members of the media, have signed as well. (The two civil society representatives decided against signing and will continue their legal defense; their trial resumes on July 12.) The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) Central Committee on June 23 reluctantly approved the PM's proposal to release the prisoners, but forced a two-week delay in the announcement. This gives hard-liners in the TPLF, as well as those in the CUD, who oppose any deal with the PM, more time to "deep six" the agreement. Post urges no public statements during this sensitive period. END SUMMARY.

----- ELDERS WORK HARD TO BROKER DEAL -----

¶2. (C) The first order of business on Professor Ephraim's current trip to Ethiopia was meeting with PM Meles on June 13 to discuss the state of negotiations with the CUD leadership (on hold since his prior visit in April) and the terms that the detainees must agree to in order to secure their release (ref A). The PM agreed that if the detainees each signed individual documents acknowledging that they made a mistake by "attempting to change the government through illegal means," they would be released and given unconditional freedom. The exact wording of the document had previously been a point of contention, but Professor Ephraim and the Elders negotiated tirelessly to arrive at agreeable language for both CUD and TPLF leadership. During the week of June 18, Ephraim spent countless hours at Kaliti prison working with CUD leadership on their decision to sign the release

document. Indeed, in a breakthrough on June 22, all 21 members of the CUD Supreme Council agreed unanimously to sign the document. This move by the leadership prompted signatures of nearly all of the remaining 40 detainees, including members of the media, on June 25. However, the two civil society representatives decided against signing and will continue their legal defense. Their trial will resume on July 12. (ref B)

MELES TAKES BOLD MOVE

¶3. (C) Professor Ephraim relayed the good news to PM Meles late on June 22, though much of the hard work was still to come. During a previously scheduled meeting of the central committee of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) on June 23, PM Meles presented his plans to release the CUD detainees on the basis of their statement acknowledging mistakes and agreeing to uphold the constitution. During the meeting, Meles faced sharp criticism from the hard-liners of his own TPLF Central Committee, many of whom vehemently oppose release of the CUD detainees. They pointed out that a release at this point would amount to circumventing the judicial process, given that the detainees had been convicted, but not yet sentenced (ref B). They further noted that negative attention coming from American media, as well as from the U.S. Congress, makes any action at this point appear that the GOE capitulated to public pressure. In the end, after a prolonged debate, PM Meles was able to secure agreement from the Central Committee, but the apparent difficulty he faced in doing so is evidence that the TPLF is not the one-man show that some believe it is.

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WHEN THEN RELEASED?

¶4. (C) In order to secure agreement from the TPLF Central Committee to release the CUD detainees, PM Meles agreed that Ethiopia's High Court would first be permitted to complete the sentencing of those found guilty, scheduled to take place on July 9. Following that, the detainees who signed the document are expected to be released, and the GOE will issue a statement explaining the move. PM Meles asked Professor Ephraim to return to Ethiopia at that time, when the Elders are also expected to issue a statement on the release and the need for national reconciliation.

COMMENT: NEXT 10 DAYS CRITICAL

¶5. (C) The coming two weeks before the sentencing and subsequent release of the detainees are very volatile. PM Meles took a very significant political risk by pushing TPLF hard-liners to agree to release the CUD detainees. Those in the TPLF Central Committee undoubtedly will be looking for a means to reverse this decision. Additional negative attention from the international media, and more importantly from the U.S. Congress, could potentially cause the agreement to derail, resulting in a disaster for Ethiopian peace and stability. This breakthrough, won through the hard work of Professor Ephraim and his fellow Ethiopian Elders, as well as the political risks taken by PM Meles, would make immeasurable progress in repairing the damage done following the post-May 2005 election protests.

¶6. (C) The GOE is very thankful to the Embassy and the Department for getting the U.S. Congress to delay mark-up of Representative Payne's Ethiopia bill. But CUD hard-liners in the U.S. have been critical of any agreement with the PM. From very harsh phone calls and emails to the Ambassador, it is clear that the CUD hard-liners in the U.S. view continued detention as the best means to hammer the PM. Their release would force them to find other areas in which to go after the GOE. END COMMENT.

¶7. (U) ACTION REQUEST. Post requests the Department to continue to use previously agreed upon language to answer any possible questions on this matter. Additionally, upon release of the detainees, Post requests that the Department issue the following statement:

BEGIN TEXT.

The United States expresses its deep appreciation to the

Ethiopian Elders for their tireless and unselfish dedication to advancing political openness and dialogue in Ethiopia. Their efforts were at the heart of the successes we now recognize. Prime Minister Meles and his government took a bold step in the release of the detainees. We applaud and commend the Government of Ethiopia for its action. We also commend and support the political opposition for its commitment to dialogue and promoting peaceful solutions. We also express our commitment to help the detainees upon release.

END TEXT.
YAMAMOTO



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VZCZCXRO0435 RR RUEHROV DE RUEHDS #2273/01 2641224 ZNY CCCCC ZZH R 211224Z SEP 09 FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6248 INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC RUEPADJ/CJTF HOA RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 002273

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2019 TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM PREL ET SUBJECT: POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION IN ETHIOPIA

REF: ADDIS 1612

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Tulinabo Mushingi for Reasons 1. 4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Political opposition leaders and Chairman of the National Teacher's Association allege that the government has held several political indoctrination "trainings" in recent months. They told PolOffs that students, teachers, farmers, and civil servants are being targeted for "political re-education" sessions that promote the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) ideology. The increasing frequency of such reports to PolOff suggest that the government is intensifying its recruitment efforts prior to the 2010 national elections. End summary.

Ruling Party's Heavy-Handed Recruitment of Students, Teachers, Farmers

¶2. (C) Opposition political party leaders and National Teacher's Association Chairman have recently recounted to PolOffs several cases they believe are examples of government attempts at political indoctrination. According to Oromo People's Congress opposition party leader Merera Gudina, beginning in June high school students in Oromiya have been selected by local EPRDF cadres and sent to military camps for what Merera called "political re-education." Merera added that these sessions, facilitated by regional government officials, typically last about 15 days. Military camps throughout Oromiya, including Holota and Tole, are allegedly utilized for the training. According to Merera, following the training the students are coerced into joining the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), part of the ruling EPRDF coalition.

¶3. (C) According to United Ethiopian Democratic Forces opposition party leader Beyene Petros, while those selected are not physically forced to attend the sessions or join the OPDO, local officials threaten to punish those who do not. Beyene said punishments include withholding microfinance loans, sabotaging efforts to get into preferred

universities, arbitrarily arresting people for days or weeks, threatening family members, and defaming a person's name so they can no longer find employment and are forced to relocate. Beyene added that in addition to targeting students, the government also targets civil servants and farmers for "political indoctrination trainings." He said that farmers' "trainings" are held in local kebeles and facilitated by local officials.

¶4. (C) National Teacher's Association Chairman Mekcha Mengistu told PolOff that the Ministry of Education held conferences, each entitled "Quality Education Package," throughout the country in late June/early July. Mekcha, who participated in one conference, told PolOff that he felt the government's true intent was political indoctrination. Mekcha showed PolOff materials that were distributed at the conference he attended, which included five booklets entitled "Developmental Democracy and Revolutionary Democracy," "Strategies and Revolutionary Democracy on Urban Industrial Development," "Creation of Democratic Structure and Revolutionary Democracy," "EPRDF Democratic Program," and "General Education Quality." At the end of the 12-day conference, Mekcha said that facilitators publicly distributed OPDO party membership forms and one of them told the teachers that "if you refuse to be part of the party, you

ADDIS ABAB 00002273 002 OF 002

shouldn't expect to be paid." Several teachers from different regions of the country told PolOff that teachers who are not members of the EPRDF coalition are discriminated against in job hiring and promotion, and sometimes fired for refusing to join the EPRDF.

Comment

¶5. (C) Though allegations of political indoctrination by the Ethiopian Government are not new, the frequency of such organized and targeted mass "training" sessions seems to be increasing in recent months, with several regular interlocutors raising the issue to PolOffs in recent meetings. The indoctrination trainings and conferences add to a long list of alleged coercive recruitment techniques used by the government, such as withholding of food aid, seeds and fertilizers to non-EPRDF members and preferential treatment in job assignment, promotion, and profession development for EPRDF members (Ref A). Such organized and targeted indoctrination sessions may reflect the ruling party's insecurity about its level of popular support in view of the coming 2010 elections. End comment.
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2028
 TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC ET
 SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: SCHOLARS DESCRIBE EPRDF AUTHORITARIAN
 PRACTICES (PART III OF V)

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1111
 ¶B. ADDIS ABABA 1357
 ¶C. ADDIS ABABA 1358
 ¶D. ADDIS ABABA 667

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

PART III OF V. THIS FIVE-PART CABLE DETAILS ETHIOPIAN SCHOLARS' VIEWS ON THE ETHIOPIAN POLITY.

Summary

¶1. (S/NF) Ethiopian scholars interviewed on the Ethiopian polity following the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's (EPRDF) landslide victory in the April local elections (ref A) cautioned that the EPRDF has employed authoritarian tactics to consolidate and extend its control in civil society, the economy and the society writ large. The scholars divided roughly into two camps: Pluralists, who favored participatory democracy, and Statists, who favored a dominant EPRDF. Parts I and II of this series outlined how, in the scholars' views, the EPRDF is consolidating de facto one-party rule and weakening state institutions (refs B and C). In this Part III, both Pluralists and Statists alleged that the EPRDF has disrupted free association among peoples with thuggery. In closing political space for legitimate opposition, the scholars warned, the EPRDF has emboldened opposition hard-liners who seek regime change by any means and effectively discredited opposition moderates who have argued that political change in Ethiopia can be effectuated through engagement with the ruling party. End Summary.

Political Repression

¶2. (S/NF) The scholars generally lamented what they described as the EPRDF's coercive tactics to expand control, and even the Statists identified an increasing risk of a backlash or other turmoil. The scholars highlighted land grabs and various forms of local thuggery in the rural areas as particularly egregious acts (ref D). "The amount of corruption and the suppression in the Oromiya state is unbelievable," the Statist think tank expert with TPLF ties said. "56 political parties and all leading Oromo intellectuals have complained to me of the abuses. There must be something to it. The Oromiya region ideally should be at the heart of an effective Ethiopian state. How can the EPRDF survive using these tactics? (Even) the Derque military

turned against itself." A Pluralist think tank expert emphasized, "Taking land from Oromo farmers with minimum compensation puts the government in trouble. If this continues, a crisis will come."

Eroding Societal Trust

¶3. (S/NF) A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member observed that "Ethiopia's stability is based on its people not its government. Despite many differences, Ethiopians want to be tolerant and live together. There are many old grass roots organizations (like the Idr burial association) that continue to bring people together in spite of religious and ethnic differences. People want to remain tolerant instead of turning to bitterness and nastiness. However, around Addis Ababa there are increasing comparisons to the Dergue. It is the arbitrary use of power, where nobody can trace you if you are picked up by the police, no charges are ever filed for long detentions and anyone who asks after you is himself at risk." Another Pluralist AAULAW faculty member said that "The EPRDF is very crafty and strong in security. Everyone is well aware that the 'walls have ears and the potatoes have eyes.' You are spied on and you are known in detail: who you are, where you go, with whom you associate. Mistrust among the people is stronger than it was under the Dergue." The Pluralist civil society representative added, "The main difference between now and the Dergue is that small things are tolerated but not allowed to blossom because you are always watched and there is intense self-censorship." The Statist think tank expert with TPLF ties concluded, "Culturally, Addis Ababa is very stable. There is little history of looting. This is based on religion, kinship, Idr

and other forces of social protection. But the state is breaking down these mechanisms."

Vindicating Opposition Hard-liners

¶4. (S/NF) Pluralists expressed particular concern that EPRDF tactics to consolidate power are vindicating hard-liners in opposition camps who want to effect regime change by other means. A Pluralist AAU faculty member said "The EPRDF humiliates those who try to work with it, so that hard-liners (in the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and elsewhere) feel vindicated. The OLF and others have said they tried to engage but Meles is impervious. The EPRDF is not seriously willing to engage. Ethiopia has experienced numerous violent and turbulent situations internally and externally and we are tired, but people say now there are two options: sit and take it or take the undesired route. The situation is very dangerous and is compounded by threats from Eritrea and Somalia. There is an ever-growing constituency of discontent. Some forces want to put into practice violent agendas." The former TPLF think tank expert said "Minor players have also been pushed out. The political process has stopped becoming a mechanism for conflict management. Many are concluding that there is no option for peaceful democratic change in the country. More and more the Diaspora and the opposition talk of other means of struggle. Such thoughts are a major setback. The (April 2008) local elections helped the OLF and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) by proving that there is no democratic alternative. It isolated the moderates, even humiliated them." An AAULAW faculty member concluded, "The April 2008 local elections undoubtedly strengthened the hand of the OLF members who call for secession."

END PART III of V. NEXT: ETHIOPIAN SCHOLARS VOICE CONCERNS
OVER ETHIOPIA'S STABILITY
YAMAMOTO



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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/30/2028
 TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC ET
 SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: SCHOLARS DESCRIBE EPRDF CONSOLIDATION OF
 CONTROL (PART I OF V)

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1111
 ¶B. ADDIS ABABA 1154
 ¶C. ADDIS ABABA 1223

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

PART I OF V. THIS FIVE-PART CABLE DETAILS ETHIOPIAN SCHOLARS' VIEWS ON THE ETHIOPIAN POLITY.

Summary

¶1. (S/NF) Following the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's (EPRDF) landslide victory in the April local elections (ref A), Deputy Political-Economic Counselor spoke separately with ten scholars to canvass elites' opinions on the current Ethiopian polity. The scholars divided roughly into two camps: Pluralists, who favored participatory democracy, and Statists, who favored a dominant EPRDF. The Ethiopian scholars unanimously assessed that the EPRDF has, for now, ended Ethiopia's experiment in multiparty democracy and is actively consolidating power and extending its authority throughout the economy, civil society and society writ large. For the foreseeable future, the scholars said, dialogue between the EPRDF and non-governmental actors or political opposition will diminish from a low baseline. Although the scholars agreed that the EPRDF, by virtue of its firm control of the state security apparatus, is currently the only party that can guarantee Ethiopia's stability, they collectively cautioned that the EPRDF's power play is, both by design and collateral effect, weakening state and societal institutions, eroding trust among peoples and groups, damaging the economy and, ultimately, threatening Ethiopia's stability. This Part I of a five-part cable outlines the scholars' views on the EPRDF's consolidation of control. End Summary.

¶2. (S/NF) Following the ruling EPRDF's landslide victory in the virtually uncontested April 13 and 20, 2008 elections, which effectively eliminated any political space for opposition parties at the neighborhood, city, district, and zonal levels, Deputy Political-Economic Counselor spoke separately with ten scholars, each in conversations ranging from one to two hours, to canvass opinion on the current Ethiopian polity from elites not affiliated with political parties. The scholars included members of the Addis Ababa University (AAU) and Addis Ababa University Law School (AULAW) faculties, as well as members of several Addis Ababa-based think tanks and civil society organizations.

While most had spent significant portions of their careers in Addis Ababa, their provinces of origin reflected Ethiopia's diversity and included the Amhara, Tigray, Oromiya and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's regions. Several scholars had formerly been senior officials either in the EPRDF government or in the Dergue regime. Most identified themselves as secular or mainstream Orthodox Christians. No Muslims were interviewed. The discussions were held from April 21 to May 1 at the Embassy and at various locations in Addis Ababa.

Pluralists and Statists -----

¶3. (S/NF) The scholars roughly divided into two camps. The Pluralists insisted that participatory democracy is the only way forward for the country, given its diversity of regions, languages and ethnicities and its various religious traditions. The Statists, in contrast, argued that a dominant EPRDF is necessary to generate economic growth and guarantee, through firm control of the military and police, the security and stability necessary for Ethiopia's welfare and development. The latter position reflects the EPRDF's "developmental state" rationale for consolidating power under its banner of "revolutionary democracy" (ref B), which posits that the ruling party will, sequentially, (i) secure the country, (ii) centrally direct economic development and (iii) open political space at some indeterminate time when, in the ruling party's determination, the relevant national institutions (including the press and civil society) are mature enough to handle greater political expression.

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"Ethiopia Is A Military Government" -----

¶4. (S/NF) The scholars, Pluralists and Statists alike, were unanimous in their assessment that the EPRDF has, for now, ended Ethiopia's experiment in multiparty democracy. "Ethiopia is, for all intents and purposes, a military government," remarked a Statist think tank expert with close ties to the ruling party. He added that "Power alone is the glue that keeps the EPRDF together. The 1,000 or more EPRDF cadres control politics at every level." A Pluralist think tank expert, and former Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) member prior to the 2001 TPLF schism, said "There has been a reversal of democratization. Political space is now closed. Major political players cannot participate in national reconstruction. Democratic elections are about processes and institutions. Ethiopia has neither." Another Pluralist think tank expert observed that "There is no real opposition left in the country. Democratic rule is not in place. The (April 2008) local election results were far from reality. Silence (expressed via low voter turnout) is opposition in itself. We failed to bring changes (in national elections) in 2005 and now we are back to authoritarianism." The former TPLF think tank expert concluded, "The April 2008 local elections exposed the ruling party as illegitimate. Legitimacy in Ethiopia demands nationalism and democracy. The joke on the streets is that Eritrea is a restaurant with no democracy on the menu, while Ethiopia is a restaurant with democracy on the menu but no food."

No Alternatives In Sight -----

¶5. (S/NF) The scholars all agreed that the mainstream Ethiopian political opposition is in disarray and cannot contest effectively the EPRDF's supremacy. Predictably, the Statists attributed this state of affairs largely to the opposition's own failings, while the Pluralists decried what they described as the systematic dismantling of the opposition by the EPRDF after the 2005 elections. An AAU administrator and marginal Statist observed that "There are no political organizations with clear philosophies and agendas that can be alternatives to the EPRDF. The opposition is weak and disparate, with no clear national constituencies or agendas. (The banned nationalist insurgencies) Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) are not on the doorstep and the (EPRDF proxy) Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) is very effective for the EPRDF in Oromiya." The think tank expert with EPRDF ties said "The opposition is too hopelessly divided to run state security effectively. The message from the local elections is 'nobody cares if the EPRDF is in place because it will enforce security.'" A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member agreed that "The ruling party's political and economic might overwhelms the

opposition. The public is subdued. There are so many discontents now, stemming from the (2005) imprisonment (of opposition, civil society and media figures and supporters) and its consequences. So many have suffered, or disappeared. The psychological impact is that people decide to tow the line, hide their views. No one is enthusiastic about political expression. It is better to be seen as non-confrontational." Another Pluralist AAULAW faculty member concurred, "After the 2005 elections, the hopes of the people were dashed and many lost interest in the ongoing politics. People are bitter about this government but they keep to themselves."

The EPRDF Is Consolidating Control...

¶6. (S/NF) Pluralist and Statist scholars alike agreed that, even though the opposition has been crippled and sidelined, the EPRDF is aggressively consolidating power and extending its authority throughout the economy, civil society and society writ large. Since this trend continues to accelerate, prospects for reversal are minimal. Rather, the scholars predicted that, for the foreseeable future, dialogue between the EPRDF and non-governmental actors or political opposition will diminish from a low baseline. A Pluralist

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think tank expert explained, "The ruling party is establishing itself as the ruling party for a long time to come. There is no dialogue in parliament, only majority rule. Without a strong opposition in Parliament, chances for opening democratic processes are slim." The marginal Statist AAU administrator concurred, noting that "Power is now being consolidated in one party from the grass roots to Parliament. Parliament is multiparty in name only. Only one party holds the discussions and passes the laws. The EPRDF is adamant that this is the best way to run the country." Likewise, the former TPLF think tank expert said "The trends in the media and civil society (where the EPRDF has been drafted new laws to assert control in these areas (ref C)) are not accidental. The EPRDF oscillates between panic and arrogance, and they are in arrogant mode now." A Pluralist civil society advocate added, "The EPRDF will use all its resources to stifle the opposition. The party is establishing relationships with the youth and identifying places where power might emerge. It is authoritarian and there is no way out. Ethiopians want competitive elections, but the EPRDF wants 98 percent support. They can never be satisfied. They want to control everything."

END PART I OF V. NEXT: SCHOLARS DESCRIBE THE WEAKENING OF THE STATE, ECONOMIC MISMANAGEMENT
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/09/2028 TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC ECON ET SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: SCHOLARS DESCRIBE THE WEAKENING OF STATE INSTITUTIONS, ECONOMIC MISMANAGEMENT (PART II OF V)

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1111 B. ADDIS ABABA 1357

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

PART II OF V. THIS FIVE-PART CABLE DETAILS ETHIOPIAN SCHOLARS' VIEWS ON THE ETHIOPIAN POLITY.

Summary -----

¶1. (S/NF) Ethiopian scholars interviewed on the Ethiopian polity following the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's (EPRDF) landslide victory in the April local elections (ref A) cautioned that the EPRDF power play is weakening state institutions and adversely impacting the economy. The scholars divided roughly into two camps: Pluralists, who favored participatory democracy, and Statists, who favored a dominant EPRDF. Part I of this series outlined how, in the scholars' views, the EPRDF is consolidating de facto one-party rule (ref B). In this Part II, both Pluralists and Statists alleged that the EPRDF does not respect the rule of law and is seeding key state institutions with ideologues at the expense of professional standards. They also lamented what they described as a rapid rise in rent-seeking behavior, spurred by inflationary pressures in the economy that affect directly the enormous civil service. Statist scholars were particularly concerned that the EPRDF is mismanaging the economy by failing to open up key sectors, such as the financial sector. End Summary.

Weakening the State -----

¶2. (S/NF) The scholars collectively cautioned that the EPRDF's power play is, both by design and collateral effect, weakening state and societal institutions, eroding trust among peoples and groups, damaging the economy and, ultimately, threatening Ethiopia's stability. Pluralists and Statists alike expressed particular concern over the EPRDF's influence on the judiciary and (mis)conduct of economic policy, both of which, they argue, undermine the state in the long run by favoring party loyalty over professional standards. A marginal Statist AAULAW faculty member remarked that "This is a situation where the state consistently violates its own laws. The Constitution is a smoke screen. Trust in institutions is eroding. Arbitrary arrest and detention are widespread. The judicial system is slow and corrupt. The legislature is broken. The priorities now must

be internal stability and the viability of state institutions. We need the basics: courts that work and basic civil rights. TPFL colleagues of mine argue that the West took 300 years to develop political freedoms. But even with a million years this process won't move forward because the EPRDF is not serious. They are recycling ideas among themselves. There no checks and balances." A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member added, "Ethiopia is highly centralized and laws on paper don't matter. Judges are recent graduates, displacing those with experience. Family connections and political affiliation determine positions. The institutions of the state are powerful only in that authorities have unlimited power and citizens have no recourse against the arbitrary decisions of the state." A Pluralist think tank expert added, "The (proposed) civil society legislation is depressing. The (proposed) press law is repressive." The former TPLF think tank expert argued, "National institutions are fragmenting. The state is contested. Strong institutions are not being created. Short-term thinking dictates EPRDF actions. Political parties and civil society institutions are failing. Conducting discredited elections only fostered more cynicism. Some even now say 'Meles is (Eritrean President) Isaias (Afwerki) minus honesty.'"

¶2. (S/NF) The scholars emphasized that EPRDF control now extends well beyond the political realm. A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member noted that "The EPRDF works aggressively to recruit students. This has led to silence and withdrawal by students and very few arrests. In fact, students benefit financially by silence. Likewise, there is no homogeneity among faculty. Professional academics are atomized, while students are increasingly divided along ethnic lines. There is no vigorous public debate in universities of topical

issues." The Pluralist civil society activist observed, "Students from Oromiya must sign a declaration of allegiance to the OPDO before going to college. Their future depends on the party. Likewise, there is no genuine debate in Parliament, no public discourse. Key institutions have been gutted, including the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsman, the Corruption Commission. They exist only on paper. The ignorance of officials in the rural administrations is unbelievable. But if you grumble, you are beaten." A Statist think tank expert with TPLF ties said, "Elections are meaningless without building institutions. Ethiopia has rules copied from elsewhere but the institutions are not there. The judiciary is not independent. The Human Rights Commission is impotent. The Ombudsman lacks credibility. One of my fears is that leadership is getting comfortable with the idea that all is well. It's like a frog in a boiling lake. They won't realize the temperature is rising until it is too late."

Security Forces At Risk

¶3. (S/NF) The scholars broadly agreed that the EPRDF is firmly in control of the military and state security services. However, some scholars cautioned that the EPRDF's aggressive consolidation of power and current policies threaten to weaken these institutions, to the detriment of Ethiopia's stability. A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member argued that "A security sector from one ethnicity, even one locality, cannot be sustained forever. You can't continue when you are hated by the people. Day by day things are going out of control." The Pluralist former TPLF think tank expert concurred, noting "Tensions will emerge within security and military institutions because there are limits to politicization." The Statist think tank expert with TPLF ties warned, "Ethiopia has a strong army but it is dispersing everywhere. The government is increasingly run along clan and tribal lines. The security forces are frustrated. The government cannot match the rising costs of living with salary raises. Just one Colonel could call it a day."

Escalating Corruption

¶4. (S/NF) The scholars' consensus was that the EPRDF power play, coupled with an emerging (policy-generated) economic crisis characterized by severe inflationary pressures and hoarding of commodities, has led to a sharp up-tick in rent-seeking behavior in Ethiopia. A Pluralist think tank expert assessed, "For EPRDF's local authorities, losing their posts means losing their benefits. There are pressures on the civil service to join the ruling party to retain their benefits. This has led to repressive actions." The marginal Statist AAULAW faculty member said "Corruption is rising. After 2005, the government admitted it failed to deliver basic services and pledged to reform, but went in a negative direction. Everyone has delved into corruption. The major preoccupation is self-enrichment. It is criminal trade.

What is happening in the banks and in the state-owned enterprises? It is a moral crisis and if it persists unabated we will have a full-fledged civil war." The Statist think tank expert with TPLF ties agreed, "Meles wants an Asia-style developmental state that is corrupt but efficient in promoting economic growth. (Yet) corruption is rising too fast. Ethiopia has one of the biggest civil services in Africa, more than 480,000 people exclusive of state security services. The huge public sector means salary increases must be widespread. When (increases) can't be sustained to meet inflation, rent-seeking behavior crops up. The Ethiopian government is now simply a protection racket." Another Pluralist think tank expert noted that "The EPRDF cadres are getting rich selling land. Only cadre members benefit and tell us baldy 'You are a fool if you don't want to live a better life' The only difference between Meles and (former Dergue leader) Mengistu (Hailemariam) is Meles is clever, while Mengistu was a bull. We have serious corruption. There is no transparency. People join the party solely for economic benefit. The same situation obtained in the last days of the Dergue regime. But there will be a time when the EPRDF can't afford this strategy and there's no land left to give away, and a crisis will come."

Economic Mismanagement

¶5. (S/NF) The scholars uniformly disparaged the EPRDF's management of the economy, with the Statists particularly critical. They described statist business policies that keep key sectors of the economy, such as telecommunications and financial services, largely closed, that privilege party members' interests over private sector concerns and that generally stifle competition. "Take Meles and (Foreign Minister) Seyoum Mesfin away," said the Statist think tank expert with EPRDF ties, "and there is no capability. Well-qualified people are needed to run the nation but the level of EPRDF arrogance is generating intense frustration among ordinary Ethiopians. The government has a foreign currency crisis, but they don't know how to fix it. The EPRDF has no choice but to open the financial sector. Only North Korea and Cuba have capital markets this closed. The problem is the EPRDF has no experience. 85 percent of Ethiopia's cash flow comes from four companies." A Pluralist think tank expert offered the most optimistic assessment of the EPRDF's economic policies, noting only that "The economy is not about to collapse. Tax revenue has been growing for six to eight years. Debt relief has helped. But the severe drought will cause a tough year, combined with constricting international assistance pipelines. Unfortunately, the EPRDF's direction is exacerbating poverty. There are no counterbalances. Past years' growth was led by good rains. But inflation, particularly for food prices, is a serious concern. So there's an impending crisis and the EPRDF has said soon we'll be a middle income country. Government propaganda is divorced from reality."

¶6. (S/SF) Other scholars were even harsher in their assessment. The former TPLF think tanker warned, "Even growth figures are problematic. People doubt the numbers. Figures may be inflated. There is no independent think tank research or even debate within the ruling party. Moreover, government structures are too heavy and the EPRDF redirects resources from the economy to sustain conflict." A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member added that "The EPRDF will not listen to other views, even on economics. They don't want to hear constructive criticism, and that's a terrible sign." The Pluralist civil society representative said, "The EPRDF thinks they simply must feed people and no one will grumble. It is not true." "Ethiopia's two problems are (i) poverty and (ii) underdevelopment and political transition," the Pluralist former TPLF think tanker observed. "The EPRDF has no solutions for either. The EPRDF's only source of legitimacy is economic growth, but growth cannot hold without a stable political environment. Moreover, growth has been driven by political imperative, fueled by massive and quick state spending. This has contributed to inflation. Basically, the EPRDF is bringing problems, not solutions, because they are more focused on control than development."

END PART II of V. NEXT: SCHOLARS' VIEWS ON WHAT THEY DESCRIBE AS THE RULING PARTY'S AUTHORITARIAN PRACTICES
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2028 TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC ET SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: SCHOLARS OFFER VIEWS ON 2010 ELECTIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD (PART V OF V)

- REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1357 B. ADDIS ABABA 1358 C. ADDIS ABABA 1359 D. ADDIS ABABA 1360 E. ADDIS ABABA 1111 F. ADDIS ABABA 1229

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

PART V OF V. THIS FIVE-PART CABLE DETAILS ETHIOPIAN SCHOLARS' VIEWS ON THE ETHIOPIAN POLITY.

Summary -----

¶1. (S/NF) Parts I-IV of this series (refs A, B, C, D) outlined how, in the views of Ethiopian scholars, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is consolidating de facto one-party rule, weakening state institutions, and creating conditions that risk Ethiopia's stability. Interviewed following the EPRDF's landslide victory in the April 2008 local elections (ref E), the Ethiopian scholars divided roughly into two camps: Pluralists, who favored participatory democracy, and Statists, who favored a dominant EPRDF. In this Part V, Pluralists and Statists offered their prescriptions on the way forward. While Pluralists were generally pessimistic about prospects for greater space for mainstream political opposition in the upcoming 2010 national elections, Statists held out hope that the EPRDF will reform internally. The Pluralists and Statists differed in their views on any potential United States response to Ethiopia's internal developments, with Statists arguing that the United States should stay out of Ethiopia's domestic politics and only urge the EPRDF to open the economy, and the Pluralists arguing that the United States should use its leverage to create necessary space for mainstream political opposition. This Part V further reviews the scholars views presented in Parts I-V. In light of the scholars' views and other Post reporting, the Ambassador has begun approaching the EPRDF at the highest levels and frankly express our concerns that the EPRDF's current actions may adversely affect our mutual interest in the Ethiopian state's long term viability. These discussions will encourage the TPLF-led Politburo to explain clearly how their consolidation of power enhances, rather than retards, the welfare and security of the Ethiopian state. End Summary.

The 2010 Elections and the Way Forward

¶2. (S/NF) Overall, the scholars were pessimistic that the EPRDF will open any political space for the 2010 elections. The Pluralists generally say they expect a repeat of the April 2008 elections. As one AAULAW faculty member put it, "The way forward is bleak. No change will occur by 2010. I can't answer what would shock the TPLF into changing course." Several slightly more optimistic pluralists pin their hopes on an EPRDF "change of heart" that will permit the opposition incremental gains in Parliament. In the alternative, few Pluralists or Statists are willing to articulate creative ways forward, other than to call for broad national reconciliation. As one Pluralist think tank expert put it, "The only way forward is national reconciliation and making the institutions of the state work, but the problem is that every attempt at national reconciliation is rebuffed. Fortunately, in the historical struggle to keep Ethiopia together the forces of unity have prevailed. A government of national unity is the way out." The Statists, in turn, hold out for internal EPRDF reforms. In the words of the Statist think tank expert with TPLF ties, "The EPRDF must reform itself. The worst case scenario is that the ten percent economic growth does not translate into meaningful gains at the household level. Ethiopia's wealth disparity is increasing. People know elections won't change anything, but internal changes can be led by the civil service. Leadership must create an intelligent and effective state. If they don't, Ethiopia will collapse."

United States Role

¶3. (S/NF) Asked how they viewed the United States' and the international community' role with respect to the Ethiopian polity going forward, the Statists suggested that the United States use its influence to urge the EPRDF to open up economically, but stay out of Ethiopia's internal politics. The Statist think tank expert with TPLF ties said, "It is important for the United States to press the EPRDF to unlock Ethiopia's economic potential. It is not the United States' role to facilitate inter-party dialogue." The Pluralists took the opposite view and argued that the United States and other international "donors" have leverage with the Ethiopian government due to their massive assistance packages and should pressure the EPRDF to reverse course and move away from authoritarianism. One Pluralist think tank expert said, "The United States administration must weigh in, pressure Meles to negotiate with the rebels and allow all parties to participate in the political process. There will be no change without pressure on Meles. It is time to end rebel movements with negotiation." A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member added, "There is still room for Western influence that transcends fanciful tit-for-tat diplomacy. People think the United States in particular can bring change if it is willing to. The United States can tilt the balance of politics in Ethiopia."

