

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 6, 2004

His Excellency President Isaias Afewerki
President of the State of Eritrea
Office of the President

Dear President Afewerki:

We write to you to express our concern over the continuing detention of Aster Yohannes and to urge you to release her.

Aster Yohannes has been held incommunicado since December 2003 without due process. We understand that she is one of several individuals being detained without charges, and we are increasingly concerned over the human rights situation in Eritrea. Adding to our concern are recent reports of intolerance of religious minorities, the expulsion of all foreign journalists, government control of the Eritrean press, and the limitation or denial of other basic human rights.

We are particularly concerned about the detention of Aster Yohannes, a citizen of Eritrea who came to the U.S. under a UN scholarship and lived in Arizona while she obtained a degree in marketing. While she was in the U.S., her husband, Petros Solomon, was detained without charges along with other government officials. After obtaining assurance from the Eritrean government that she could travel to Eritrea to be with her children, Aster Yohannes made the trip home on December 11, 2003. Upon her arrival at the airport, she was taken from outside the airport terminal before she could see her children, and she has been held incommunicado since then.

We understand that Eritrea is in the midst of a tense border dispute with Ethiopia, and that much of your attention is devoted to that issue. Work on the border issue, however, should not preclude a resolution to the case of Aster Yohannes, other detained individuals, or the improvement of the general human rights situation in Eritrea. In fact, the establishment and enforcement of basic human rights would serve to improve the security and well-being of the country.

We respectfully urge you to release Aster Yohannes immediately and allow her to return to her family. We will regard this as a first step toward restoring human rights in Eritrea. We look forward to resolving this and other important issues in the very near future. We await your response.

Sincerely,



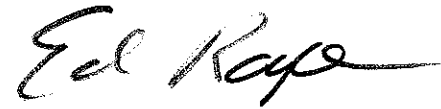
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HENRY J. HYDE
Member of Congress



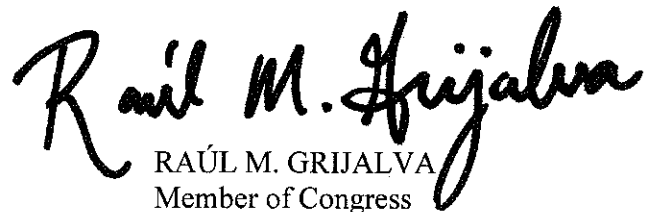
TOM LANTOS
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EDWARD R. ROYCE
Member of Congress



JIM KOLBE
Member of Congress



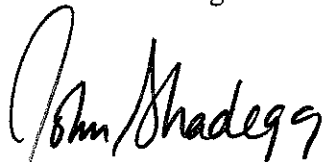
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



ED PASTOR
Member of Congress



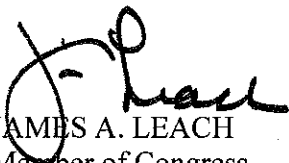
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JOHN B. SHADEGG
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RICK RENZI
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JAMES A. LEACH
Member of Congress



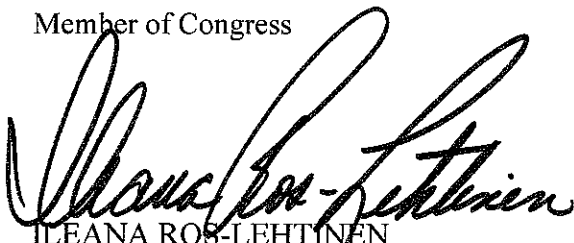
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
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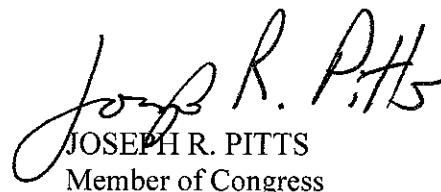
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ELTON GALLEGLY
Member of Congress



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Member of Congress

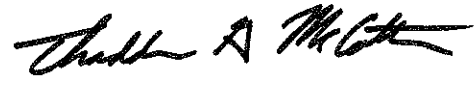



JOSEPH R. PITTS
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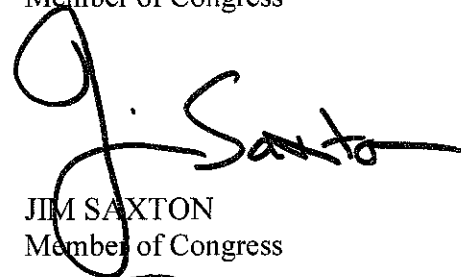

BETTY McCOLLUM
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MARK GREEN
Member of Congress

