

NEWSLETTER

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Dear Friends,

In my message last month, I brought to your attention about the House bill, HR 6600, and asked you "to reach out to your Congressional representatives to bill." raise your concern about this Accordingly, Ethiopianthousands of American Americans and friends of joined the Ethiopia have campaign opposing this bill. To add insult to injury a days ago a similar devastating few



sanction bill, S.3199, was introduced to US Senate by New Jersey Senator, Bob Menendez. This new bill is now scheduled for markup in the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on March 29, 2022.

Like HR6600, the Senate bill is unsurprisingly draconian. One of its targets is an endorsement of sanctions against Prime Minister Abiy for his role in directly leading the counter-offensive that pushed the TPLF back to Tigray amidst calls by the US to cease all hostilities and implement a cease-fire immediately in August of 2021. As we recall that was the time when TPLF forces had begun their ignominious march to Addis Ababa to topple the democratically elected Federal government. Along their way, they committed despicable crimes against the Amhara and Afar regions. The other target of S.3199 is "sanctioning of all parties supplying arms used in the conflict, including government agencies and officials from Israel, Germany, France, Turkey, Ukraine, Hungary, Russia, China, and the *United States.*" In other words, S.3199 aims to punish Ethiopia for defending itself against TPLF onslaught. It also plans to impose sanctions on those countries for selling arms to Ethiopia which will be used to defend its sovereignty.

The Senate bill is also duped "Ethiopia Peace and Democracy Promotion Act of 2021". It is a misnomer. Like HR6600, the senate bill is also an aggressive sanction bill to control Ethiopia's future by imposing a harsh economic embargo on a country already grappling with the aftermath of a TPLF-initiated destructive war. The bill does not even care to update itself on the current reality in Ethiopia. It chose to ignore the inconvenient truth that TPLF invaded Amhara and Afar regions which resulted in unimaginable atrocities. It even looked the other way to the ongoing invasion by the TPLF against Afar that hampered food delivery to Tigray. Hence, how can we buy the arguments by the authors of these draconian bills that these are positive efforts to help Ethiopia? How can these bills enhance US/Ethiopian relations?

I am also aware of the reluctance of some in the diaspora to join the campaign to stop these bills. One of the justifications for this reluctance was the Government's controversial decisions on some sensitive issues including the release of TPLF leaders from prison, the reconstruction-related matters in Amhara and Afar, as well as the issue of displaced Ethiopians from western Ethiopian. I fully understand their anger and frustrations. We are also accustomed to the bitter differences of opinion on other policy issues in Ethiopia. But Ethiopians should differentiate between the long-term vital interest of their country and the policy of the current leadership in Ethiopia. As a diverse and vibrant community, we will continue debating on those contentious issues and figure out a common ground to work together. Despite differences in government policies, we should come together to save the country. AEPAC does not believe that HR6600 and S.3199 serve the cause of democracy, peace, and stability in Ethiopia. On the contrary, these measures will destroy the fastest-growing economy in Africa. Furthermore, they will undermine the long-term relations between the US and Ethiopia. Ethiopian Americans cannot afford to allow Ethiopia to slip into anarchy and lawlessness like Libya, Yemen, and other failed states.

I sincerely appeal to you to join the fight to stop HR 6600 and S.1399!

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Mesfin Tegenu, AEPAC Chairman

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AEPAC ACTIVITY UPDATE

AEPAC Election Campaign Strategy Implementation Update

With AEPAC State Chapters expanding and building their membership base, the need for a comprehensive guide was recognized and developed. The four guides finalized and in use include:

- 1. A revised organizational structure, and mandates of the different
- committees/sub-committees.2. Mid-Term Election guideline.
- 3. Endorsement guideline.
- 4. Non-disclosure agreement document to ensure data and communication tools provided to states follow AEPAC guidelines.

As part of voter education and drive, flyers and video clips for different chapters are being produced.