Comment

¶4. (S/NF) The ten scholars' views, as expressed in this five-part series, are not inconsistent with concerns expressed by other Embassy contacts and, at the very least, represent common perceptions of elites and market makers in Ethiopia. Their descriptions of the Ethiopian polity are, however, at variance with the Ethiopian government's more sanguine representations to our Embassy (ref F). The scholars portrayed the EPRDF as an authoritarian regime in ascendency following its decision to turn away, for now, from its brief experiment with multiparty democracy. Even as it expands its influence, the regime, in the scholars' view, evidences classic strains common to authoritarian regimes, including predictable economic blunders caused by an intrusive state, dilution of capacity in state institutions, the rise of rent-seeking behavior and the (intentional) erosion of trust between various societal groups. These problems, the scholars averred, are compounded by the unwieldy EPRDF coalition, run by an insular and tin-eared Politburo and its proxies, that rules this diverse, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society by crude coercion rather than consent. Though divided on whether Ethiopia can thrive as a de facto one-party state, the scholars agreed no other political party or advocacy group is at present positioned to succeed the EPRDF, given the EPRDF's singular control over the state security apparatus. However, all agreed that the EPRDF's current policies could ultimately destabilize the country.

¶5. (S/NF) Comment Continued: United States national security interests in Ethiopia's internal political dynamics are tied to the question of Ethiopia's fundamental stability. If

Ethiopia were to fracture, the resulting chaos would engulf the entire Horn of Africa, producing an incalculable set back for regional stability and for our global efforts to counter extremism. It remains an open question whether any strong, single-party government in Addis Ababa can effectively administer a nation with as many fault lines (ethnic, linguistic and religious) as Ethiopia, but the message from this small sampling of scholars is that historically the answer in Ethiopia has been "no" and that the EPRDF has begun to draw unfavorable comparisons among elites to the Emperor and the Dergue regimes, both of which were toppled at gunpoint. As the EPRDF unabashedly extends its authority throughout the economy, civil society and society writ large, Post has begun approaching the EPRDF at the highest levels and frankly expressing our concerns that the EPRDF's current actions may adversely affect our mutual interest in the Ethiopian state's long term viability. We will encourage the TPLF-led Politburo to explain clearly how their consolidation of power enhances, rather than retards, the welfare and security of the Ethiopian state. On the basis of the Politburo's response, coupled with independent analysis of the efficacy of EPRDF actions, we will be best positioned to determine how to engage this regime in a manner that balances

our considerable need to continue our current counterterrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa unimpeded with our long term interests Ethiopia's and the region's stability. End Comment.

END PART V of V.
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2028 TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC ET SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: SCHOLARS VOICE CONCERNS OVER ETHIOPIA'S STABILITY (PART IV OF V)

- REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1111 B. ADDIS ABABA 1357 C. ADDIS ABABA 1358 D. ADDIS ABABA 1359 E. ADDIS ABABA 1229

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

PART IV OF V. THIS FIVE-PART CABLE DETAILS ETHIOPIAN SCHOLARS' VIEWS ON THE ETHIOPIAN POLITY.

Summary -----

¶1. (S/NF) Ethiopian scholars interviewed on the Ethiopian polity following the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's (EPRDF) landslide victory in the April local elections (ref A) warned that the EPRDF power play, as it is unfolding, threatens Ethiopia's stability. The scholars divided roughly into two camps: Pluralists, who favored participatory democracy, and Statists, who favored a dominant EPRDF. Parts I, II and III of this series outlined how, in the scholars' views, the EPRDF is consolidating de facto one-party rule, weakening state institutions and engaging in authoritarian practices (refs B, C and D). In this Part IV, Pluralists and Statists expressed concerns about Ethiopia's stability. Pluralists described widespread discontent with the EPRDF's de facto one party rule and said that the state is not strong enough to withstand major internal or external shocks, such as a severe economic downturn, which could plunge the country into chaos. The Pluralists argued that multiparty democracy is necessary to ensure that Ethiopia's diverse constituencies continue to support the state as constituted and not abandon the political process for change but other means. The Statists posited that the EPRDF must stay in control because of its authority over the state security apparatus, but said that without internal reforms, the EPRDF's grip on the nation will slip, to everyone's detriment. Both camps decried what they described as the EPRDF's laissez-faire approach to growing radicalization among Ethiopia's Muslim populations. End Summary.

The Center May Hold...For Now -----

¶2. (S/NF) The scholars disagreed somewhat on the immediate ramifications of the EPRDF's consolidation of its rule, although they all agreed that EPRDF consolidation will continue indefinitely in the absence of unanticipated events.

Statists and some Pluralists said they believed that the EPRDF is strong enough to pursue this approach in the near term. Other Pluralists disagreed. A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member posited "The EPRDF is politically astute. For (international donor consumption) it touts the ballot box and press freedom, while for the Ethiopian public it appeals to nationalism. They point to the threats from Eritrea, the insurgent Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the insurgent Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and terrorism. The TPLF can hold the EPRDF coalition together because the means of state power are utilized very effectively and ideologically they are very committed. Likewise, global conditions are different than with the Dergue and the Emperor. There is little international backing for opposition groups and the West concentrates on counterterrorism objectives to the exclusion of other concerns." Another Pluralist think tank expert added, "I don't see armed resistance for quite some time, but maybe in the long run, preceded by increased banditry and crime. The prevailing mood in the countryside is disillusionment with the political process, with both the government and the opposition." However, the Pluralist former TPFL think tank expert was far more pessimistic, remarking that "The EPRDF may be able to manage for another few years, but at the cost of the country. The more offenses it commits, the more its forces are stretched, the greater the backlash." A Pluralist civil society representative agreed, noting that "Ethiopians are resilient and the EPRDF deserves its due for roads, education and basic services. But the April 2008 local elections are a clear indicator of where things are. Does anyone really expect another 17 years of EPRDF rule? There is a limit to patience."

Tenuous Stability -----

¶3. (S/NF) Most scholars, Pluralists and Statists alike, expressed grave concern about Ethiopia's long term stability and viability as a state if the EPRDF does not rapidly correct its present course. For the Pluralists, the EPRDF must meaningfully restart Ethiopia's democratic transition to avert disaster. "The status quo as it exists today cannot continue indefinitely," a Pluralist AAULAW faculty member said. "Without serious pressure on the EPRDF to reform the political process, the worst will be reaped by all of us. It is a question of time. If the drought continues (ref E), perhaps we will see total anarchy. If the elite withdraw from politics en masse, or if the EPRDF is infiltrated, or if there is an economic crisis, or if we fail in Somalia, chaos and anarchy will result." A Pluralist think tank expert in environmental matters reflected that "In an African context, regime change is obvious. The U.S. has elections but for us, the gun is useful. Everything here is in decline, from the economy to the human development index, and this adversely impacts stability. In many places, such as the Ogaden, the government already has no currency. Tigrayans are afraid their day will come. Meles is facing a crisis, with people starving, with emboldened rebels, and for all his smarts we don't know how he will handle it. You can't predict rebels. In a country where you have rebels, you have a problem. They could come to the capital at any time. Meles knows he defeated the Dergue with 60,000 troops, toppling the biggest army in Africa. Others could overthrow him with less. Meles was a rebel and he will be removed by rebels if he does not change course."

¶4. (S/NF) A Pluralist AAULAW faculty member emphasized, "We are not proceeding in the right direction on democracy. If anything throws things out of balance, things could get very bad very quickly. Once it goes, it is possible this government would end and chaos would reign. There's no light at the end of the tunnel yet, given the nasty circumstances. There has been an increasing fragmentation and an erosion of common values since the Dergue. If people are pushed to the edge, one day things will spin out of control. Patience and tolerance has a limit." The Pluralist civil society member added, "Ethiopia's stability is just a function of force. The EPRDF conducted local elections to legitimize its programs through the ballot box. Without Meles, however, the EPRDF coalition likely cannot hold together. Ethiopia's stability is definitely at issue." Expressing the most pessimistic view, the Pluralist former TPLF think tank expert said "Ethiopia is macro-politically unstable, even in the short term. It is a failing state on fast forward, characterized by declining legitimacy, weakening institutions and absence of conflict management. The theoretical and empirical evidence suggests the EPRDF is leading the country to disaster. The EPRDF is driving the bus, but it is too busy spying on the passengers to look at the road. The major ethnic constituencies, the Amhara, the Oromo and the Somalis, feel humiliated and targeted. The state even threatens Tigrayans. This is all happening in a volatile subregion and

is not good for peace, stability and economic development. We are seeing a progressive fragmentation of politics, identity and the economy. The EPRDF has not answered the many losers with grievances. These grievances cannot be accommodated by the current political processes. It is an open question whether EPRDF control can match the increasing frustrations. If major (opposition) political players go underground, it will be a red flag. The situation is very flammable. Meles has made his choice, using the 'developmental state' as the ideological justification for clinging to power. The opposition has not yet made its choice, but sometimes negotiation is too late. The end state will be anarchy or the emergence of a thug."

"A Choice Between Unity and Dispersion"

¶5. (S/NF) By contrast, the Statists saw greater risk in the method by which the EPRDF currently proceeds with one-party rule, not in one-party rule itself. They worried aloud that the Ethiopian government cannot survive major shocks, such as a deep economic or military crisis. The marginal Statist AAU Administrator said "The monolithic way, one party, one

philosophy, one direction will become moribund - but how long that takes depends. The EPRDF system of control will stay for some time - but like the Dergue or the Emperor, it is only a matter of time before some crisis intervenes." A Statist AAULAW faculty member added that "We have very important concerns about the unity of the country. The choice is unity or dispersion. If nothing changes, the EPRDF will lose its grip. Those in power have too narrow a constituency. They think they can perpetuate the party indefinitely, but it can't be done in Ethiopia. Even Tigrayans are worried. We are poor. We are polarized. So many groups are marginalized. The next secession will kill us. It is different from the past because ethnic politics is increasingly fashionable. The country cannot afford another round of conflict. Influential people are arguing for unity but people are retreating to their ethnic and religious boxes. The opposition could go to the bush. One spark could set it off. Anything can go wrong and we can have total disintegration."

Radicalization Threat

¶6. (S/NF) Even as the EPRDF expands its influence throughout society, the scholars expressed uniform frustration that the EPRDF appears to tolerate rising religious extremism. The Pluralist civil society representative warned that "Especially in rural areas, traditional Sufis are being challenged by Wahabis and Salafis. The traditionalists wonder why the government does not protect them as new practices are imposed. Moreover, instability in Somalia is greatly affecting Ethiopia." The Pluralist former TPLF member observed, "When institutions fail and political processes go wrong, Islamists have a honeymoon. Ethiopia is becoming fertile ground for terrorism. There will be a tipping point for radicalization." Another Pluralist think tank expert concurred, "Religious fissures are appearing. Ethiopia is in the nascent stages of radicalization. To tamp this out would require more effective administration." Despite the warning signs, the EPRDF apparently turns a blind eye to radicalization because, a former TPLF senior official said bluntly, "it is scared."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 000677

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/18/2019
 TAGS: ECON PGOV EAID ET
 SUBJECT: PARTY-STATALS: HOW THE RULING PARTIES'
 "ENDOWMENTS" OPERATE

ADDIS ABAB 00000677 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Upon taking power in 1991, the ruling Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) liquidated non-military assets held by the movement to found a series of companies whose profits would be used as venture capital to rehabilitate the war-torn Tigray region's economy. The TPLF bestowed a portion of this initial roughly US \$100 million to each of the three other component parties in the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition to establish similar endeavors in each of their home regions. While companies were initially established in the names of party loyalists, they were formally transferred to the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT) under the "endowment" provisions within the Ethiopian civil code, which prevented individuals from withdrawing money from enterprises for their own gain. Although the Board of Directors of EFFORT closely monitors the finances and business plans for each company under its umbrella, EFFORT's books themselves are not subject to any transparent external review. Throughout the 1990s, EFFORT commissioned feasibility studies and provided capital for various commercial ventures throughout Tigray. In this decade, however, no new EFFORT ventures have been established despite significant profits, lending credibility to the popular perception that the ruling party and its members are drawing on endowment resources to fund their own interests or for personal gain. End Summary.

