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**Congress of the United States**  
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February 16, 2007

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His Excellency Meles Zenawi  
Prime Minister of Ethiopia  
Office of the Prime Minister  
PO Box 1031  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Dear Prime Minister Zenawi:

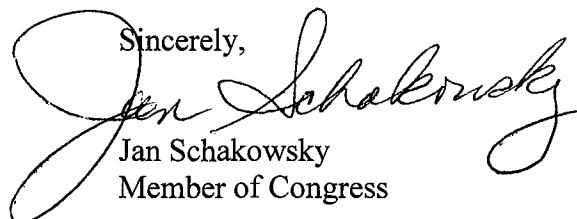
I am writing on behalf of my Ethiopian-American constituents to express our concern about the ongoing detention of opposition leaders, political activists, journalists and others in Ethiopia who are being detained on politically-motivated charges. I strongly urge your government to seek political dialogue to the ongoing political crises rather than continue the unwarranted detentions. I hope that the political prisoners are released immediately, and that you continue a political dialogue with the opposition leaders to show your commitment to democracy.

I understand that many Ethiopians were arrested in connection with public protests over alleged fraud in Ethiopia's May 2005 elections. Opposition leaders and their co-defendants were charged with a range of offenses that include "outrage against the Constitution" and "inciting, organizing or leading armed rebellion." However, I believe that those that are in detention are prisoners of conscience who are being jailed solely due to their efforts to exercise peaceful freedom of expression.

The Ethiopian Constitution states that "*no one shall be arrested without a court warrant,*" yet we understand that all of the political prisons have been jailed without warrant. Furthermore, the International Mission of Judicial Observation (IMJO or "Observatory") acknowledged in December 2006 that "The Observatory cannot help noting that the argument of the Prosecution is wholly contradictory and inconsistent." In addition, the IMJO stated, "Observatory considers the charges to be arbitrary and disproportionate to the nature of the events that occurred in the aftermath of the May 2005 elections. The Observatory expresses its deepest concern about the fairness of this trial, as it believes it to be a way to silence any political criticism of the current regime."

The United States and Ethiopia have a longstanding relationship of positive and constructive diplomatic relations. I hope that we can work together to respect democratic leadership, human rights and freedom of the press. I urge you to take my constituent's wishes into strong consideration.

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress