

# United States Senate

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

April 11, 2007

The Honorable Jendayi Frazer  
Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of African Affairs  
Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Frazer,

I would first like to take the opportunity to thank you for your recent visit to Somalia, the first such visit by a senior U.S. official in over a decade. It is my belief that for U.S. diplomacy to be more effective in helping stabilize Somalia, it is necessary that our diplomats meet with Somalis in their own territory. For this reason I have been advocating for the State Department to authorize such diplomatic visits, including through communication directly with Deputy Secretary Negroponte. I can also assure you that Somalis residing in both their native country and here in the U.S. were very encouraged by this important gesture.

As you know, I have an abiding interest in working towards a stable and peaceful Somalia. For this reason I have been especially troubled by the recent peak in violence in Mogadishu. My office in Minnesota recently hosted a group of Somali community leaders who expressed a wide range of concerns regarding the current situation in Somalia. These concerns dovetail with some of my own concerns pertaining to our policy, and I would like to share a few of these concerns with you.

First, there continues to be a severe humanitarian crisis in Somalia. It is estimated that the recent violence in Mogadishu affected over 100,000 civilians, forcing them to leave their homes and endure significant suffering. This large population of internally displaced persons, who often sleep outside under trees with no food, water, or sanitary facilities, is in need of urgent assistance. Consequently, diseases such as diarrhea are exacting a very high toll on the displaced children. Reports reaching members of the Somali community in Minnesota indicate that the humanitarian situation is further exacerbated by the occupation of many hospitals and schools by Ethiopian and Transitional Federal Government forces.

Additionally, a significant portion of refugees have fled to villages along the Kenyan border, including Afmadow, Qooqaani, Badhaadhe, and Liboy/Dhobley. Aid agencies have had trouble accessing these refugees due to the closing of the border. Yet these vulnerable groups have an urgent need for housing, medical care, and food. It is for these reasons that I would request that addressing the humanitarian crisis remain at the forefront of our agenda for Somalia, which in turn will require a greater commitment of U.S. resources. I am very pleased by the increase in our assistance to Somalia in response to the ongoing crisis, but feel we have not ramped up our commitment of resources for humanitarian needs to the level that is necessary.

I also have concerns regarding the presence of Ethiopian troops in Somalia, some of which I expressed to you in my letter delivered in our meeting on February 8<sup>th</sup>. I understand it is U.S. policy to support the transition of security responsibility from Ethiopian forces to an African Union peacekeeping mission, yet it is now April and the Ethiopian armed forces remain present in Somalia. As you can imagine, many members of the Somali community in Minnesota have raised the question: when will the Ethiopians depart Somalia? I understand that you have invested a large amount of effort into recruiting peacekeeping troops from other African nations to replace the Ethiopians. I would therefore appreciate an update on efforts to replace the Ethiopian military presence in Somalia. Furthermore, I continue to hear troubling reports of human rights violations by the Ethiopian troops in Somalia. Therefore I would like to ask for your assistance in receiving an assessment of the human rights situation on the ground, and also to work with the Ethiopians to hold accountable the perpetrators of abuse.

Ultimately, the pervasive political instability in Somalia can only be solved through reconciliation and progress towards an inclusive democratic government. This will require a high level of engagement by U.S. diplomats, which I personally believe would be more feasible through the appointment of a Special Envoy for Somalia. I continue to be a strong advocate for the creation of this position, and will use the tools at my disposal to work to achieve it.

I would again like to recognize your attention and tireless efforts to end the violence and instability in Somalia. I understand that you face significant challenges, and I remain very grateful for all of your hard work. I offer my assistance to continue these efforts in whatever way I can as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the representative of the largest Somali community in the U.S. Thank you very much and I look forward to hearing from you on these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Norm Coleman", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Norm Coleman  
United States Senate