LIQUIDATED AID RESOURCES USED TO FOUND THE ENDOWMENTS

¶2. (C) Seeye Abraha (strictly protect), the Chief Executive Officer of EFFORT from 1995 until his expulsion from the TPLF in 2001, detailed EFFORT's founding and operations to Pol/Econ Chief in a two-hour discussion on March 17. Seeye noted that the TPLF had received huge amounts of international assistance, particularly from the United States, throughout the 1980s to support its struggle against the Derg government and to provide relief to the Tigrayan people. Whatever food or other in-kind support that they could use or transport into Tigray, they would. They sold the excess food and support items in Sudan for cash. At the end of the struggle, the TPLF incorporated

whatever military materiel it held into the Ethiopian military's inventory, kept all of its more than 100 transport lorries, and liquidated most of the remaining stock held. Seeye estimated that in 1991 the TPLF had roughly \$100 million liquidated. Acknowledging that these resources did not belong to individual TPLF members, the party decided to use the funds as a perpetual relief mechanism for the Tigrayan people who suffered the costs of the struggle.

VENTURE CAPITAL TO REHABILITATE TIGRAY

¶3. (C) Initially, the party allocated a portion of the funds available to assist families of those who died in the struggle directly. The bulk, however, was used as venture capital to establish companies to generate perpetual income sources for new ventures. From 1991 to 1995, these companies were coordinated under the Economic Affairs Department of the TPLF under the leadership of Sebhat Nega. Convinced that party insiders were more loyal to the party than interested in personal gain, the initial companies were established with individual party insiders listed as the owners. Additional resources were used to fund feasibility studies for other local-resource intensive ventures of interest.

¶4. (C) In 1995, the Defense Minister and long-time confidant of Prime Minister Meles, Seeye Abraha assumed control of the rehabilitation-intended entities. Recognizing the potential liability of having massive resources held in private names, Seeye and the TPLF established EFFORT as a caretaker foundation for the rehabilitation efforts. Seeye acknowledged that some

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capital had been lost in the years prior to his assuming control, but declined to give details. Having inherited only a relatively primitive civil code, the party decided that the "Endowment" provisions therein offered the best means to secure the resources available for rehabilitation without any loopholes to allow individuals to withdraw capital for personal gain. The TPLF gave a portion of its wealth to each of the other three parties in the EPRDF to establish their own endowment funds. The Amhara National Democratic Movement's (ANDM) endowment is called Tirit, the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) founded Wendo Trading, and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) established Dinsho. (Note: While Seeye confirmed that the TPLF provided funds for these other rehabilitation funds, which later became endowments, he never had direct involvement in any of those funds/endowments operations. End Note.)

¶5. (C) Once established under EFFORT, each company was transformed into a shareholder company. Seeye argued that the TPLF's intention in the mid-1990s was for EFFORT to study, and then establish, profitable companies that used locally-available resources and provided employment for Tigray. Examples of firms established early include a transportation company to use the trucks used in earlier relief efforts, the Messebo Cement plant outside of Mekele, a trading house, and Almeda Garments outside of Mekele which would use cotton grown in Tigray as an input. Feasibility studies were done for a marble factory, a gold mine (in joint venture with Ghana's Ashanti Gold), and construction firms. EFFORT intended to establish companies under a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model offering the sale of established companies to citizens through the sale of shares with the profits and proceeds going to fund new commercial ventures. EFFORT was charged with reviewing each company's finances and business plans. While EFFORT was controlled by a CEO and Board of Directors drawn solely from TPLF party loyalists, Seeye confirmed that each company it controlled was managed and reviewed by professionals with significant expertise in each company's relative sector. Managers were expected to keep and provide detailed financial accounting, but to transfer profits not being re-invested to EFFORT. EFFORT accounts were only internally reviewed by the party.

AN APPARENT SHIFT SINCE 2001

¶6. (C) During the rift within the TPLF in 2001, much of the EFFORT Board of Directors sided with their CEO Seeye and were expelled from the party. One who did not, Sebhat Nega, was rewarded with the CEO position. (Note: As Seeye has not been involved in EFFORT since 2001, and is now in the political opposition, his perceptions of EFFORT

dynamics since 2001 may be skewed or intended to influence. Still, his long-term, close relationships with those who do remain in the party's top echelon and his -- and his family's -- attention to Tigray and continued friendships with many still in office, do lend some credibility to his analysis of EFFORT activities since ¶2001. End Note). According to Seeye, upon Sebhat's assumption of the CEO position, all EFFORT companies were re-registered from shareholder companies to private limited companies -- potentially reflecting a shift in the BOT approach previously pursued. While we do not know how profitable all of the EFFORT companies are, we can assume that government protectionism and excess demand in major sectors such as transportation, cement, and construction has ensured that many of the larger EFFORT companies are reaping large profits. At the same time, Seeye confirms that none of the ventures for which feasibility studies or analyses were conducted while he remained at EFFORT have been established in the interceding years -- suggesting that profits are not being rolled over into new Tigray rehabilitation endeavors, but diverted elsewhere.

¶7. (C) Seeye argued confidently that the business community's perception that EFFORT's and similar EPRDF parties endowments' companies receive preferential access to limited credit and/or foreign exchange stocks, or treatment on government bids and contracts, customs clearance, and

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import/export license is certainly true. He went so far as to argue that these "party-statal" likely receive preferences even over the special treatment received by state-owned enterprises. Seeye argued that, much like Sebhat Nega's removal from the TPLF Central Committee in 2006, his removal as CEO of EFFORT in late 2008 likely reflects tensions between Sebhat and Prime Minister Meles' wife Azeb Mesfin. While former regional Vice President of Tigray Abadi Zemo has taken over the CEO position at EFFORT, Seeye argued that Azeb's ascendance to the EFFORT Vice Chairmanship reflects an increasing consolidation of influence within the party and control over resources by Meles and Azeb.
YAMAMOTO



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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 001674

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2019
 TAGS: KPAO KISL KIRF SCUL PROP ET
 SUBJECT: WAHABISM IN ETHIOPIA AS "CULTURAL IMPERIALISM"

REF: 08 ADDIS ABABA 3230

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SECOND OF THREE CABLES ON COUNTERING WAHABI INFLUENCE IN ETHIOPIA

 SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Arab Wahabi missionaries, mainly from Saudi Arabia, continue to make inroads into the Ethiopian Muslim community, but are meeting increasing resistance in doing so. Islam has existed in Ethiopia since the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the mainly Sufi Muslim community has enjoyed traditions, customs, and cultural practices that have endured for centuries. Yet this indigenous Muslim culture has come under attack since 9/11 by Wahabi missionaries engaging in what amounts to cultural imperialism against Ethiopian Islam. Prior to 9/11, there was little Wahabi proselytizing in Ethiopia. As a result, Ethiopia's delicate Muslim/Christian balance and historic attitudes between the faith communities regarding tolerance and mutual respect are being challenged, thereby undermining U.S. interests in the region. Sufi Muslim leaders want support from the U.S. to counter this pressure. END SUMMARY.

 WAHABIS CHALLENGE ETHIOPIAN MUSLIMS

¶2. (C) In the Harar, Bale, and Dessie regions of Ethiopia, Arab Wahabi missionaries (and their Ethiopian disciples) are directly challenging the traditions and practices of the indigenous Muslim community. As expressed to PAO by members of the IASC, Wahabi missionaries are able to use their money and legitimacy as native speakers of the language of the Koran and their closeness to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, to undermine Ethiopian Muslim customs and traditions and teach interpretations of the Koran that promote a far less tolerant view of other Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Because of the financial support these missionaries have, it is very difficult for Ethiopian Muslim leaders to counter their influence and many imams are not educated well enough to argue against these foreign interlocutors. As a result, indigenous Ethiopian Muslim culture is under assault and the Ethiopian Muslim community needs U.S. support to counter extremist influence that may well generate and promote conflicts with the Ethiopian Christian community as well as intra-Muslim conflicts as we have already seen happen in some areas.

¶3. (C) Ethiopians are sensitive to this issue and readily understand the nature of this conflict when it is put in &cultural imperialism8 terms. &Cultural imperialism8 and &globalization8 are terms that resonate with Africans across the continent. Ethiopian Muslims, in particular, can easily see that Arab cultural imperialism under the guise of Wahabi missionaries threatens their centuries-old faith traditions and sends a message of inferiority to the Muslim faithful. That message of inferiority is that African Muslim traditions (particularly Sufi) are &unislamic,8 that Africans who have been practicing Islam for more than a thousand years have &strayed form the Truth,8 and that they need to purge their culture and traditions of practices and rituals that do not conform to their Arab/Saudi/Wahabi ideal.

WAHABI ACTIVISM IN ETHIOPIA SINCE 9/11

¶4. (C) Since 9/11, according to post's interlocutors, Wahabi missionaries have increased their activity in Ethiopia greatly. Prior to 9/11, Wahabis were hardly active in Ethiopia. Since that time, though, they have greatly increased their work in Ethiopia, working through NGOs and Ethiopian Muslims who lived and worked or studied in Saudi Arabia and became Wahabis themselves. Early on, they set themselves up in direct competition with the Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (IASC) as being the only legitimate Muslim authority in Ethiopia. Although the IASC initially tried to accommodate the Wahabis, they quickly realized there was no compromising with them and cleaned house in the last IASC

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election earlier this year. Now the IASC is all Sufi and they are reaching out to the U.S. and other potential partners to help them counter Wahabi influence.

¶5. (C) In the Bale district of Ethiopia (southeastern Oromiya region near Somalia), in the area around the Sheikh Hussein Shrine, Wahabis destroyed more than thirty Sufi shrines in the first few years after 9/11. In doing so, they turned public opinion against them and met considerable resistance from the local population. No more monuments have been vandalized or destroyed in the past three or four years, but Wahabi activists continue to preach and teach against the practice of saints, shrines and pilgrimages) especially to the Sheikh Hussein Shrine, which has been a pilgrimage destination for Ethiopian Muslims for over 400 years.

¶6. (C) In Dessie, in the Amhara region (northern part of the country), Wahabis are on the offensive against the practice of celebrating Mouldid al-Nebi, the Birthday of the Prophet. With support from Kuwaiti religious NGOs, Wahabi activists actively preach and teach against this practice, which has been a popular custom in the larger region for some 200 years.

¶7. (C) In Harar city and the Harar region, Wahabis went to great lengths to make inroads into this historic center of Ethiopian Islam (Muslim since the time of the Prophet and considered by many to be the &Fourth Holy City of Islam8), but strong resistance by the populace and their leaders effectively drove them out. In the larger Harar region, Wahabis in the past tried to evangelize the population, but the people in this heavily Sufi area roundly rejected Wahabism to the point that Wahabi missionaries finally gave up and left. This has not been the case in other areas, however, where cultural identity and religious leadership was not as strong and confident as in Harar. Telling people who have been practicing Islam since the time of the Prophet that their traditions and practices are &unislamic8 grated heavily on the Hararis, own Ethiopian national pride and ancient faith traditions that long predate those of Ibn Wahab. When driving through this region of Ethiopia, and when walking the streets of Harar and surrounding cities, Wahabi veils and beards are so rare as to be virtually non-existent. In fact, a visitor might go an entire day without seeing even one.

MAJORITY SUFIS FIGHT BACK AGAINST WAHABIS

¶8. (C) Ethiopian Muslims, by and large, are Sufis. As Sufis, the Muslim communities across Ethiopia have developed local customs and traditions of saints, zikrs (communal prayer chants), and pilgrimages, and Ethiopian Muslim writers have compiled a significant body of literature on Islam, Islamic law, and Muslim spirituality. With the advent of Wahabism in Ethiopia, these practices have come under widespread assault and the indigenous Muslim community has grown increasingly

resentful and outspoken in the face of these attacks by foreigners. Muslim leaders as well have grown increasingly bold in their outspokenness against Wahabism and the IASC talks openly now of the need to counter their influence.

WAHABISM AS &CULTURAL IMPERIALISM8

¶9. (C) Given the nature of Wahabi attacks on the Ethiopian Muslim community, the picture is becoming increasingly clear through discussions with Muslim intellectuals and religious leaders that this is, in fact, &cultural imperialism8 by Arab/Wahabi missionaries against Ethiopian/African Muslims. Wahabi missionaries do not seek to convert Christians or non-Muslims, but instead focus all their efforts on other Muslims only. In seeking to &purify Islam8 among the larger Muslim community, Wahabis are in fact trying to develop a globalized version of the Faith that does not reflect the rich diversity of Muslim communities and their faith traditions around the world.



¶10. (C) Ethiopians are acutely aware that they are the oldest independent country in Africa, that they have Africa's only indigenous alphabet, that they were never colonized, that the Falasha Jewish community in Ethiopia pre-dated the Babylonian exile, that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the only

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indigenous Church in Africa, and that Islam has been present in Ethiopia since the Prophet Muhammad himself, among many other points of pride. They are very proud that so many Muslims consider Harar a holy city and that so much Islamic heritage has been preserved there. This national pride is strong across all faith groups and Ethiopians greatly resent foreigners telling them that their faith is wrong, their cultural traditions are somehow wrong and need to be changed, that their centuries-old practices must be curtailed, etc.

¶11. (C) The fact that foreign Wahabi missionaries do not seek to convert non-Muslims, but instead focus exclusively on the indigenous Muslim community, shows that they are in fact trying to change the Muslim culture of Ethiopia by questioning their values (e.g., tolerance of Christians and other non-Muslims, as well as other Muslim groups), their customs (e.g., pilgrimages to saints, shrines), their traditions (e.g., Moulids), their style of dress (e.g., black Wahabi veils that cover the face instead of the open, brightly-colored veils typically worn by Muslim women in Ethiopia), and even the writings of Ethiopian Muslim thinkers whose views do not conform with Wahabi interpretations.

¶12. (C) By recognizing this movement as an aspect of cultural imperialism, it becomes clearer how to develop an effective strategy to counter this influence. Part III of this cable series will outline a range of cultural programs that post is now implementing in Ethiopia that are very well-received by the Muslim community and that show promise to further erode the impact of Wahabi missionaries in Ethiopia.
YAMAMOTO

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ADDIS ABABA 001318

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/07/2019

TAGS: PGOV [\[Internal Governmental Affairs\]](#), PINR [\[Intelligence\]](#), PREL [\[External Political Relations\]](#), KPAO [\[Public Affairs Office\]](#), ET [\[Ethiopia\]](#)

SUBJECT: UNDERSTANDING THE ETHIOPIAN HARDLINERS

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (S) In a rare meeting with the elusive head of the Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) and main hardliner within the powerful executive committee of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) party, Ambassador and NISS chief Getachew Assefa discussed a wide range of regional and bilateral issues. Getachew made clear during the four hour private meeting that Ethiopia sought greater understanding from the U.S. on national security issues vital to Ethiopia, especially Ethiopia's concerns over domestic insurgent groups like the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). He spoke at length about former Addis Ababa Mayor-elect Berhanu Nega as an extremist; VOA's biased reporting; the dangers of former defense minister Seeye Abraha's growing authority within the opposition; Ethiopia's views on democracy and human rights; Eritrea's role as a rogue state in the region; and regional issues including the importance of supporting the Transitional Federal Government and a rapprochement with Alhu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) as the only option for Somalia's survival; and the need for U.S. reconciliation with Sudan. End Summary.

TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING

¶2. (S) Through the arrangements of former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, Irv Hicks, Ambassador met with Ethiopia's national intelligence chief, Getachew Assefa, for a four hour private meeting on June 4. Getachew, noted for his eccentric behavior and elusiveness, explained to the Ambassador that he welcomes greater dialogue with the U.S. Embassy, but underscored the importance of deeper U.S. understanding of Ethiopia's security concerns. Characterizing the U.S. relationship as sound and expressing appreciation for the cooperation with the U.S. on special projects on counterterrorism, Getachew emphasized that Ethiopia shares U.S. views on high value targets (HVT) like Robow and al-Turki as threats to regional stability. But domestic insurgent groups, like the OLF and ONLF, should also be treated as terrorists because they have safe haven camps in extremist-held areas in Somalia and receive support and assistance from the very same HVTs that the U.S. and Ethiopia

are trying to neutralize. Such support makes the ONLF and OLF accomplices with international terrorist groups, Getachew argued. Just as Ethiopia would not meet with domestic U.S. insurgent groups, referring to individuals and groups who would conduct bombings of U.S. government offices, abortion clinics and advocates of racial and gender hate, Ethiopia would not want U.S. officials to meet with Ethiopia's domestic insurgents who bomb and kill Ethiopian officials and citizens.

¶3. (S) Getachew added that the GOE does conduct talks with the ONLF and OLF and there are groups, like the Ethiopian elders, who reach out to the membership in an effort to end the violence. Getachew stressed that this is an Ethiopian process by Ethiopians and should remain an Ethiopian-led, Ethiopian-directed and Ethiopian-coordinated process. Ambassador made clear that the U.S. Administration does not meet with the ONLF and that the U.S. is in close consultations with Ethiopian authorities on their views on the ONLF and OLF, and that the U.S. supports the work of the Ethiopian Elders to end the violence. Getachew noted the visit to European Capitals and Washington of ONLF senior leaders and said they met with staffers in the U.S. Vice President's office. The Ambassador said that we had no evidence that a meeting took place with the Vice President's staff and stressed that the State Department did not meet with the ONLF group. Further, the U.S. military no longer meets with alleged ONLF supporters in the volatile Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia because of security concerns. The Ambassador stressed that such meetings in the past was for force protection of U.S. military civil affairs team working in the dangerous Ogaden region near Somalia, but in the last few years there has been no contact. The Ambassador added that there should be closer discussion between he U.S. and Ethiopia on this issue.

U.S. GIVES EXTREMISTS A VOICE AND LEGITIMACY

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¶4. (S) Getachew complained pointedly that Voice of America (VOA) is biased and gives a platform for extremist elements. He cited VOA interviews with former Addis Mayor-elect Berhanu Nega, whom Getachew asserted is supporting the overthrow of the government from his base in Pennsylvania. Getachew referred to the recent arrest of 40 current and former military officers and other individuals in informing the Ambassador that the NISS has recorded, through voice intercepts, conversations between Berhanu's Ginbot 7 group in London with some of the 40 arrested people in Addis. Getachew asked why the U.S.G. would give a public platform to a person who advocates violence and the overthrow of a government friendly to, and supportive of, U.S. policy.

¶5. (S) Getachew also discussed the VOA reports covering former State Department official Greg Stanton of Genocide Watch, who charged Prime Minister Meles of crimes against humanity as a result of Ethiopia's incursion into Somalia in 2006. Getachew complained that VOA Amharic reporting was biased and not even handed. He did note that VOA English was fine. VOA Amharic service does not interview Ethiopian officials who can refute "false assertions" espoused in the VOA interviews. Getachew praised Germany's Deutsche Welle service for its balanced and yet hard hitting reporting. Getachew underscored that if the GOE is doing something wrong or does not have the support of the people, news services have an obligation to highlight such problems. Getachew said VOA, however, seeks to report only what is anti-government or lend support for the opposition. Getachew concluded that the U.S.G., because of VOA Amharic service is an official arm of the U.S.G., lacks neutrality in its support for the opposition and this undercuts relations between the two countries. The Ambassador replied that VOA is a very independent media and the U.S.G. does not have oversight and control over the content of the reporting.

¶6. (S) Getachew raised the recent arrest of VOA senior stringer Meleskachew Amaha by the Customs office for non-payment of taxes. Getachew went into detail that Meleskachew, who was a business partner until recently with Berhanu Nega, was hiding contraband in materials brought into Ethiopia duty free by the Norwegian Government for projects and programs. Getachew said in one shipment were contraband radios not subject to duty free status and taxes were not paid on the products. There were also radios in one shipment, the use of which was not known. Further, Meleskachew secured a bank loan illegally. Getachew added that Meleskachew's association with Berhanu Nega, connection with the VOA Amharic service, and closeness to the opposition drew the attraction of Ethiopian authorities.

THE OPPOSITION

¶7. (S) Getachew commented on Ethiopia's opposition leadership underscoring that he wishes to see a vibrant opposition movement, but currently, the NGO community and foreign missions support the opposition blindly without critical analysis. Getachew remarked that the opposition is not democratic and, if elected to power, would lead to more political restrictions and a severe deterioration of relations with the U.S. over democratic values. Getachew raised in particular the rise of former Defense Minister Seeye Abraha, founder of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) which established the current government in 1991. He was jailed for the past seven years on corruption charges. Getachew noted that Seeye is a hardliner who pressed the war to be waged in Eritrea despite the decision to stop the conflict and settle the issue through the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. Getachew said Seeye is now an opposition figure but he is no democrat and would rule the country, if elected, with an iron fist in the most undemocratic manner. Getachew said he knows Seeye well, having fought along side him in the struggle to overthrow the communist Derg regime. Seeye is fearless, focused and dangerous, according to Getachew. Should the opposition come to power, especially with Seeye at the helm, the opposition-led government would not tolerate parties opposed to it, seek the arrest and prosecution of former officials and prime ministers, and limit the people's ability to participate freely in the political process. Getachew added that it would be a disaster for Ethiopia and for U.S. relations as well as giant step backward for the people of Ethiopia.

