

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 15, 2005

His Excellency President Issayas Afewerki  
c/o Ambassador Girma Asmerom  
Embassy of the State of Eritrea  
1708 New Hampshire Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

Your Excellency:

As members of the United States House of Representatives concerned with human rights and aware of the importance of free and independent media, we are writing to express alarm over the deteriorating human rights situation and growing repression of freedom of expression in Eritrea. In particular, we are concerned about the ban that your government has imposed since September 2001 on all independent non-governmental press and about the continuing detention of more than a dozen journalists for over two years without formal charges.

Jailing people for the peaceful expression of their opinion is a serious violation of human rights. As a state party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Eritrea is obligated to uphold the rights and freedoms protected by these agreements, including the right to freedom of expression. Eritrea is currently the only African nation, and one of few in the world, without privately owned media outlets. The suppression of private media outlets restricts freedom of expression and information, stifling Eritrea's national dialogue and forcing political discourse underground. Ultimately this repression will foster the very instability that your government aims to avoid.

The detained journalists, most of whom were jailed following the government's ban on independent media in September 2001, are being held in undisclosed locations without charges, despite the fact that Eritrean law forbids the holding of a prisoner without charges for more than 30 days. Prolonged detention without trial is also a violation of the aforementioned international treaties. None of those detained have been taken before a judge or provided with legal counsel, and officials have refused to supply information regarding the health, whereabouts or legal status of the detainees.

Fessahaye Yohannes, a married father of three, is one of the journalists in continued detention. Prior to his detention he was the co-editor and co-founder of the weekly newspaper Setit, which addressed controversial issues facing the country, such as poverty, land and housing concerns and the lack of democracy and justice. Other journalists who have been detained without charge include Said Abdulkadir, Yosuf Mohamed Ali, Amanuel Asrat, Temesgen Gebreyesus, Mattewos Habteab, Dawit Habtemichael, Medhanie Haile, Dawit Isaac, Seyoum Tsehaye, Saadia Ahmed, Saleh Al-Jezaeri, and Hamid Mohamed Sai.

As Eritrea enters its twelfth year of independence, we are dismayed that not all Eritreans are free to exercise the basic rights and freedoms to which they are entitled and which your government is expected to uphold. We respectfully urge you to immediately release all journalists and other

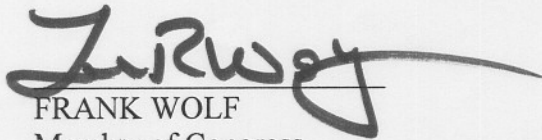
prisoners of conscience who have been jailed simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression. We further urge you to lift the ban on Eritrea's independent press.

We look forward to your response and to resolving these issues.

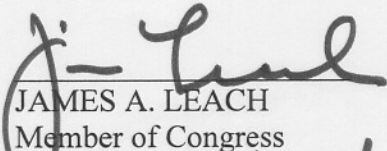
Sincerely,



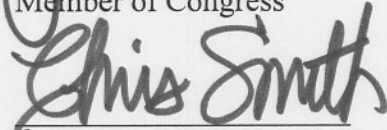
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Member of Congress



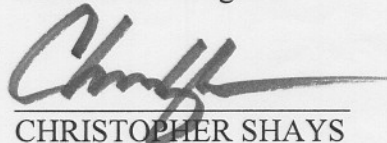
FRANK WOLF  
Member of Congress



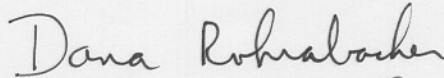
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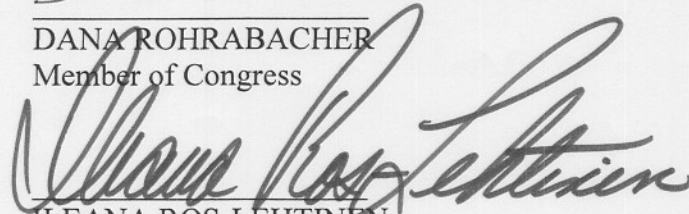
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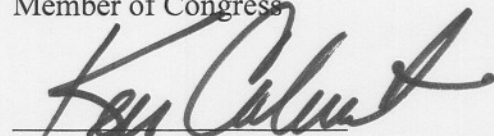
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Member of Congress