AEPAC Chapters Engage with Candidates

AEPAC State Election Campaign chapters continue engaging with candidates (incumbents/challengers) to weigh their positions on HR6600 and S.3199. Based on responses that they don't support these bills, and their positions on a range of Ethiopian-related issues, AEPAC state chapters have begun to endorse pro-Ethiopia and candidates who promote US-Ethiopia relations. While this process is still in its early stages, AEPAC will continue this engagement and ramp up as we approach the mid-terms.

AEPAC & Friends of Ethiopia Oppose HR6600 and S.3199

AEPAC and its partners have held multiple rallies opposing the House and Senate bills (HR6600/S.3199), which if passed would have devastating results on the future of US-Ethiopia relations, economically threaten Ethiopia's development and destabilize the Horn of Africa. Tens of thousands of petitions and phone calls to Senators and House members have been made to make sure that these bills don't pass.

The first opposition rally was organized by AEPAC in collaboration and committees in the Tri-States (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) and other neighboring states. This was followed by San Francisco/California and DMV (District of Colombia, Maryland, and Virginia). The protest in New Jersey was held outside Congressman Tom Malinowski's office. Malinowski is the House Representative who authored the bill, so it was key for him to be aware of the strength of the Ethiopian-American community's feelings towards the issue. Simultaneous to the protest, we flew an airplane banner over Congressman Malinowski's district to raise awareness of the harmful impact of this bill and how it provides support to the TPLF.

Since the introduction of Congressman Tom Malinowski's Bill, HR6600, the socalled Ethiopia Stabilization, Peace, and Democracy Act, the bill awaits scheduling of a full vote on the House floor by Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Speaker Nancy Pelosi.







Media

This month our media activity has been firmly fixed on efforts to stop S.3199 and HR.6600.

We undertook a PR effort at both the New Jersey and Washington D.C. protests. In NJ we hired a banner that flew across Congressman Malinowski's district and in D.C. we hired a mobile billboard that called out S.3199 a day before it went to committee. The NJ protest was covered widely in local and African press including <u>Insider NJ</u>, <u>NewJersey News</u>, <u>Black Star News</u>, and <u>Africans in</u> <u>America</u>.

Our very own Wassy Tesfa had an opinion article published in <u>New York</u> <u>Amsterdam News</u> where she focused on the national dialogue and highlighted the progress Ethiopia has made on the path to peace. She also flagged the TPLF's attacks in Afar are the main block to getting humanitarian aid to those in need in Tigray.

And we continued our work with our third-party advocates. Working with Professor Jon Abbink we placed two opinion articles. The first was with <u>Business</u> <u>Day</u>, one of the largest news outlets in South Africa with a big international audience, which focused on the TPLF's efforts to overthrow democracy and compared their actions to those of Vladimir Putin and the invasion of Ukraine. The second was a powerful piece attacking HR.6600 which was placed with the prominent Conservative outlet, <u>American Conservative</u>.

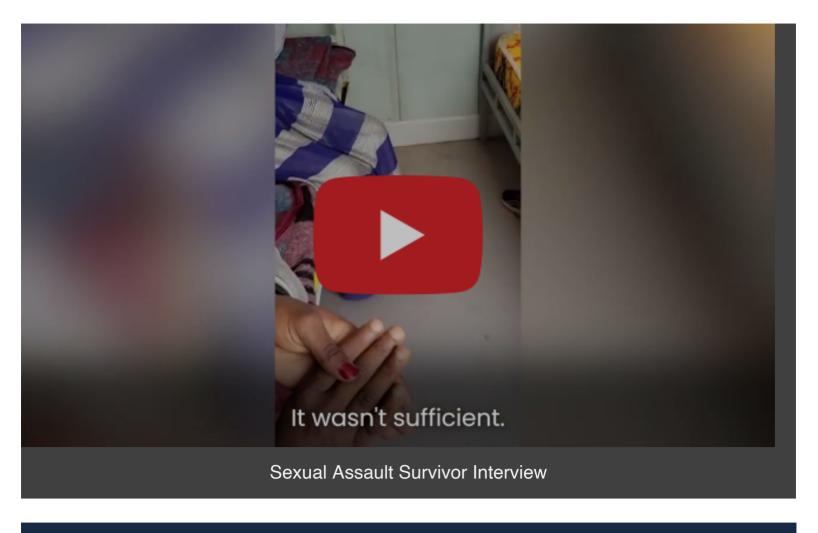
We continue to regularly brief tier-one media both correspondents on the ground in East Africa and state department reporters. We are keeping up the fight against TPLF's misinformation and telling a positive story of Ethiopia's progress on peace and rebuilding.

Digital

The digital team has continued to engage in campaigning on social platforms and via mailouts throughout the previous month. Key developments have been made in the setting up of a journey system that allows for automated mailouts relating to audience engagement with previous campaigns. This will help boost content sent to diaspora members who show a high interest in being a part of direct outreach campaigns.

Across channels, engagement has remained high, with content relating to HR6600 and S.3199 performing extremely well. High-performing pieces of content have included a response to Sen. Menendez's shocking press statement undermining Ethiopia by using old and outdated arguments, and the response to Sec. of State Antony Blinken's statement of support for the humanitarian truce announced by the Ethiopian Government.

Finally, please watch this heartbreaking interview released on our digital channels, recorded by our very own Wassy Tesfa, with a survivor of sexual assault at the hands of the TPLF. It is for women like the one in this video that we continue our struggle to return Ethiopia to a state of peace:



NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

Ethiopia declares unilateral, indefinite humanitarian truce

No aid trucks have successfully delivered aid to Tigray since mid-December. So, aid agencies have been forced to transport supplies by air – an expensive and ineffective method. The main delivery land corridor to Tigray in Afar has been made unsafe by continued TPLF attacks on villages around the corridor. According to the World Food Program (WFP), the primary impediment to moving humanitarian aid was also compounded by WFP trucks that entered Tigray not returning, the last count being reported by sources as exceeding a thousand trucks.



The Ethiopian Government on March 24, 2022, declared a humanitarian truce to help hasten the delivery of emergency aid into the Tigray region, where hundreds of thousands face starvation.

A government statement said this truce will substantially improve the humanitarian situation on the ground and pave the way for the resolution of the conflict in northern Ethiopia without further bloodshed and called upon the insurgents in Tigray to desist from all acts of further aggression and withdraw from areas they have occupied in neighboring regions.

In response, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) said it "will do everything it can do to make sure this cessation of hostilities is a success".

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Gutierrez welcomed the peace gesture on the part of the Ethiopian Government, and the commitment by forces in the Tigray region to comply with the immediate ceasefire. Others that welcomed the truce include the US, France, and Amnesty International.

US, Chinese, and AU Special Envoys in the Horn of Africa

In the wake of and leading to the declaration of the unilateral humanitarian truce by the Ethiopian Government, three special envoys to the Horn of Africa -Ambassador David Satterfield of the US, Ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo of AU, and the newly appointed and first Chinese envoy Ambassador Xue Bing were busy meeting with Ethiopian officials.

The Chinese envoy whose mandate includes promoting regional "initiative of peaceful development" in the Horn of Africa made stops in Asmara, Nairobi, and Addis Ababa. This is part of the Chinese envoy's platform for eight nations of the Horn. China plans to convene a summit of the Horn countries sometime in mid-2022 in Kenya or Ethiopia.

Ukraine and Russia Crisis

Russia launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, causing several hundred civilian deaths and pushing millions to flee to neighboring countries. The crisis, which was simmering for years, exploded into a deadly attack on Ukraine when Russia reached a turning point when NATO was mobilizing resources for the future joining of Ukraine with the continental alliance.

The Russians wanted US-NATO to cease any military activity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia out of concern about its security. This situation has severely strained US-Russia relations and increased the risk of a wider European conflict. Europe is dependent on liquefied natural gas from Russia. With the current crisis and sanctions on Russia, the US is gearing up to assist its European allies with replacing Russia's liquified gas. The US promises to welcome 100 thousand refugees and \$1bn in food, medicine, and other supplies.