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¶8. (S) Reflecting on the 2005 elections, Getachew said he welcomed Berhanu Nega's election as mayor of Addis Ababa and was disappointed with Berhanu's refusal to take up responsibilities of the office. Berhanu rejected the electoral process which elected him mayor and let down the people of Addis Ababa, Getachew said. If Berhanu had served, it would have been a test for the opposition in managing the capital's complex challenges. Berhanu may have succeeded but no one will ever know. Berhanu took a different path, Getachew said, and is now an extremist pursuing efforts to overthrow the government from his base in Pennsylvania where he is an associate professor at Bucknell University. Getachew said he found it difficult to understand how Berhanu, who had realized his dream to be mayor of Addis Ababa, descended into the role of a terrorist.

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

¶9. (S) Getachew echoed common themes advocated by the ruling EPRDF party stalwarts from the Prime Minister to the party faithful. He stressed that the EPRDF supports democracy and that it is the goal for the ruling party to eventually give way to other parties of common vision in fighting poverty and a commitment to support the process of democratization. Getachew said he would support opposition parties if they have a better message to help Ethiopia overcome poverty, improve health care and education, and raise the standard of living of the Ethiopian people. He added that the U.S. and others should look at Ethiopia's democracy efforts and human rights record as a work in progress. It will take time but Ethiopia is moving in the right direction that will make Ethiopia a democratic state.

FOREIGN POLICY: ERITREA, SOMALIA, AND SUDAN

¶10. (S) Getachew described Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki as "no martyr," who sought to survive and establish himself as the predominate leader in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia stands in the way of Isaias' grand design and it is his goal to divide Ethiopia and weaken it through terrorism. Getachew remarked that one of Isaias' bodyguards was in Dubai and then defected to Ethiopia. The bodyguard remarked that Isaias was a recluse who spent his days painting and tinkering with gadgets and carpentry work. Isaias appeared to make decisions in isolation with no discussion with his advisors. It was difficult to tell how Isaias would react each day and his moods changed constantly. Getachew added that Eritrea trains over 30 rebel groups at Camp Sawa near the Sudan border and graduates are infiltrated into Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia to enhance instability and target Ethiopian interests. Getachew expressed dismay with Kenya in allowing Eritrean intel officers and military trainers who support al-Shabaab in Somalia, to bribe their way out of Kenya and return to Eritrea. He explained the activities of Abraha Kassa, Eritrea's elusive intel chief who directs Eritrea's Somalia operations.

¶11. (S) On Somalia, Getachew said the only way to support stability was through support for the ASWJ which attracts a wide range of support from all the clans, especially those

groups in conflict with each other. The ASWJ has been effective in countering al-Shabaab and is ideologically committed to Sufism and the defense of Islam against the extremist salafists which form al-Shabaab. Getachew said the U.S. can best help by supporting the ASWJ and TFG to cooperate, to pay salaries of TFG troops and support the IGAD and African Union which are seeking to sanction Eritrea, implement a no fly zone, and close ports used by extremist elements.

¶12. (S) On Sudan, Getachew urged the U.S. to engage Bashir and the Sudanese leadership. Sudan, more than Somalia, poses the greatest threat to regional security and stability, Getachew argued. The prospects for a civil war which destabilizes the region would be devastating. The only country that would benefit would be Eritrea.

COMMENT

¶13. (S) It is interesting that Getachew's description of President Isaias mirrors Getachew's own character, as well.

ADDIS ABAB 00001318 004 OF 004

Getachew avoids speaking with foreigners and few foreigners really know him. He is not well liked within his own agency for decisions he makes in isolation which, at times, make little sense and are not discussed in consensus with his staff. His apparent hot temper and reclusive habits have made it difficult for his staff to gauge his moods and understand his thought process. The Prime Minister himself and other EPRDF leaders have remarked to the Ambassador that it is difficult to talk with Getachew and to meet with him, but that his loyalty to the EPRDF is never in question. Despite his poor reputation, Getachew is regarded as a strong EPRDF hardliner and commands considerable authority and influence within the powerful EPRDF executive committee which lays down the policy for the ruling party and the government.

While relations with NISS officials below Getachew's rank are extremely cordial and, depending on the unit, very close, the Ambassador has met with Getachew only twice in the past three years, and other Embassy staff have also met with little success in engaging him. Even visiting senior U.S. intel officers have not been successful in meeting Getachew. Ambassador will pursue future meetings with Getachew but he will never be a close contact. End Comment.
YAMAMOTO

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 DNI FOR NIO/AFRICA CARSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2018
 TAGS: PREL KDEM PGOV ASEC EAID ET
 SUBJECT: DISMANTLING ETHIOPIA'S POLITICAL SPACE

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1571 B. ADDIS ABABA 1672

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) This is the first in a series of cables outlining policy options on U.S.-Ethiopia relations in light of recent restrictions on political and democratic space (Refs. A and B).

¶2. (S/NF) The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power in 1991 under much fanfare for toppling the brutal communist "Derg" regime, promising to share power among Ethiopia's strong and diverse ethnic groups, and pledging political and economic reform. This hope also led the United States to consider Prime Minister Meles one of "a new generation" of African leaders. The EPRDF's refusal to genuinely share power with independent-minded coalition members such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in favor of EPRDF-affiliated puppet parties, however, led these groups to abandon the government in preference for armed struggle in the early 1990s. Still, the ruling EPRDF coalition has instituted an appreciable degree of political reform in Ethiopia since coming to power in 1991. The 2005 pre-election campaign period is the best example of such openings, with unprecedented live televised debates between incumbents and contenders, equitable media coverage across political parties, and unhindered opposition access to constituencies. Once significant opposition electoral gains became evident, however, the GoE ceased its experiment with multi-party democracy and began systematically dismantling Ethiopia's democratic space. In June and November 2005 Ethiopian security forces used excessive force in firing on civilian protesters, killing 193 and injuring 763. In late-2005, security forces detained 30,000-50,000 civilians without charge, holding them incommunicado in military controlled camps for nearly three months and arrested 131 senior opposition, civil society, and media leaders on purely political charges ranging from "outrages against the constitution," to "treason," to "attempted genocide."

¶3. (S/NF) The precipitous decline in political space has

continued over the past two years. While placating donors by holding interparty dialogue on contentious issues, the ruling party effectively rejected recommendations by established opposition parties. When the lack of serious engagement forced an opposition walk out, the ruling party leveraged rubber-stamp endorsements by EPRDF-fabricated opposition groups to ram through a new National Electoral Board (NEB), a repressive media law, and a political party financing law that restricts and denies space to the opposition. In the past two years the clearly-partisan NEB has rendered suspect administrative rulings stripping the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP) and Oromo National Congress (ONC) labels from their freely elected and recognized leaders (Addis 145). Ruling party cadres' harassment and intimidation of opposition candidates in the run-up to the April local elections precluded them from registering for the April local elections (Addis 596 and Addis 667). Additionally, the NEB's bureaucratic delays -- and refusals -- in approving domestic election observers prevented credible organizations from observing the elections (Addis 1065). Together these efforts guaranteed an overwhelming marginalization of any political opposition in the 2008 local elections. Ultimately, the opposition took only three out of 3.6 million contested seats in April's local elections. In our assessment, the local elections significantly increased voter apathy and deep frustration over the chances of building on the political gains of the 2005 campaign period and election results.

¶4. (S/NF) Beyond the scope of formal politics, the GoE's brutal conduct of counter-insurgency operations and harsh oppression of other ethnic groups betray the minority regime's desperate attempts to remain internal control at all costs. And the costs are high. In the Ogaden region, systematic reports by Human Rights Watch and other credible groups of summary executions, rapes, forced conscription, detentions, and beatings by the Ethiopian military against the civilian population (see 2008 Ethiopia Human Rights Report) combined with intentional impediments to the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies (Addis 1284) reveal the GoE tactics that undermine the local population's confidence in the government and drive locals to further support insurgents. Granted that ONLF actions in the Ogaden have increased violence, we have urged the ENDF and GoE that a violent response is not the answer. We have passed Gen. Petraeus' manual on counterinsurgency operations to senior GoE and ENDF leaders as a framework for dealing with the ONLF. CJTF-HOA's inability to conduct civil affairs operations in that region, combined with the close USG-GoE partnership in the public's mind not only prevents us from winning hearts and minds -- something in our own national interest -- but risks allowing the public to conflate the USG with the actions being conducted by our strategic partner -- further putting U.S. national interests at risk as the local population begins to view the U.S. as the enemy. While the tactics are not as extreme or pervasive there, the parallels in the GoE's strategy of maintaining control in the Oromiya region have similarly marginalized the country's largest ethnic group. The perceived USG complacency with these actions, in the minds of Oromos, is best exemplified by one Oromo opposition leader's equation of the U.S.-GoE relationship today with the U.S. relationship with the Shah of Iran in the 1950s-1970s.

¶5. (S/NF) Mounting efforts to marginalize civil society represent the latest dynamic in the GoE's strategy of eliminating dissent -- a process begun in early 2005 when Ethiopia became the first country in twenty years to expel the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and IFES. Despite acquitting the civil society leaders detained after the 2005 post-election turmoil on the sole charge they faced, the Ethiopian court on that same day imposed a new charge and convicted the two leaders without the opportunity for a defense. The GoE's refusal to release the two on parole in stark contrast to standard practice and under a clear directive from the ruling party's central committee (Addis 260), only confirmed the GoE's intolerance for dissent.

¶6. (S/NF) In April, the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington and the Foreign Ministry began informing USAID-funded NGOs that the GoE would no longer register USAID implementing partners in Ethiopia, instead requiring them to operate under more tenuous Memoranda of Understanding signed with specific GoE entities. On May 2, the final nail was unveiled as the Justice Ministry distributed a draft civil society proclamation -- reportedly developed personally by Prime Minister Meles and the Justice Minister -- that effectively bars civil society groups from activities in the democracy, good governance, human rights, community development, conflict resolution, justice, and law enforcement sectors, and establishes draconian penalties for civil society

individuals who violate the highly subjective authorities of a new civil society agency (Addis 1223). Entry, registration, and operations of technical assistance and other contractor personnel and commodities are becoming increasingly problematic with the GoE. A very-poorly introduced requirement replacing the previous VAT exemption for foreign assistance implementing partners with a to-be-established VAT reimbursement scheme and the GoE's elimination of duty free imports for implementing partners appears to violate the Ethiopia-U.S. Bilateral Assistance Agreement (Ref. B). The GoE's recent refusal to register U.S. implementing partners or accord them bilateral Agreement-secured privileges is even more problematic.

¶7. (S/NF) Embassy Addis Ababa views this precipitous narrowing of Ethiopia's political space as undermining Ethiopia's stability which could affect the entire Horn of Africa region.

YAMAMOTO



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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 001599

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/07/2019 TAGS: PREL PGOV EAID ET SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER MELES ON BALANCING AND STRENGTHENING U.S. RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY -----

¶1. (C) Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi underscored to visiting Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson on July 6 that Ethiopia welcomes a broad and balanced relationship that focuses not just on security but also encompasses economic development and political stability. As he commented to other senior U.S. officials, Meles stated that Ethiopia shares the same values and interests on democracy and human rights and common policy goals on development and security. Meles reiterated the need to correct problems which unnecessarily raise distrust in the relationship. He cited Ethiopia's inclusion with Sudan and Zimbabwe in the July 2008 omnibus appropriations bill requiring notification to Congress before disbursement of funds and other complaints as indicators of a changed and tougher stance on Ethiopia by the U.S. Meles argued that criticism of recently passed legislation on press, public financing of political parties, and civil society did not limit political space, but expanded democratic values in Ethiopia. He welcomed senior level meetings with the U.S. to define clearly the relationship and to resolve misunderstandings. End Summary.

