



# Kinijit International Council

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## KIC - Washington Update

February 21, 2008

1. Efforts to get H.R. 2003 introduced in the Senate are continuing. The crisis in Kenya has become an urgent focus for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Africa Subcommittee, and this has delayed work on Ethiopian democracy and human rights issues. There is a growing understanding in Congress and in Washington, however, that the situation in Kenya should be viewed as an example of what could happen in Ethiopia if long-standing problems are not addressed quickly. Ethnic tension and economic collapse are inevitable in countries where governments rely on force and the suppression of human rights to stay in power, rather than democracy. The next step in the Senate is likely to be an Africa Subcommittee hearing dealing with human rights and democracy across the horn of Africa, but it has not been scheduled.

2. The Meles regime's efforts to derail H.R. 2003 are a good measure of the bill's importance. The Meles regime has conducted an aggressive domestic propaganda campaign against H.R. 2003. An American academic, Abigail Salisbury, was recently fired as a professor at the University of Mekele, in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, after she publicly discussed the importance of H.R. 2003 with her students and fellow faculty members. She reported that that "many students had been afraid to express their true feelings about H. R. 2003" because of fear of government retaliation against them. She found that, in fact most were supportive of the bill. She concluded that, "After reading my students' work and speaking with many people outside Tigray, I have come to think that the spirit of H. R. 2003 is correct. I can admire the desire (by the U.S. Congress) to help the people of another country (Ethiopia)."

The Kinijit Support Association of United States (KSA-USA) held a meeting in Washington, DC on February 15-17. Fifteen board members were elected, including a new Chairman, Ato Gizaw, as were three members of the Audit Committee, and three members of the Discipline Committee.

Kinijit President Engineer Hailu Shawel addressed an audience of over 800 people at the Washington convention center. His speech described ongoing efforts to organize for future elections in Ethiopia, the importance of new economic policies, and the need to unite the country. When he was asked about the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD), Hailu Shawel expressed a willingness to work with any groups that seek peaceful, democratic change. Kinijit/CUD constitution commits its members to seek



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change through peaceful means. Any groups that drop their guns are welcome to join our peaceful struggle, he said. Hailu Shawel called for a dialogue among all political parties in Ethiopia to discuss peaceful and lasting solutions.

Engineer Hailu Shawel also explained the function of the USA Kinijit Support Group and Kinijit International Council's while the support Chapters function as organizing, building and strengthen the Kinijit members in the USA and collecting funds from the Ethiopians Diaspora, the Kinijit International Council's main duties will be to serve as political advisor to the Kinijit Ethiopia, duties in the areas of diplomacy and international relations.

Also Dr. Taye Woldesmiat spoke about the important of teachers associations and students and their parents in the peaceful struggle. He said these patriotic Ethiopians are part of the people's struggle. He said that he came to join Kinijit to see a strong party. He also said that he would like to see a prosperous Ethiopia. This will not come easy as we have to work very hard in order to free our people from the dictatorial government.

Wzro. Nigest in her presentation pointed out that she is very glad to see so many people who came to attend this important event. She stressed that the women must be part of the struggle as without them there will not be a powerful struggle for peace, human rights and democracy in Ethiopia.

Mesfin Mekonen, Kinijit International Council Foreign Relations