

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to our witnesses, and good afternoon to everybody.

In my 27 years in Congress, in which I have done a great deal of work on human rights and foreign policy, I have seen that there IS a human rights double standard, and there is one under every administration. I have seen it, I have spoken out against it, I have done everything in my power to prevent every administration from shutting its eyes to human rights violations.

This double standard seems to be a bug that gets passed on from one administration to another. I remember the Clinton administration, for example, and its feckless response to three of the worst outrages of our times.

First, the 1994 Rwanda genocide, in which Hutus slaughtered Tutsis. Despite the Rwandan government's obvious preparations for slaughter, nothing was done to prevent it. Despite international news media coverage of the slaughter as it progressed, nothing was done to stop it. During the spring and summer of 1994 while Hutus slaughtered at least half a million Tutsis with machetes, the Clinton administration did nothing at all to step in, did nothing at all to organize an international intervention! To his credit, President Clinton has repeatedly expressed his regret for what he admitted was his "personal failure."

The double standard in our non-response to Rwanda was very unpleasant but obvious, and many people remarked on it at the time. Everyone knew that if one ethnic group had fallen on another with machetes in a European or Latin American state, this would not have been tolerated. The United States would have led an international community clamoring for intervention. But the Rwanda horrors occurred in Africa, and the White House did nothing. One standard was applied to Europe, North and South

America, Russia, and much of Asia, and another standard, a lower standard, to Africa.

Second, the southern Sudan. The civil war in southern Sudan killed 2 million people and displaced 4 million. President Clinton responded with weak efforts to “isolate” Sudan diplomatically. Congress couldn’t get the President to do so much as appoint a Special Envoy. Not until 2001, when President Bush designated Senator Danforth Special Envoy for Peace in the Sudan, with the mission to report on how the US could play a useful role in the quest for peace, did the White House take the tragedy with due seriousness. It’s the same double standard: one for Africa, another for the rest of the world.

Third, chattel slavery in Mauritania and Sudan. In the mid 1990s, abolitionists exposed the continuing existence of chattel slavery in Mauritania and Sudan, where tens of thousands of black Africans were held as slaves. Congress held hearings on this horror, and I led the drive to make eradicating slavery into a foreign-policy priority. But President Clinton observed silence until the eleventh hour of his presidency. The same double standard.

Now here we are talking about the Bush administration’s policy toward Ethiopia and Equatorial Guinea. I am glad that we are addressing these important topics, and I hope this hearing will encourage the Bush administration to push the governments of Prime Minister Zenawi and President Obiang harder on human rights violations in Ethiopia and Equatorial Guinea.

I have myself been pushing the administration to do more to encourage African governments to respect their citizens’ human rights, particularly the Ethiopian government of Males Zenawi. I visited Ethiopia in

August 2005, and met with Prime Minister Zenawi. I urged him to investigate the June 2005 shootings of demonstrators, to punish those responsible, and to release political prisoners. He did not do that. I believe, along with many other people in both parties, that the Bush administration has not put enough pressure on the Zenawi government. Ethiopia is a great ancient civilization, whose people suffer from unlawful killings, and beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly those suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the opposition; detention of thousands without charge and lengthy pretrial detention.

That is why yesterday I introduced a bill, the Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights Advancement Act of 2007, HR 2228, that would require the Bush administration to promote human rights, the rule of law, and democracy in Ethiopia. The bill includes an authorizes funding to assist political prisoners, indigenous Ethiopian human rights organizations, independent media, civil society, and to promote legal training. The bill would prevent security assistance to the Ethiopian government (other than assistance for counterterrorism and peacekeeping) unless President Bush certifies that Ethiopia is making “credible, quantifiable efforts” to investigate and punish the shootings committed by its security forces, release political prisoners, respect the independence of the judiciary and media, permit human rights organizations to operate freely, and, in a provision new to this bill, return or make restitution for property expropriated from US citizens.

The people of Equatorial Guinea suffered, in the 1970s, under one of the world’s most repressive regimes, and almost 1/3 of the people in the country emigrated. Under President Obiang things are better, but they

remain bad. The people of Equatorial Guinea suffer from torture, beating, and other physical abuse of prisoners and detainees by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; impunity; arbitrary arrest, detention, and incommunicado detention; harassment and deportation of foreign residents; judicial corruption and lack of due process; restrictions on the right to privacy; severe restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press. Equatorial Guinea has become an oil-rich country, but this wealth remains in the hands of a small ruling elite. Some say this wealth makes it difficult for the US to exert pressure on President Obiang; but it does not make it difficult for us to speak up.

I believe that this administration has not pushed Prime Minister Zenawi harder on human rights issues because it is satisfied that his government is cooperating with us in the war on terror. The war on terror is very, very important; but no regime that terrorizes its own citizens can be a reliable ally in the war on terror. Terrorism isn't just a military issue, it's also a human rights issue. Terrorists come from countries where their governments failed to respect their human rights. In defending human rights, we are fighting terrorism, attacking it at its roots. This is something I have worked to see that all administrations do.