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ZENAWI BLACKMAILS HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE INTO POSTPONING MARK-UP OF H.R. 2003

Zenawi Takes Kality Political Prisoners Hostage Over Mark-up of H.R. 2003

Zenawi Threatens Committee

“Mark-up H.R. 2003 and the Kality Prisoners Will Not Be Released!”

The Coalition for HR 2003 has just learned that Zenawi, through his lobbyists and intermediaries, has communicated to House Africa Subcommittee Chairman Donald Payne and House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos that if the Foreign Affairs Committee goes forward with the mark-up of H.R. 2003, he will NOT release the Kality political prisoners.

On the eve of the mark-up scheduled for June 26, 2007, a steady stream of State Department officials, lobbyists and others have gone to the Hill or called to tell Chairmen Payne and Lantos that the fate of the Kality prisoners will depend on the Committee’s decision to mark-up H.R. 2003.

State Department officials have sought to persuade the two committee chairmen and other members that Zenawi is in the final stages of releasing the Kality prisoners, and that marking up the bill at this time would cause him unspeakable embarrassment. Members were told that by marking-up the bill at this critical time, Zenawi will “lose face” among his people and the international community. To help him “save face”, members were asked to delay the mark-up for at least two weeks.

A Zenawi intermediary who has been recently shuttling messages between Zenawi and the political prisoners reportedly called particular members of Congress several times yesterday to assure them that this time around Zenawi will surely release the prisoners. Members were further assured that this time around Zenawi was not up to his usual delaying tactics or tricks.

Delay of Mark-up of H.R. 2003

Zenawi's threats to take the Kality prisoners hostage has caused considerable concern and consternation among the two Chairmen and other members of the Foreign Affairs committee.

The members are particularly concerned that they do not want to be responsible for the continued and needless suffering of the Kality prisoners by going forward with the mark-up of the bill at this time. They want to make sure that the Kality prisoners and all other political prisoners are set free and allowed to join their families. They were willing to delay the mark-up for a few weeks if that will help in getting them released.

Zenawi's Hostage Taking Strategy

Zenawi's threat to take the Kality prisoners hostage is a transparent strategy calculated to delay and ultimately thwart legislative action on H.R. 2003. His strategy is based on one or more of the following:

- By releasing the Kality prisoners in the next few days, he expects his monstrous crimes will be overlooked or forgotten by Ethiopians and the international community excited over the release of the political prisoners.
- By releasing the political prisoners and delaying mark-up action, Zenawi expects that Congressional interest in H.R. 2003 will wane and decline because members of Congress will be satisfied by the release of the prisoners and not insist on passage of H.R. 2003 or other sanctions;
- By delaying the mark-up of H.R. 2003 until the Congressional summer recess, Zenawi hopes opposition in Congress and in the Diaspora will weaken, and the bill will not see floor action.
- By delaying the mark-up of H.R. 2003 Zenawi hopes that he could trick the two chairmen and other committee members that the bill is not necessary because he is doing whatever Congress wishes to achieve in the bill.

- By releasing the prisoners and delaying the mark-up, Zenawi hopes to hoodwink the Diaspora into believing that he is a really a good guy.
- By delaying action on H.R. 2003, Zenawi thinks his old trick of DELAY, DELAY, DELAY will get him through another Congressional session!

Zenawi is Feeling the Heat

For the first time in nearly 16 years, the mark-up of H.R. 2003 has put Zenawi on the defensive.

His arrogant bluster that Diaspora Ethiopians are shiftless do-nothings is gone!

His belief that he can not be held accountable by anyone is shattered in the face of the hard reality that he will be held accountable in the U.S. Congress, the European Parliament and many other forums.

For the first time in 16 years, Zenawi can see that JUDGEMENT DAY IS NEAR!!!

The Truth About H.R. 2003 or What Zenawi should Know About H.R. 2003

Zenawi appears to believe that H.R. 2003 is exclusively about the release of the Kality prisoners. IT IS NOT. The Kality prisoners issue is a paramount issue, but only one of many other issues. If Zenawi is not aware of the objectives of H.R. 2003 in Ethiopia, here is a short primer for him:

H.R. 2003 is about:

- gaining the unconditional release of ALL political prisoners of conscience.
- instituting democratic reform and accountability.
- restoration of the democratic rights of the people.
- strengthening human rights and civic society organizations.
- establishing permanent human rights monitoring and reporting processes.
- increasing the independence of the judiciary.
- creating and supporting a judicial monitoring process, with special focus on unwarranted government intervention in strictly judicial matters.
- arresting and prosecuting human rights abusers, torturers and murderers, and bringing to justice the killers of 193 innocent men, women and children and wounding of 763 others.
- improving election procedures and insuring fraud free elections, and restoration of the CUD leaders to their elected positions.
- removing press censorship and full freedom of the press.

- repealing restrictive press laws.
- establishing a program to strengthen private media in Ethiopia.
- training programs for democratic participation.
- limitations of the use of U.S. security assistance to peacekeeping and counter-terrorism and NOT against the civilian population.
- fostering stability, democracy and economic development in the region.
- establishing a program to provide legal support for political prisoners and prisoners of conscience
- providing assistance to strengthen local, regional, and national parliaments and governments, political parties, and civil society groups;
- strengthening training for political parties such as organization building and campaign management;
- providing training for civil society groups in election monitoring in Ethiopia; and
- professionalizing the National Election Board in order to address issues such as delimitation of constituencies, voter registration, political party registration and candidate registration, and it is quintessentially about
- **accountability for crimes against humanity.**

Next Steps: The Final Battle for Ethiopia Human Rights in the U.S. Congress

We expect the House Foreign Affairs Committee will postpone mark-up action on H.R. 2003 on June 26, 2007 for at least two weeks. The bill will be brought back on calendar for mark-up in a few weeks.

We must now ORGANIZE, MOBILIZE and ENERGIZE! We must work day and night to inform our members of Congress that H.R. 2003 must be marked-up and promptly sent to the House floor for a final vote.

We must never surrender to Zenawi's blackmail, extortion or hostage taking. We must be single-minded in our desire to pass H.R. 2003. We must use our democratic rights as American citizens to the maximum to hold Zenawi accountable. Zenawi is on the run!

Coalition for H.R. 2003 Will Launch A Campaign to Mark-up H.R. 2003

In the next few days, the Coalition for H.R. 2003 will launch a national campaign to Mark-up H.R. 2003, pass it in committee and send it to the House floor for final action. Stay Tuned!!!

Post Script: Zenawi's Kangaroo Kourt Konvictions

In a real judicial system, after a defendant is found guilty, the following action is sentencing. Indeed, the so-called court had set July 9, 2007 as a sentencing date for the Kality prisoners of conscience. In Zenawi's Kangaroo Kourt, judicial process

means nothing. Zenawi is now negotiating for the release of the prisoners. But why? If the Kality prisoners are indeed guilty, they should at least be sentenced, and Zenawi can then exercise executive clemency (pardon).

But Zenawi has backed himself into a corner: The Kality prisoners were charged with bogus crimes, and they were never guilty of anything except winning the hearts and minds of 77 million people. **For that “crime”, all 77 million Ethiopians will testify for them.**

Let us ALL join hands in writing the last chapter of a dying regime in the U.S. Congress!