



State Department Ignores Plight of Ethiopians

Even as the Obama administration brings the might of the United States armed forces to the aid of Libyan rebels linked to al-Qaeda, the State Department is ignoring the plight of Ethiopian Christians who have come under attack by Muslim radicals. As reported previously for *The New American*, dozens of churches were destroyed in riots which erupted in the Oromia region early March after it was alleged that Christians had “desecrated” a Koran.



It has been noted that the search for [a coherent “Obama doctrine”](#) may be futile, and the contrast between the administration’s disinterest in the plight of Ethiopia, even as it declared war on the Libyan government, highlights the incoherence which reigns in the halls of Clinton’s State Department. As Lambert Mbom wrote in a recent article ([“State Dep’t and U.N. Silent About Latest Anti-Christian Violence in Ethiopia”](#)) for CNSNews:

While the Obama administration cited human rights atrocities in Libya as part of the reason for U.S. and U.N. military intervention there, neither the State Department nor the United Nations have apparently condemned an outbreak of violence in western Ethiopia, led by Muslim radicals. Since early March two Christians have reportedly been killed, more than 3,000 displaced and at least 69 churches destroyed.

Also, leading human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Human Rights First appear not to have publicly condemned the attacks.

The attacks in Ethiopia were perpetrated against so-called ‘evangelical’ denominations, and not the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, which is the largest Christian church body in the country. The Muslim attack which began with the churches of Asendabo took place in a province which is almost evenly divided between Christians of various denominations (48.7 percent of the population) and Muslims (47.5 percent), according to census data published by the Ethiopian government. Throughout Ethiopia, Muslims account for 33.9 percent of the overall population, and the data provided by the most recent census makes it clear that much of that Muslim minority resides in a few areas, including the Afar and Somali regions. Given the flight of thousands of Christians in response to the recent violence, there is reason to be concerned that such a pattern of attacks over the long term might alter the religious character of the province.

A glimpse into the mind of the victims of the violence is provided by an interview which Wolde Giorgis gave to [Radio Netherlands Worldwide](#):



Written by [James Heiser](#) on April 4, 2011

“It is a miracle that we are standing here talking,” says Wolde Giorgis, a primary school teacher and devout Christian, standing in front of the burnt remainders of what used to be the largest Pentecostal church of Asendabo, a town in the southwest of Ethiopia that is predominantly Muslim.

Wolde says to fear for his life. “I will leave this place as soon as possible, like so many Christians already did. I don’t know what will be next: first they burn our churches and houses. Are they going to kill us now?”

While the [Obama administration and neo-conservatives](#) are stumping for yet another war which is supposed to “end the violence,” they ignore the plight of the Ethiopians. According to CNSNews:

The department’s Office of International Religious Freedom, which “monitors religious persecution and discrimination worldwide and implements policies in respective regions or countries, and develops programs to promote religious freedom” has not released any comment on or condemnation of the violence.

Despite several inquiries by CNSNews.com for comment, the Ethiopia desk at the State Department did not respond before this story was posted.

The independent U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has also apparently not mentioned anything about the incidents, although spokesman [sic] Tom Carter acknowledged that the commission was aware of the violence in Ethiopia.

This anti-Christian attacks started on March 2. At that time, the U.N. Human Rights’ Council was holding its month-long session in Geneva, during which it adopted a resolution combating intolerance based on religion. Yet neither the council nor other U.N. rights bodies has released any statement on the Ethiopian situation.

Highlighting the Obama administration’s apparent ambivalence to the suffering in Ethiopia, even as hundreds of millions of dollars worth of military assets are expended aiding Libyan rebels is not a reason for intervention in Ethiopia. United States military intervention, when considered in terms of the vital interests of the United States, is not warranted in either Libya or Ethiopia. What can be learned from a comparison of the plight of these two nations is an insight into the “Obama doctrine”: Whatever is guiding the president’s policy, it is most certainly not the rhetoric he utilized during the election. [As Michael Boyle wrote for *The Guardian*:](#)

Perhaps the most dispiriting aspect of this operation is that it proves that President Obama has been seduced by the power of the Oval Office into betraying many of the promises he represented as a candidate. The same thoughtful man who once argued that the US should never go to war without a congressional authorisation did not seek one, and waited ten days before even addressing the American public about his rationale for the operation. The same president who pledged in his national security strategy to take into account the limitation of our economic resources in his foreign policy decisions has led us into a war costing hundreds of millions of dollars. The same president once critical of a rush into a “dumb war” has let a compelling moral cause turn the US into a party in another war in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the plight of the Ethiopians does not even merit a State Department press release.



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