

Dear Colleagues: As you are well aware, since the May 2005 elections, conditions in Ethiopia have deteriorated. Many people are incarcerated, including elected members of Parliament, political leaders, and human rights defenders. As the Ethiopian Commission of Inquiry stated in its final report, 193 people were killed in June and November 2005, and many more were injured.

Ethiopia is an important country for many of us in Congress. Our primary objective and hope is to see a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Ethiopia. The people of Ethiopia have suffered for far too long due to abuse of power, civil war, and natural disasters. If conditions do not improve soon and Ethiopia plunges into another round of civil war, the consequences for Ethiopia and the entire region could be devastating and perhaps irreversible.

The government of Ethiopia organized and conducted perhaps the most open and competitive elections ever in May 2005. The previous elections, especially the 1995 and 2000 elections were largely boycotted and judged to be neither free nor fair. The fact that opposition parties openly participated in a hotly contested election campaign and over 90 percent of the registered voters went to the polls on Election Day demonstrated that active and peaceful engagement in the political process can bring change for the better.

Unfortunately, what was seen as a positive development in the May elections was soon marred by unnecessary violence against peaceful demonstrators. The way the Government of Ethiopia handled the post-election environment contributed to the sorry state of affairs we are witnessing today.

We strongly believe that we must all avoid using this important document for political purposes. What is important is what we can do to avoid such things from happening again. It is also pivotal that those who committed these violent acts be held accountable. Please join us for a briefing by several members of the Ethiopia Commission of Inquiry for Members of Congress, staff, and the public on their findings. We hope you will be able to attend this important briefing on

November 16th at 11:00 AM in 2318 Rayburn House Office Building

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s/ Michael M. Honda