

**ETHIOPIAN-AMERICANS and FRIENDS of ETHIOPIA in
OKLAHOMA For H.R. 2003**

**For Immediate Release
November 22, 2007**

**Protesters Ask Senator Inhofe to Be Fair
During Scheduled Ethiopia Visit**

Contact Person:

Mr. Muluneh Zeleke, Spokesperson

Phone: 405-314-4560

Oklahoma City, OK - On Tuesday, November 20, 2007, a delegation of the recently formed Ethiopian-Americans and Friends of Ethiopia in Oklahoma for H.R. 2003 organization delivered a letter to Senator Inhofe's district office in Oklahoma asking him to meet with opposition leaders and victims of the families of the 2005 massacre by government troops. In the letter to the Senator, the protesters stated:

We have learned from your office that you will be traveling to Ethiopia in the near future. In your recent statements, you said that that you maintain a personal friendship with Mr. Meles Zenawi and his wife. You have also indicated that you oppose H.R. 2003 because it will undermine U.S. counter-terrorism efforts in the Horn and thwart democratic reforms currently underway.

We would like to make a special request that during your visit in Ethiopia, you make an effort to meet with opposition party leaders and family members of the victims of the 2005 massacre. We believe that it is only fair that you hear at least both sides of the story before you make up your mind whether to oppose or support H.R. 2003.

There are always two sides on any issue, often more. In this case, there are those who support and oppose H.R. 2003. You have given much attention and credibility to those who oppose the bill. You have not heard or communicated with those who support the bill, or could benefit from the bill. That is why we are asking that you meet opposition leaders and victims' families. By having such meetings, you will gain several advantages. First, the meetings will enable you to reach a fair conclusion based on consideration of all sides of the issues. You could ask them questions and tell them why you have taken a particular position. Perhaps you could change their minds, and they could change yours. But all could be better informed and achieve greater understanding through communication.

Second, if you communicate with the opposition leaders and victims' families, your decision to support or oppose H.R. 2003 will be based on a clear conscience.

If you decide to oppose the bill, all will know that you have done it out of principle and not political expediency. If you decide to support it, the same will obtain. But it is unfair, fundamentally unfair, to oppose the bill based only on one side of the story.

Finally, by talking to the opposition leaders and victims' families, you will know the truth. You will get a chance to learn first hand what happened to those individuals who were massacred, the suffering of their families, and the oppression of dissidents and opposition leaders in Ethiopia. And as John 8:32 says, "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Please meet with opposition leaders and the victims' families when you visit Ethiopia. Would you promise to give their side a fair hearing before you return from Ethiopia?
Thank you."

The District Office Manager, Ms. Jane Hightower, accepted the letter and supporting documents and assured the delegation that Senator Inhofe will receive the request for a fair hearing by his constituents before he departs for Africa on November 26, 2007.

State Senator Constance N. Johnson joined the peaceful demonstration and spoke to Senator Inhofe's staffers concerning H.R. 2003. Senator Johnson stated:

I think it is crucial that Senator Inhofe communicate with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia about the strength and feelings of his constituents in Oklahoma. In addition to listening to different perspectives on his visit to Ethiopia, Senator Inhofe should have a conversation with the Prime Minister about his practices that are leading to the deaths of innocent civilians simply because of their right to dissent. It is important to share with the Prime Minister the American sense, and notion of democracy that as a Prime Minister and as a leader he allow for diversity of opinion and actually respect those that have differing views. This is a point that has to be taken up with the Prime Minister. The fact that we are here for 2 weeks in a row shows what is open to us here in America, the right to assemble and express our opinion. I am here today in support of that, and I will give whatever help I can to my Ethiopian-American constituents."

The protesters distributed thousands of flyers with the pictures of those massacred in June and November 2005, and asking Oklahomans to urge Senator Inhofe to meet with opposition leaders and victims' families during his visit to Ethiopia. A copy of a letter written by Professor Ted Vestal, the distinguished longtime scholar on Ethiopian politics, was also distributed. <http://www.ethiopianreview.com/articles/1502>

Local TV stations and print media covered the event. For video of the event, [click here](#):