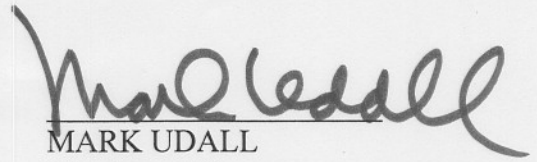
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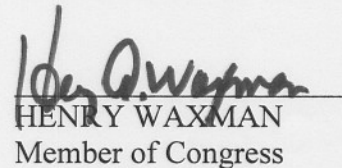
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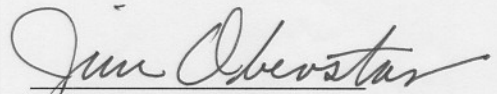
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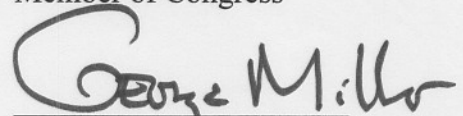
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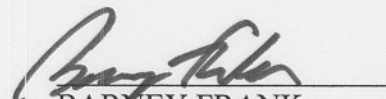
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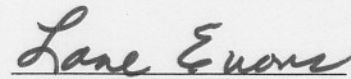
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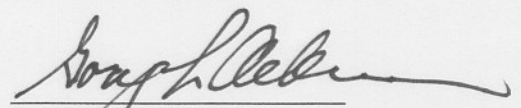
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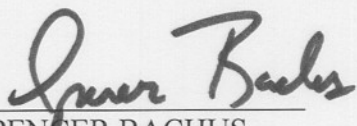
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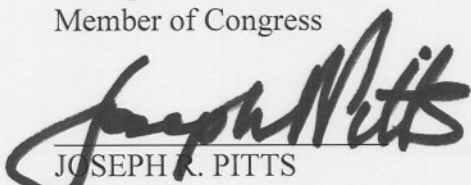
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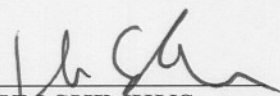



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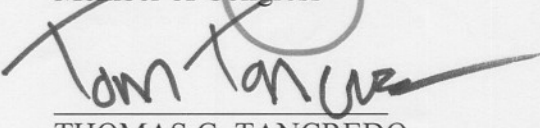
  
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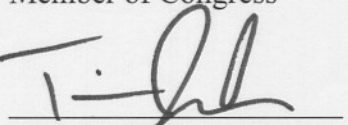
  
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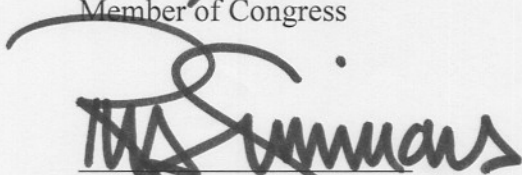
  
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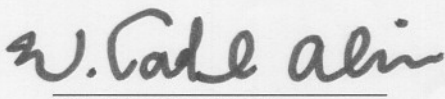
  
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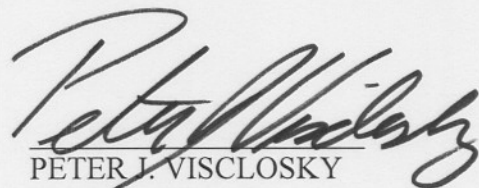
  
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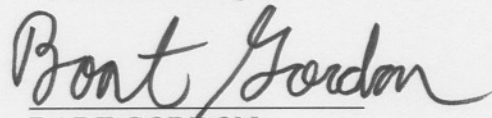
  
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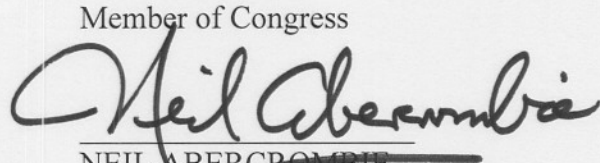
  
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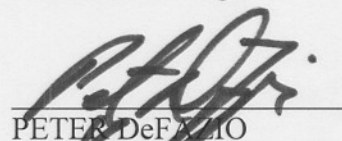
  