Lifeline of Two Nations: Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway

President Ismael Omar Guelleh of Djibouti arrived in Addis Ababa on March 27, 2022, for a two-day official visit. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed greeted him upon arrival at the airport and an official state reception was extended to Mr. Ismael.

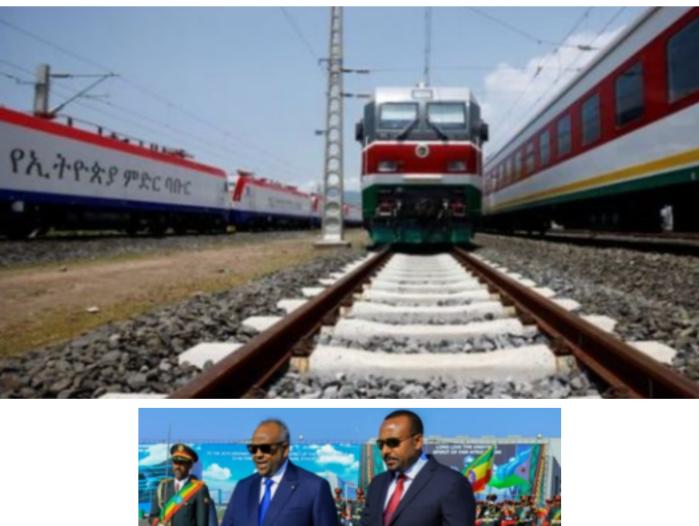
"I welcome my brother Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, to his second home. I look forward to our fruitful discussions on issues of common interest over the next two days," Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed wrote in a social media update.

Djibouti and Ethiopia are working together to enhance cooperation on infrastructure development including water supply, telecom, electric power, and other development areas.

The 105-year-old railway line jointly owned by both the Djiboutian and Ethiopian governments now provides landlocked Ethiopia with access to the sea. More than 95% of Ethiopia's trade passes through Djibouti, accounting for 70% of the activity at the Port of Djibouti. The new Addis Ababa–Djibouti railway supersedes the Ethio-Djibouti railway that was originally built by the French from 1894 to 1917.

The \$US 3.4bn electrified railway line is built by China Railway Group and China Civil Engineering Construction with 70% financed by China's Exim Bank.

The railway line has a total length of 752 km, 21 dedicated railway stations, 449 passenger trains, and 1469 freight trains, transporting 77,357 TEUs. In 2021 it recorded \$86 million (US) in revenue.





Transboundary Water Cooperation Pavilion

The 9th World Water Forum, the largest global event for accelerating collective action for water, was held on 21st-25th March 2022, in Dakar, Senegal. The Forum attracted participants from every horizon, including political and economic decision-makers, multilateral institutions, academia, civil society, and the private sector. This will be the first time the World Water Forum, the largest international water-related event, is held in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Niger Basin Authority (Benin, Burkina, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria) has set up the legal institutional framework (Water Charter and its Annexes) as well as mechanisms, instruments, and technical tools in accordance with its political and strategic orientations, and the Shared Vision to manage its transboundary waters.

This event aims to share experiences and views among participants from member countries, partners, and other basin organizations for more information on these legal, institutional, and technical achievements in order to develop strategies to improve and scale up their application/implementation.

Ethiopia was represented by President Sahle-Work Zewde. Addressing the High-Level segment at the 9th Word Water Forum in Dakar, the President highlighted the process of GERD and the Green Legacy Initiative that Ethiopia has been implementing since 2019.

The president also called for political commitment, avoidance of politicization of the water issue which she described as a technical matter, and genuine cooperation among riparian states in order to address comment challenges. She reiterated that genuine cooperation is not an option but rather a necessity for riparian states of the transboundary watercourses.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Follow

To keep up to date with AEPAC's work, please follow us on <u>Twitter</u>, and <u>Facebook</u> for regular updates.

Check out our website - www.aepact.org

Share

Want to help push the voice of American-Ethiopians to the audiences who matter? Then please share these Tweets so that AEPAC's message is seen by more people across social media:

AEPAC Mission Video

Contact

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