

Dear Mr Gerald LeMell

Executive Director
Action Africa
1634 Eye Street, N.W, Suite 810
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Sir,

I am a little embarrassed not to have contacted you earlier acknowledging and thanking you for your organization's decades of solidarity work with Africa.

Your maiden organization ACOA was part and parcel of the pan-African struggle for independence. You were among the most notable partners of the anti-apartheid movement. You have engaged your own government on many issues of policy on behalf of Africa ever since and made a difference on several of them. You bear witness that, despite formidable challenges, Africa and Africans have come a long way and generally for the better. The continent has by and large made significant strides to impact on either the condescendingly politically correct all-positive or the stereotypically harsh all-negative characterizations of its image. I am saying this without in any way ignoring or minimizing its present day problems and challenges. Some, I readily admit are serious and stubborn and all compete for our attention including yours. But with Africa, image and motivation of all of its stakeholders also matter, including yours..In recent years, advocacy agencies, who produce most of the Western analysis on Africa are increasingly playing a game of distortion and smear to initiate, influence and gage policy decisions that keep Africa handicapped indefinitely. I trust and hope that you're extensive and close encounter with the continent will protect you from this dangerous contagion.

I am prompted to write you this time because of your reported sponsorship of a conference on Ethiopia scheduled to take place April 9-11, 2010 in Arlington, VA supposedly on "GOOD GOVERNANCE, PEACE, SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS&SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT "in the Horn of Africa. The organizers have already dubbed it as momentous and historic. The guest list, which includes the sponsors, is out to market the event. A good number of the panel coordinators and panelists, as diverse as they are in their past and present politics, they are a priori 'regime change advocates'. One of the organizers, Advocacy for Ethiopia has already declared "...the viability of bringing change through the ballot box will be examined and how to clip the wings of the dictatorship will be outlined. Participants will make commitment to a road-map for democratizing Ethiopia."On top of this, there is the Honorable Anna Gomez, a very partisan Portuguese EU parliamentarian frozen on 2005 election who joins them here when the newly appointed Election Observer Team is heading to Addis Ababa to monitor this year's election. It is going to be ridiculously fabulous...which brings me to your sponsorship.

In regard to most of the prominent players from Ethiopia, if not all, it is the same stew in a new Virginia platter. Given the political track record of the leaders of the diasporas opposition

and the questionable moral and professional integrity of some of the academics, the lofty theme of the conference is even cosmetically unappealing. Let me be more blunt and clear:

Some were enablers and /or partners of the defunct Mengistu regime that had ruined Ethiopia; they had their bloody "glorious" past.

Some are fugitives from justice. They had tried their best at a coup d'état and are crying wolf from afar.

A few are agents of a foreign government that is openly at war with Ethiopia...they are in the pockets of MR. Isayas Afeworki. Their badge of honor is to play subversion and destabilization in the service of their master Secessionist OLF and ONLF apologist- losers are dressed up for a show too..

Others have time and again tried to recycle violence by waging guerrilla warfare but failed miserably for lack of both followers and courage; they now want the U.S .to fight their battle or lend them Predators.

There are even known unknowns among them who deny Al Qaida and AL Shabbab terrorists do not pose a threat to Ethiopia and denounce and denigrate its legitimate security concerns. What motivates and binds them together, at least momentarily, is that most crude and primitive thing: a hate and greed- combo. Democracy, human rights, justice, liberty.....these are the last of their worries in their approach to politics. I may sound a little bitter myself because I can't handle hypocrisy very well.

Ethiopia entered a new phase in its modern history 1991 and its achievements in all aspects under circumstances specific to the country and the region; and the peculiar dynamics of its geography demography and politics...are ,I think remarkable. I do not want to bog you down with the details here and now. But I assure you that peace, good governance, democracy, human rights, sustainable development...are at the core of its vision and renaissance as a country. In my humble opinion, efforts at attaining them have been underway for a good decade and there are tangible and encouraging outcomes: they are not going to be launched on April 11 on your watch from a conference hall in Virginia. You can travel to Ethiopia and check it out yourself before or for that matter after you join a narcissistic crowd of nay savers.

My advice though is different. Please do not squander the prestige and resources of your organization in a futile effort of tarnishing Ethiopia. I implore that you seriously reconsider and withdraw your sponsorship.

Very Sincerely

Kebede D. Yimam