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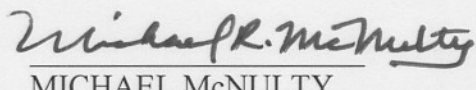
  
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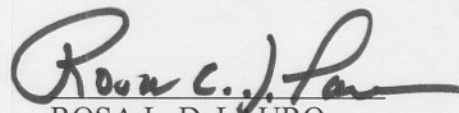
  
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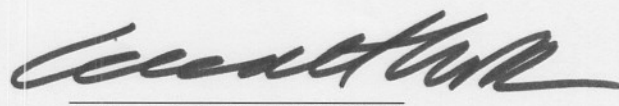
  
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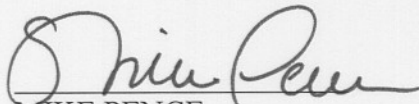
  
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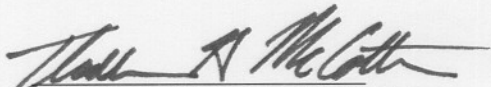
  
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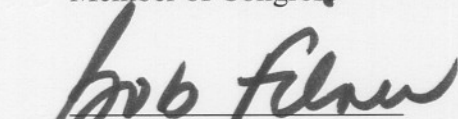
  
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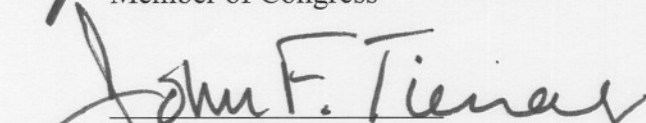
  
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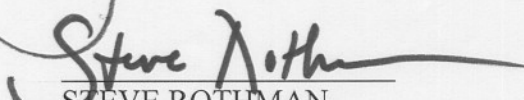



  
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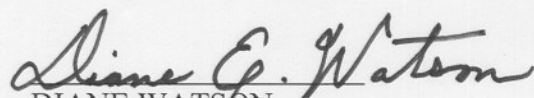
  
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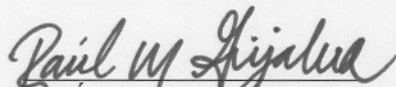
  
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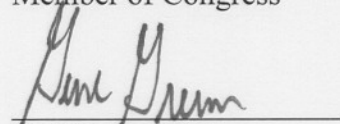
  
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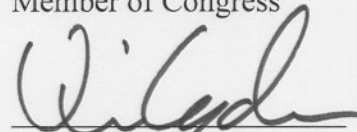
  
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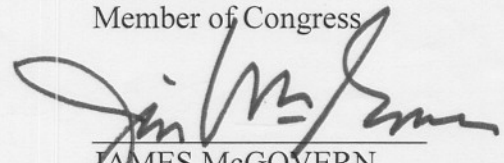
  
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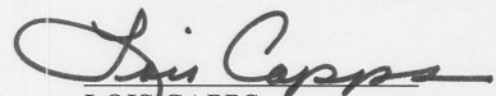
  
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Member of Congress

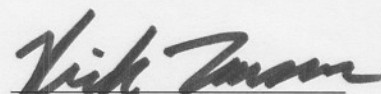
  
GENE GREEN  
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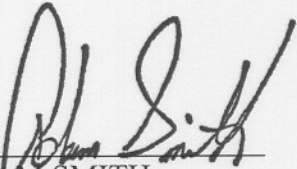
  
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LOIS CAPPS  
Member of Congress

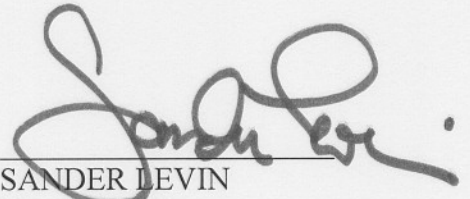
  
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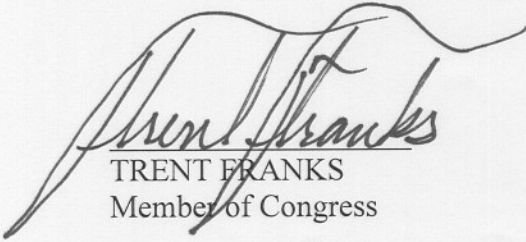
  
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