Dear Senator………………

My name is (YOUR NAME). As your constituent, I am writing to you regarding an urgent matter that needs your immediate attention.

In April 2018, your colleagues in the House passed H.R. 128, Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia. However, starting in December 2018, the Ethiopian government, led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, set up military command posts in Western and Southern Oromia and military forces have been terrorizing and killing innocent civilians in these regions. Unfortunately, in recent days, the Ethiopian government has escalated human rights abuses to unconscionable levels. These abuses are particularly targeted at Ethiopia’s largest ethnonational group, the Oromo, who have been historically marginalized by successive regimes, as have other indigenous peoples in Ethiopia.

On Monday, June 29, 2020, renowned Oromo artist-activist Hachalu Hundessa was gunned down in the capital city of Addis Ababa. This assassination comes just days after his interview on Oromia Media Network (OMN) aired in which he expressed concerns about the government’s human rights abuses stemming from the command posts as well as critiques about the historical legacy of Menelik II. In less than 24 hours following Hachalu’s assassination, on Tuesday, June 30, 2020, the government arrested and unlawfully detained OMN journalists, prominent opposition leaders and human rights activists such as Bekele Gerba, Jawar Mohammed, Hamza Borana, and dozens of other individuals, including two American citizens from Washington state, Redwan Aman and Yusuf Beshir. The crackdown has been compounded by a countrywide internet and phone shutdown effectively stifling information flow and communication with people in the country. Further, the assassination and unlawful arrests have sparked an eruption of youth-led protests across Oromia.

 While I am a U.S. citizen, I fear for the safety of my family and loved ones in Ethiopia. I fear that we are on the brink of mass atrocities. The media has been reporting that scores of peaceful protestors have been shot and killed by government security forces. The New York Times reported on July 1, 2020, that over 50 civilians were killed in just a day while protesting. Given that PM Abiy Ahmed has suspended national elections for an unknown period of time, Ethiopia is not only undergoing a severe human rights crisis, but has entered another phase of violent authoritarianism.

Ethiopia has been a long-time ally of the U.S. I call upon you, my senator, to stand with your Oromo and Ethiopian constituents in condemning Abiy Ahmed’s violent regime, which is masquerading as a democratic government, by doing the following:

1. Condemn state-sanctioned military and police violence against innocent civilians and protestors and demand the immediate cessation of state violence.
2. Call for an impartial and independent investigation of the assassination of Oromo artist and activist Hachalu Hundessa by an independent body.
3. Demand the immediate release of all political prisoners, including Abdi Regassa, Yaassoo Kabbabaa, Bekele Gerba, Jawar Mohammed, Hamza Borana, Misha Chirri, and others and an end to unlawful imprisonment.
4. Demand an immediate end of illegal military command posts in Western and Southern Oromia.
5. Demand the Oromia Media Network conduct its professional journalism work without any interference and intimidation by the government security forces.
6. Call for democracy through the timely administration of free and fair elections in 2020.
7. Call on the international community to impose sanctions if the above demands are not met.

Sincerely, (YOUR NAME)