



March 21, 2007

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*Media Alert*

The University of Minnesota Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, the Law School, and the Human Rights Center present a special panel discussion event

*The “New Breed” of African Leaders and the Future of  
Human Rights and Democracy in Africa*

Friday, April 6, 2007

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Room 25 Mondale Hall

University of Minnesota Law School

229 19<sup>th</sup> Ave S.

Minneapolis, MN 55455

Free and open to the public, but registration required

Event website – information and registration: <http://www.hrusa.org/workshops/africanleaders>

**Event Description:**

The Humphrey Institute, the Law School, and the Human Rights Center are proud to present a panel discussion event on African Leaders, the current state of Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, and U.S. Foreign Policy. The event is framed in the context of the expression, “the new breed of African leaders,” coined by U.S. President Bill Clinton. This expression largely refers to late- and post-cold war African rebel leaders who came to power after long and bloody civil wars promising democracy and respect for human rights -- principally in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda.

This notion was further supported with new waves of aid, trade incentives, and debt relief policies, both by multilateral and bilateral donors. The United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as G-8 poverty eradication policies, also gave further credence to the idea, and were aimed at providing opportunities for these countries to advance in economic development, good governance, and respect for human rights.

Unfortunately, this “New Breed of African Leaders” failed to achieve the intended goals and wishes of its own citizens and the international community. Their countries remain mostly one-party states with autocratic leaders who are often very hostile to differing political opinions and criticism. Many of them are now best known for their gross violations of human rights, corruption, and repression of political opposition, as well as repression of civil society associations and the free media.

At the panel discussion event, policymakers, academics, and human rights advocates will present and discuss challenges facing the African political landscape. Through panel discussions, the event will critically examine the challenges and obstacles to democratization and respect for human rights that persist in African countries. The event is also intended to stimulate discussion on policy options and possible

practical guidelines in rethinking U.S. foreign policy in Africa to promote good governance and respect for human rights. One of these panels will examine the Ethiopian elections of May 2005 and the continued human rights violations and political repression in that country as a case study. This session will also critically analyze the role of the international community in supporting the democratization process in Ethiopia and its implication for the democratization process in Africa as a whole.

The panels will feature a variety of distinguished speakers and moderators, including Michael Clough (Former Director of Africa Advocacy, Human Rights Watch); Keith Ellison (U.S. Representative, 5th Congressional District, Minnesota); Christopher Fomunyoh (Senior Associate and Regional Director, Central and West Africa Programs, National Democratic Institute); Alemayehu G. Mariam (Professor, Department of Political Science, California State University-San Bernardino); and Peter Takirambudde (Executive Director, Sub-Saharan Africa Program Human Rights Watch).

The panel discussion event is co-sponsored by the African News Journal, the African Student Association, Amnesty International Law Student Group, Amnesty International-University of Minnesota Student Chapter, Books for Africa, the Ethiopian-American National Alliance, the Humphrey Fellowship Program, the International Leadership Institute, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, Minnesota African Women's Association (MAWA), the Oromo-American Citizens Council, the Oromia Student Union, and the following University of Minnesota Departments and Programs: The African American & African Studies Department, the Department of Political Science, the Department of History, the Institute for Global Studies, and the Human Rights Program.