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## **Senate Foreign Relations Committee Wants More Action to be Taken with African Allies**

**FALLS CHURCH, VA (7/23/2021)** – On July 20, 2021, U.S. Senator Jim Risch (R-Idaho), ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made the [following statement](#) regarding the nomination of assistant secretary for African Affairs, the Honorable Mary Catherine Phee: “The Biden Administration has stated that “Africa is a priority,” but it’s unclear where Africa fits in that priority list.” He continues, “First, I am troubled by the conflict and humanitarian situation in Tigray. However, I am concerned that the U.S. is so focused on the Tigray crisis that it is ignoring the significant challenges to peace and democracy we face across Ethiopia. This is a complex challenge, I get that. I look forward to hearing how we navigate Ethiopia’s challenges and the other crises across the Horn of Africa which is becoming more and more of a focus and a crisis.” Mr. Risch is clear in his understanding that this is not strictly an Ethiopian issue, but a regional and global issue.

The “complexity” includes the imprisonment of political opponents, such as Jawar Mohammed. “[Jawar](#), a founder of the United States-based Oromia Media Network, was an ally of Abiy and played a key role in coordinating the protests that catapulted him to power, before becoming a public critic of his administration.” Mohammed and others were imprisoned following the violence that erupted throughout Ethiopia after the murder of singer-songwriter Hachalu Hundessa on June 29, 2020. Ibsa Gemedo, one of the defendants’ lawyers, told Al Jazeera that “The case is motivated by the government’s desire to remove Jawar and others from the political realm, and muzzle opposition in the Oromia state.” [Jawar, and others](#), were charged with violating anti-terrorism, telecom fraud and firearms laws.

“Aside from Ethiopia,” Mr. Risch said, “I remain deeply concerned about the lack of initiative the international community has shown – including our European, French and African partners – in pushing for a resolution to the Crisis in Cameroon, as well as corruption challenges by the regimes in Zimbabwe and South Sudan.” His focus became more pointed: “African countries are crucial partners in our fight to combat malign Chinese influence. The United States remains the top contributor of health and humanitarian assistance to Africa, but we must do more to commit ourselves to building strong economic and security partnerships with our African allies.” Although Mr. Risch does not spell out what actions will be taken to “do more,” OLLAA certainly welcomes and looks forward to more developments from Mr. Risch and the rest of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

OLLAA remains extremely concerned by the lack of action and failure of Abiy to release political prisoners and start an all-inclusive national dialogue. We urge the United States government and the rest of the international community to act faster. The situation in Ethiopia certainly did not start with or in Tigray and has spread to the rest of the country.

*OLLAA is an umbrella organization that represents dozens of Oromo communities around the world.*