

U.S. Statement at the UPR of Ethiopia, 19th Session, May 6, 2014

The United States welcomes the Ethiopian delegation.

We commend Ethiopia for its commitment to economic and social development. However, we remain seriously concerned by restrictions on civil society activity, the arbitrary detention and harassment of human rights defenders, journalists, and opposition political figures, and the politicized application of laws against opposition voices.

We are deeply concerned that the Charities and Societies Proclamation has severely restricted many local organizations' ability to conduct important democracy, governance, and human rights work. Strong civil societies promote good governance and contribute to sustainable economic growth and development. Easing restrictions on civil society activity will move Ethiopia toward an environment of inclusiveness and political plurality in advance of the 2015 national elections.

We recommend that the Ethiopian government:

1. Conduct a full review of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, amending the law as necessary to ensure that it strengthens the rule of law and is applied apolitically and in full compliance with Ethiopia's international human rights obligations, including equality before the law and freedom of expression;
2. Repeal the Charities and Societies Proclamation in order to promote the development of an independent civil society able to operate freely;
3. Permit the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association to travel to Ethiopia to advise the government on freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.