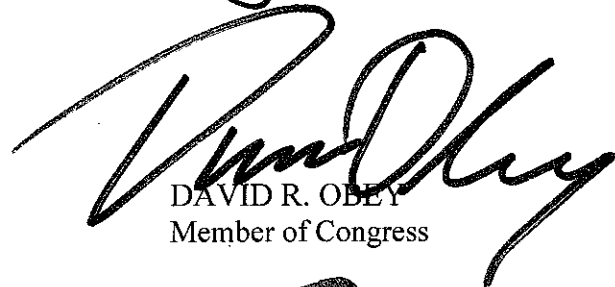

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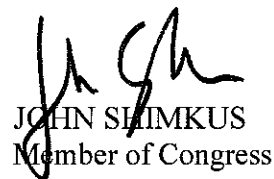

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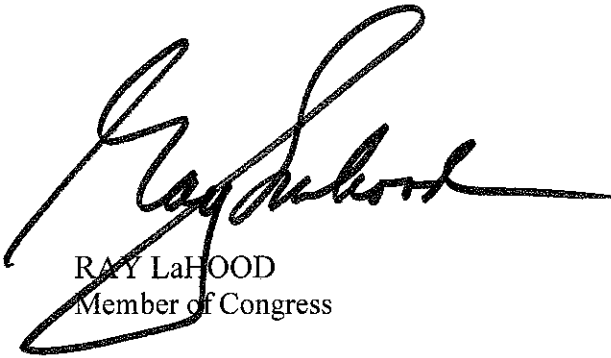

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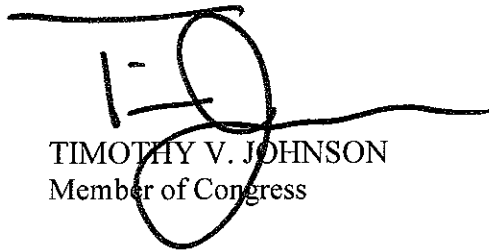
NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Member of Congress



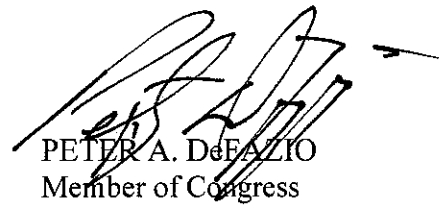
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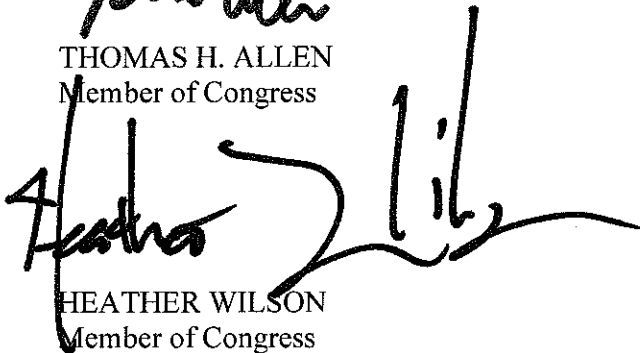
PETER A. DEFAZIO
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Zoe Lofgren

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Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
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Michael M. Honda

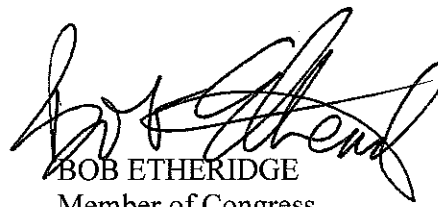
MICHAEL M. HONDA
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Janice D. Schakowsky

JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress



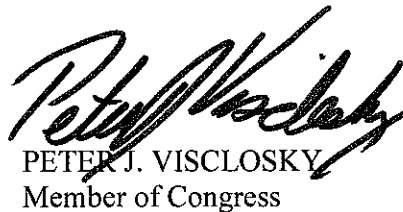
MICHAEL H. MICHAUD
Member of Congress



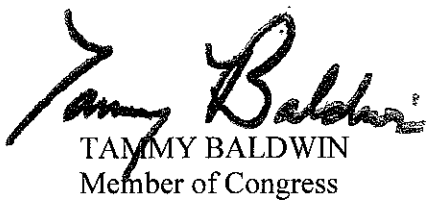
BOB ETHERIDGE
Member of Congress



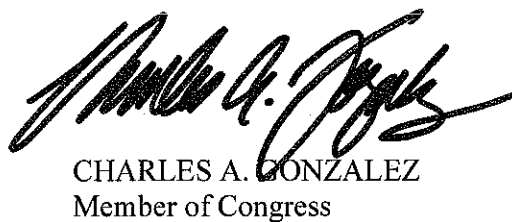
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