TOWARD A MORE BALANCED RELATIONSHIP -----

¶2. (C) Assistant Secretary Carson and Prime Minister Meles discussed for over three hours on July 6 the need to develop a more balanced relationship which focuses not only on regional security concerns, but also on advancing shared objectives on development and political stability, including human rights and democratic values. But, misunderstandings stand in the way of developing a strong relationship. Meles described Ethiopia's belief that despite its commitment to form a more democratic country, Ethiopia is being treated more harshly than countries which do not advance democratic values. He listed several problems which, when taken together, convey a changed stance, a tougher approach toward Ethiopia by the U.S. Such indicators, if not addressed and resolved, will undercut the relationship, Meles argued.

¶3. (C) Meles raised, as an example, Ethiopia's inclusion among a list of countries like Sudan and Zimbabwe, in a brief paragraph in the 2008 appropriations bill requiring Congressional notification prior to disbursement of assistance. Other indicators of changed perceptions include the Department of State's annual Human Rights Report. He called the Report "inaccurate" and "misleading" and questioned why the Embassy and the Department could not work with the government to jointly investigate or monitor alleged

human rights abuses. To issue the report without first raising problems directly with the government to allow officials the opportunity to address complaints, investigate charges, and resolve valid human rights abuse claims does not contribute to confidence and trust in the relationship. The Prime Minister said the State Department's Human Rights Report allows other groups, like Human Rights Watch, to issue even harsher reports based solely on rumors, misinformation, and unsubstantiated complaints. Meles said that he understood the legal restrictions placed on the Embassy in sharing sensitive information with the government, but urged a more open discussion as a means to improve relations.

¶4. (C) Meles remarked that Ethiopia and the U.S. must dialogue on differing views on rebel groups, like the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). The Prime Minister cited past contacts with the group by the U.S. military, in its effort to enhance force protection for civil affairs teams working in the volatile Ogaden region near Somalia. Just as Ethiopia would not contact groups declared as insurgents or terrorists by the U.S., Meles questioned why the U.S. military and, most recently, the U.S. Congress, would speak with the ONLF, a declared insurgent group by Ethiopia. Meles offers as another indicator of a changed posture toward Ethiopia by the U.S. the refusal to sell night vision goggles to the Ethiopian military by the U.S. Further, this tension in the relationship was recently heightened by the passing to the U.S. and UK Embassies in private a copy of a draft antiterrorism law. A report was released by Human Rights Watch along with a very critical comment, shortly thereafter. The Ethiopian Government (GoE) believes that it was the U.S.

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and not the UK which released the report to Human Rights Watch. Meles said he was perplexed as to why the USG would release a document provided in strict confidence. Such treatment by the U.S. places relations with Ethiopia on an adversarial plain.

COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY

¶5. (C) On human rights and democracy, the Prime Minister said there are few developing countries more serious than Ethiopia about establishing democratic structures and protecting human rights. But, negative and false reports and criticism from the vocal Ethiopian diaspora in the U.S. creates a wrong perception of Ethiopia's record. Meles underscored that he recognized there is much more that Ethiopia must do as an evolving democracy and that his government is committed to democratization. Meles said he could not understand how countries like Eritrea, which has no commitment to democratic values and is a severe abuser of human rights, can escape U.S. Congressional scrutiny, yet Ethiopia is a target for criticism. Meles stressed that it is Ethiopia's choice to pursue democracy and it holds itself accountable to the high standards set for democratic states.

POLITICAL SPACE

¶6. (C) Meles said that criticism of laws passed since 2005 as restrictive of political space were unnecessary attacks by the Ethiopian diaspora and international NGO groups. He briefly commented that such laws, which include the Press Law, Electoral Law, Political Parties Registration Law, Charities and Societies Law, and the just passed Antiterrorism Law, did not limit political space, but clearly defined the limits of activities and protected rights. On the re-arrest of opposition leader Birukan Midekssa, Meles said he had no choice other than to uphold legal procedures. Meles said that Birtukan violated the terms of her pardon and release from prison two years ago. Despite criticism, if the Justice Ministry had not re-arrested Birtukan, then it would demonstrate a lack of commitment by the GoE to upholding the rule of law and democratic procedures. Meles reiterated his belief that this was also an issue of sovereignty. There cannot be a law for the masses, but a separate law for Birtukan and others. All must comply with the constitution. Meles also added that he hopes the U.S. would give Ethiopia "space" to make mistakes and correct them for Ethiopia is still a developing democracy.

TOWARD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

¶7. (C) Meles said he welcomed the recent visit of Deputy Secretary Lew and the U.S. commitment to advancing a new paradigm for assistance. Development aid over humanitarian assistance would help Ethiopia's economic development. But,

Meles worried that, given the tougher U.S. approach to Ethiopia, that the U.S. Congress and Administration may place strict human rights and good governance conditions for disbursement of funds. Given the misperception of Ethiopia's human rights and democratic records, Meles expressed anxiety that Ethiopia would receive limited funding which would undercut its development program.

¶8. (C) Assistant Secretary Carson raised economic development and pressed the Prime Minister on the importance of opening the telecommunications, banking and insurance sectors to private enterprises. This will enhance foreign investment, resolve Ethiopia's chronic foreign exchange deficit, and improve its balance of payments problems. Meles did not directly address the closed sectors, but stressed his commitment to economic development as a cornerstone of his government's economic policy objectives.

CORRECTING MISPERCEPTIONS

¶9. (C) A/S Carson remarked that strong relations are defined by shared and common values on democracy, good governance, and human rights as well as on security and development goals. There are frictions in all relations, but such tension are discussion points, not defining points of the relationship, and the fundamental basis for relations remains

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strong. A/S Carson articulated human rights and good governance as cornerstone ideals for strong bilateral relations. He detailed how democracy and respect for human rights made countries and systems stronger. A/S Carson urged Meles to resolve the Birtukan case fairly in order to remove it as an irritant in the U.S.-Ethiopian relationship. A/S Carson praised the elections in Tanzania and Ghana, where POTUS will visit later this week. Finally, A/S Carson underscored the importance of political space to ease frustrations and enhance political dialogue. Meles expressed his understanding and support for A/S Carson's position. Meles also pressed for bilateral meetings between the U.S. and Ethiopia as essential to correct these differences and tensions, and to restore the mutual commitment by both countries to the bilateral relationship.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) While we have corrected Prime Minister Meles's misperceptions on night vision goggles and informed him of our efforts to discuss and correct problems noted in our human rights report, the continued raising of these issues underscore the anxiety by the Prime Minister and his government that the U.S. posture toward Ethiopia would become tougher or worse, and that the U.S. would not consider Ethiopia an important ally in the region. It is also clear that while Meles desires improved relations, he also wants to establish bilateral relations on his own terms in which the U.S. would give Ethiopia space as it advances human rights and democracy as well as economic development according to its own policy objectives. End Comment.

¶11. (U) A/S Carson cleared this message.
YAMAMOTO



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SENSITIVE SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2019 TAGS: PGOV ASEC PTER ET SUBJECT: ATTEMPTED COUP OR OPPOSITION ROUND-UP?

REF: A. ADDIS 379 B. 2008 ADDIS 3159

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY -----

¶1. (C) The Ethiopian Government (GoE) announced on April 25 that it had arrested 35 individuals affiliated with the overseas-based opposition movement "Ginbot 7" who were planning a "terrorist attack" in Addis Ababa. The Government was quick to clarify that it disrupted a "terrorist attack" not a "coup" as had been reported by some media outlets. Without any specific information or evidence substantiating the allegations, we -- and many diplomatic colleagues with whom we have spoken -- assess the move as another crackdown by the GoE on pro-opposition individuals within the military and civil service consistent with other such acts in recent years. End Summary.

DETAILS -----

¶2. (SBU) State Minister of Communications Ermias Legesse told Pol/Econ Chief that the group was composed of active and previously-dismissed military officers as well as a group of civilians. Ermias reported that the federal police had obtained court warrants on the morning of April 24 and, upon searching the homes of many suspects, found weapons, military clothing, maps, land mines, and documents detailing plans for a terrorist attack. Ermias declined to comment on the target(s) of the alleged attack as the case will be brought before the courts in coming days, but did say that the effort sought to disrupt activities all over the city.

¶3. (SBU) Ermias reported that one of the leaders of the alleged attack was Brigadier General Teferra Mammo while the civilian coordinator was Mr. Melaku Teferra. Melaku had been a leader of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) opposition party in 2005 who was detained and tried along with roughly one hundred other opposition leaders from November 2005 through July 2007. Melaku is currently a member of the National Council of the opposition Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party. The GoE explicitly argued that former CUD Vice Chairman and Addis Ababa mayor-elect Berhanu Nega was the driving force and mastermind behind the alleged attack. In response to press reports about police surrounding, harassing, beating, and arresting family members of individuals alleged to be affiliated with the planned attacks, Ermias stated that the police are only executing the warrants which they have received from the courts.

BACKGROUND ON GINBOT 7

¶4. (SBU) Ginbot 7 is a political opposition movement established in the United States on May 15, 2008 by Berhanu Nega. Berhanu Nega was a Vice Chairman of the CUD who competed successfully to become mayor of Addis Ababa in the 2005 elections. Berhanu Nega was arrested and tried along with Melaku and scores of other opposition leaders. He re-acquired his legal permanent resident status upon being released and pardoned and is now an Associate Professor of Economics at Bucknell University. On the third anniversary of the 2005 elections, Berhanu and others in the Diaspora founded Ginbot 7 (the date in the Ethiopian calendar corresponding to May 15, the day of the 2005 elections). At the founding event, Berhanu stated that the actions of the GoE demonstrate that peaceful struggle is not working in Ethiopia, and arguing therefore that struggle by any means is appropriate for Ethiopians to live freely.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) While the GoE's claims may ultimately prove true, in the absence of specific and credible information, this latest round of arrests strikes us and many Ethiopia watchers in Addis as another move by the GoE to justify the arrest of political dissenters. The GoE has a robust record since December 2006 of doing so within the military. Ref. A offers insights into GoE moves to purge the civil service of those who support the opposition, and even those who do not

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explicitly support the ruling party, and Ref. B details a late-October 2008 series of arrests of ethnic Oromos allegedly for being involved in plans by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) to conduct terrorist attacks in Ethiopia. Apart from his fiery rhetoric, we have no reason to believe that the asserted links between Berhanu Nega and the alleged plans for attacks are credible. Pol/Econ Chief spoke with Berhanu's AmCit wife, Dr. Nardos Minassie, who claimed to be completely unaware of the allegations or media reports surrounding her husband and reported being fine, staying at home, and unaffected by the incident.

¶6. (C) As have many within the Embassy, our counterparts at the British Embassy also assess that this current round of arrests are likely a variation on the theme established with the arrests reported in Ref. B. Despite the GoE's claim of having disrupted such a large alleged plot to terrorize the capital city, we have not observed any overt increase in the security presence around the capital. While we will continue to track this case as it develops, we expect that the current case will prove to be more one of political retaliation to further entrench the stifling of political opposition as Ethiopian eyes shift toward the 2010 national elections rather than one of a legitimate effort by the opposition to disrupt life in the capital or target the regime. End
Comment.
YAMAMOTO