

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 11, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Secretary Blinken and Administrator Power,

We write to express deep concern about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia, which is set to worsen this year due to growing conflicts and climate shocks.

In November 2022, the international community welcomed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). We applaud the United States for its crucial role in bringing the parties together to reach the accord. However, while TPLF forces have begun to demobilize as a condition of the deal, we have yet to see Eritrean combatants fully withdraw, which has fueled violence in the Tigray region. Further, conflict has continued—or even intensified—in other regions such as Amhara and Oromia.

Simultaneously, dire drought conditions in Ethiopia are further exacerbating humanitarian needs in areas already ravaged by conflict. Over the last few years, in Ethiopia's southern and southeast regions, the worst drought in over 70 years killed over 4 million livestock.¹ Above average rains in those same drought-stricken areas in the latter part of 2023 led to extreme floods and mudslides, affecting an estimated 1.5 million people² and displacing another 630,000.³ Drought conditions have now shifted to other parts of the country, many of which are already struggling with bouts of violence.

The confluence of conflict and extreme weather events in Ethiopia has exacerbated the dire humanitarian crisis in the country. This comes on top of the fact that at least 4.4 million people⁴ are internally displaced and 942,000 refugees⁵ from other countries reside in Ethiopia. An estimated 20.1 million people⁶ in Ethiopia are in need of immediate food assistance.

The United Nation's Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2023 was only 34% funded with a \$2.66 billion shortfall⁷. The HRP targeted 4.9 million people for protection services, as women and children have been

¹ "WFP Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa: Drought Response in the Horn of Africa - Situational Report #3 (March 2023)," *ReliefWeb* (UN OCHA, March 24, 2023), World Food Programme, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/wfp-regional-bureau-eastern-africa-drought-response-horn-africa-situational-report-3-march-2023>

² "Ethiopia – Situation Report, 1 Dec 2023," *ReliefWeb* (UN OCHA, December 1, 2023), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-1-dec-2023>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "Ethiopia," *UN OCHA* (United Nations), <https://www.unocha.org/ethiopia>

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "Ethiopia," *World Food Programme* (United Nations), <https://www.wfp.org/countries/ethiopia>

⁷ "Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan 2023," *Financial Tracking Service* (UN OCHA), <https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1128/summary>

disproportionately affected during these crises—particularly given the threat of gender-based violence. However, due to this shortfall, 43% of the 4.9 million people⁸ were not reached, and humanitarian partners in some areas are likely to suspend activities this year. While we are heartened by United States’ and international efforts to provide food assistance and other humanitarian aid to the Ethiopian people, their needs remain great, especially when factoring in the more than 100,000 Sudanese refugees⁹ who have recently fled the violence in their country and taken refuge in Ethiopia.

We support the Administration’s continued global leadership in the provision of humanitarian aid to those most in need. We also acknowledge that it is critical to maintain effective oversight of assistance and ensure that it is not being abused or diverted. However, commitments from other donor countries and the international community have failed to keep up with the increasing needs globally. The UN’s Ethiopia HRP 2024 requires \$3.24 billion, but is only 0.5%¹⁰ funded, and the UN warns that \$500 million¹¹ is required immediately to get food aid to 6.6 million people before a pipeline break in March. We also note reports that relief partners distributing food aid have struggled to scale back up¹² after last year’s pause in aid distribution to root out diversion, and many in need have yet to receive assistance.

Continued American engagement and leadership to support the people of Ethiopia is critical. Therefore, we request that the Administration:

- Push for a resolution to the conflicts affecting the humanitarian emergency, including the removal of Eritrean government troops from Ethiopia;
- Work with the Ethiopian government and international partners to ensure humanitarian aid gets to those in need; and
- Coordinate with other donor countries and international organizations to increase global contributions for the humanitarian response in Ethiopia.

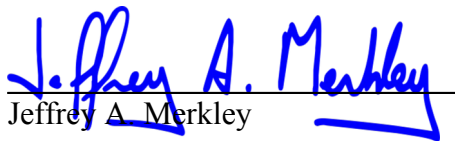
Ethiopia is home to more than 120 million proud and resilient people with strong cultural and economic ties to the United States. It is vital America continues to support a more just future for its citizens.

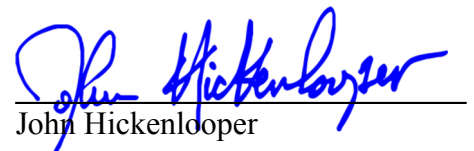
Thank you for your prompt attention to this important issue.

CC:

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Sincerely,


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator


John Hickenlooper
United States Senator

⁸ “Ethiopia – Situation Report, 1 Dec 2023”

⁹ “In Ethiopia, UNHCR’s Grandi urges more support for people fleeing Sudan,” *UNHCR* (United Nations, January 31, 2024), <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/ethiopia-unhcr-s-grandi-urges-more-support-people-fleeing-sudan>

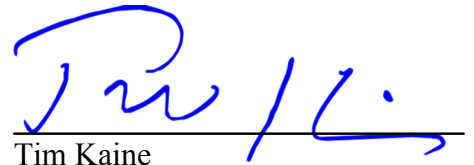
¹⁰ “Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan 2024,” *Financial Tracking Service* (UN OCHA), <https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1195/summary>

¹¹ “Ethiopia Situation Report,” *UN OCHA* (United Nations, February 16, 2024), <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia>

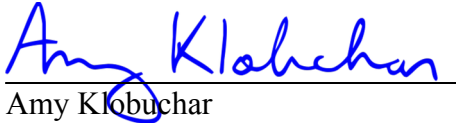
¹² “Aid glitches and funding shortfalls increase famine fears in Tigray,” Maya Misikir, (*The New Humanitarian*, February 13, 2024), <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2024/02/13/aid-and-funding-shortfalls-increase-famine-fears-ethiopia-tigray>



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator