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March/April 2025

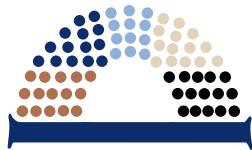
Ethiopian Parliamentarians,
Monthly Digest



research@bridge-et.org



ENDERASIE IS A PARLIAMENTARY MONTHLY
DIGEST ISSUED BY BRIDGE RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION.



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Parliaments. Peace. Policy

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BRIDGE Profile

Bridge Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace (BRIDGE) is an independent, non-profit think tank based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Registered under the FDRE Civil Society Organization Proclamation No. 1113/2019, which specializes in parliamentary affairs, peace, and development in the IGAD region.



Mission

To advance democratic governance and enhance peace through evidence-based research and innovative policy analysis.



Vision

To be a leading research hub and trusted source of analysis on parliamentary affairs, peace, governance, and development in the IGAD region.



Core Values

- ◆ Rigor: Delivering high-quality, evidence-driven research.
- ◆ Innovation: Pioneering creative and adaptive solutions for governance and peace challenges.
- ◆ Trust: Upholding credibility through transparent and reliable analysis



Objectives

It aims to strengthen legislative institutions in federal and local parliaments in Ethiopia and the IGAD region by:

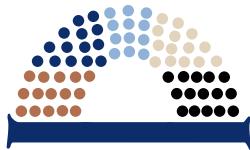
- ◆ Conducting evidence-based research.
- ◆ Providing capacity-building support to enhance the performance of parliamentarians.
- ◆ Monitoring parliamentary activities to ensure accountability and effectiveness.



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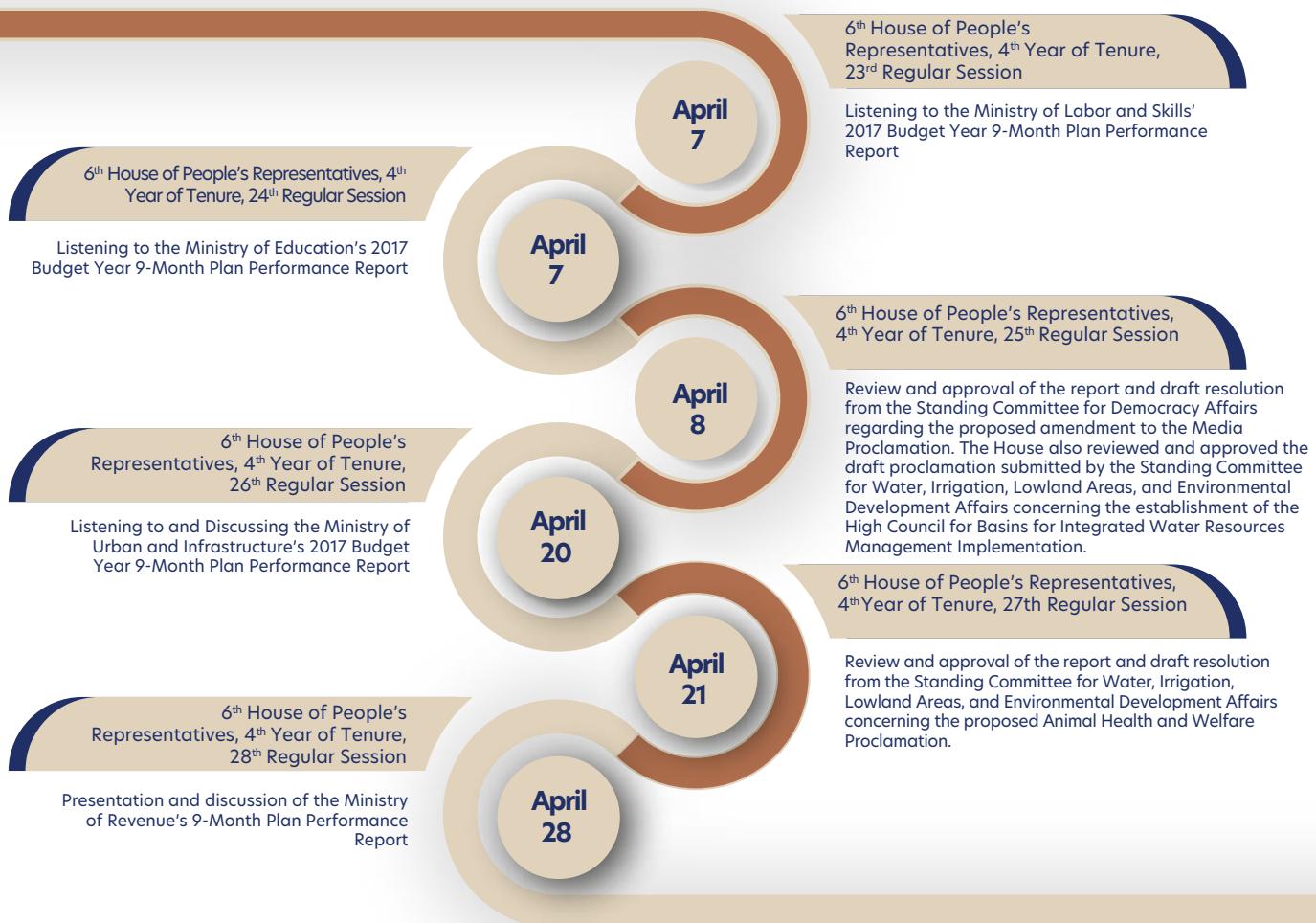
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This April edition of enderasie highlights three key undertakings by the House of Peoples' Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), reflecting the institution's core responsibilities: legislating, overseeing executive agencies, and advancing parliamentary diplomacy. The publication provides a detailed overview of the laws ratified by the House, the representational assignments carried out by its members, institutional oversight activities, including reports and field visits, and developments in parliamentary diplomacy. It also presents a concise Bridge's observational insight into two critical issues addressed during the month.

*All dates are in the Ethiopian calendar.

Regular Sessions of the House



Legislative Activities of the House

D

uring April, the House approved three proclamations as part of its legislative function. However, it's important to note that no new draft proclamations were referred to standing committees for further deliberations, and no public or explanatory forums on draft legislation were convened within the reporting period.



Laws Ratified

In April, the House of People's Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia ratified three significant pieces of legislation as part of its constitutional mandate. The first was the Proclamation to Amend the Media Proclamation, ratified during the House's 25th Regular Session as Proclamation No. 1374/2017. The draft proclamation was reviewed and passed by a majority vote, with only one vote in opposition. The first was the Proclamation to Amend the Media Proclamation, ratified during the House's 25th Regular Session as Proclamation No. 1374/2017. The draft proclamation was reviewed and passed by a majority vote, with only one vote in opposition. The report and recommendation were presented by the Standing Committee for Democracy Affairs through the Honorable Ewunetu Alene. The Chief Government Whip, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, emphasized the proclamation's critical role in strengthening institutions and ensuring both citizen and national security. Dr. Tesfaye highlighted the media sector's significant growth over the past seven years. According to his report, the number of media outlets increased from 122 to 272, television stations expanded from

25 to 103, an increase of 78, and radio stations grew from 52 to 125. Furthermore, the diversity of media languages doubled, rising from 29 to 58. (For more in-depth information on Proclamation No. 1374/2017, please consult our brief survey provided on page 13 of this edition.)

The second legislation ratified was the Integrated Water Resources Management Implementation River Basins High Council Establishment Proclamation, approved unanimously as Proclamation No. 1375/2017. This decision followed the presentation of a report and recommendation by the Honorable Fetiya Ahmed, Madam Chair of the Standing Committee for Water, Irrigation, Lowlands, and Environmental Development Affairs. In a recent parliamentary session, Fethiya emphasized the importance of the water sector, noting that the accountability of the newly proposed High Council for Water Resources to the Prime Minister underscores the national significance of the issue. According to her, the proclamation will allow Ethiopia to utilize its surface and groundwater resources equitably and sustainably. She further noted that it will ensure effective water resource management through coordinated decision-making and

the resolution of inter-regional disputes using scientific approaches. This legislation, officially titled the Establishment of the Integrated Water Resources Management Implementation High Council for River Basins Proclamation No. 1375/2017, was subsequently approved by the House of People's Representatives.

Additionally, the House unanimously passed the Animal Health and Welfare Proclamation No. 1376/2017, presented on April 29 by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Honorable Solomon Lale. The proclamation contains provisions aimed at preventing and controlling zoonotic diseases, those transmitted between humans and animals. Furthermore, it mandates that imported and exported animals and animal products comply with the standards and regulations of the World Organization for Animal Health. According to Solomon, the proclamation is aligned with prevailing international and continental frameworks and is expected to enhance the economic contribution of Ethiopia's livestock sector. The draft was unanimously ratified as Proclamation No. 1376/2017.



Oversight and Monitoring of Executive Institutions



One of the key responsibilities expected of them, members of the House of Peoples' Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia have the task of overseeing executive bodies. In this regard, key activities include listening to reports from executive institutions, physically assessing them, and conducting field visits.



Reports of Executive Institutions

In April, several executive institutions appeared before the House of People's Representatives to present their performance reports for the 2017 Ethiopian fiscal year, covering a period of 8 to 9 months. These sessions were held as part of the House's constitutional oversight duties, with the reports submitted to the relevant standing committees for review.

Earlier this month, the Ministry of Labor and Skills presented its nine-month performance report for the 2017 Ethiopian fiscal year. The report was delivered by Honorable Minister Muferiat Kamil, who stated that 3.4 million jobs were created during the reporting period. She highlighted that the ministry's efforts to provide vocational training for citizens, both domestically and abroad, have yielded tangible results. The Minister also noted that the ministry remains dedicated to fulfilling its mandate and contributing to national development. Honorable

Dr. Negeri Lencho also praised the institution's role in expanding employment opportunities and using technology to improve service delivery. However, he emphasized the need to pay more attention to overseas employment and the industrial sector. Dr. Negeri additionally stressed the importance of strict monitoring and regulation to address ongoing challenges related to employment and labor agencies, as mentioned in the House's report.

The Ministry of Education submitted its nine-month performance report for the 2017 Ethiopian fiscal year on April 15. The report was presented by the Minister of Education, Professor Berhanu Nega. Professor Berhanu outlined several key achievements and challenges. The report emphasized the ongoing efforts to fundamentally transform Ethiopia's education system. The main points addressed in the report included:

- ◆ In the 2017 academic year, 25,253,365 students are enrolled from pre-primary to grade 12.
- ◆ 1,252,063 adults are enrolled in basic education programs.
- ◆ Additionally, the report indicates that 71,445 students are enrolled in distance education programs, 61,251 are in accelerated learning programs, and 152,284 students are attending evening classes.



- ◆ In the 2017 academic year, 6.3 million students from pre-primary to 8th grade were provided with school feeding programs.
- ◆ 43.5 million Secondary school textbooks have been distributed in the 1st and 2nd rounds.
- ◆ 7,262 school leaders received specialized summer training in school leadership, 6,983 were evaluated.
- ◆ 43,827 teachers received specialized summer training, with 61.4% of them scored 70% or higher on assessments
- ◆ Under the motto “Education for Generations,” 54 billion Birr was raised in the 2017 academic year alone. This funding enabled the construction of a total of 6,815 new schools, including 5,906 pre-primary, 832 primary and middle, and 712 secondary schools.
- ◆ Additionally, 22,348 pre-primary to secondary schools underwent renovation. Furthermore, 10,187 pre-primary to secondary schools received additional classroom constructions.
- ◆ Institutional performance metrics improved as follows: primary and middle schools achieving Level 3 or higher in in-school inspection ratings increased from 7.8% to 13.2%. Similarly, secondary schools reaching this level saw a rise from 16.21% to 32.69%.
- ◆ 16 model secondary schools are currently under construction, and an additional 15 model secondary schools being initiated;
- ◆ Five specialized secondary boarding schools are currently under construction and set to enroll Grade 9 students in the upcoming 2018 academic year.
- ◆ In regions affected by the northern conflict, 45 in the Amhara Region and 4 in the Afar Region have been constructed and completed.
- ◆ To address the decline in the 12th-grade student pass rate, a study has been conducted to identify its causes. Based on the findings of this study, numerous efforts are currently underway to improve the pass rate in the 2017 academic year.
- ◆ In line with the autonomy framework piloted by Addis Ababa University’s autonomy, nine other universities have commenced the process of transitioning to autonomous governance.
- ◆ Starting from this budget year, all types of diplomas for all higher education institutions will be printed solely through the Ministry of Education.

Following Professor Berhanu's presentation, the Chairperson of the House Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs, Honorable Dr. Negeri Lencho, emphasized the need for continuity in key initiatives such as the ongoing civil service reform, teacher and education leadership training programs, and student nutrition efforts. Dr. Negeri further suggested that reinstating the suspended summer program could serve as a potential measure to address the nationwide shortage of teachers. Additionally, he called upon the Ministry of Education to develop concrete solutions for students who have been forced to drop out of school due to both natural and man-made crises in various regions of the country.

On April 8, the Government Procurement and Assets Authority submitted its performance audit report to the House Standing Committee on Government Expenditure, Management, and Control. The report focused on the effectiveness of the government's electronic procurement system during the 2015/2016 fiscal year. According to information from the House, the Standing Committee held substantive discussions based on the audit's findings. Madam Chair of the Committee, Honorable Dr. YeshiEmebet Demise, emphasized the importance of finalizing and implementing the necessary legal frameworks for electronic government procurement. She highlighted that a collaborative system involving financial institutions, the Ministry of Revenue, and other relevant agencies should be established to improve the procurement process and ensure efficient management of procurement orders. Additionally, she underscored the need to include special procurements within the electronic procurement system and called for improved data availability to support effective auditing. Deputy Chairperson Honorable Arare Mosisa echoed the importance of strengthening the electronic procurement system to boost the efficiency and effectiveness of government procurement. She urged the Authority to create an enabling environment for oversight by developing clear guidelines to address procedural gaps. In response, the Director General of the Public Procurement and Property Authority, Ms. Meseret Mesekele, reported that the electronic procurement system has been made accessible to institutions using standard government operating systems. She added that the Authority has undertaken awareness campaigns to educate stakeholders on using the electronic procurement platform and its procedures.

On April 16th, the Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure presented its nine-month plan performance report

for the 2017 fiscal year to the House. The Minister of Urban and Infrastructure, Chaltu Sani, highlighted the development of capacity for the coordinated execution of road and other infrastructure projects through corridor development. The Ethiopian Roads Administration was praised for operating with a strong organizational structure. In the past nine months, achievements included implementing municipal service standards in 14 cities, and expanding the urban developmental safety net. However, House members raised concerns about delays in road project completion, damages, and postponements in compensation payments. The Director General of the Roads Administration, Engineer Mohammed Abdurahman, and Minister Chaltu Sani attributed these issues to rising costs of construction materials and delays in disbursing compensation. They explained that efforts are focused on finishing existing projects to address these challenges. For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Dr. Eshetu Temesgen, pointed out the expansion of urban corridor development and the establishment of project offices as strengths. Conversely, he identified poor performance of the land cadaster system and delays in payments as areas of concern.

On April 28, the Ministry of Peace presented its nine-month performance report to the House Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs. The report was delivered by the Minister of Peace, Mohamed Idris, who outlined the ministry's achievements during the reporting period. He noted that the ministry had planned to engage 25 million citizens in community consultations over the fiscal year and had successfully consulted more than 18 million so far. Minister Mohamed emphasized that community consultation is a foundational step toward achieving sustainable peace. He underscored





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the importance of identifying and addressing the root causes of conflict, rather than mischaracterizing them as ethnic or religious in nature, which risks further inflaming tensions. Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Dr. Dima Negwo, commended the ministry's efforts to modernize its operations through the use of technology. He also stressed the need for pre-conflict early warning and forecasting mechanisms to remain grounded in rigorous, research-based approaches.

On April 28th, the Ministry of Revenues presented its nine-month performance report to the House. Minister of Revenues, Aynalem Nigussie, announced that 653.2 billion Birr was collected in revenue during this period. In response to questions and comments from House members, Aynalem emphasized that the Ministry of Revenue has shown strong internal coordination between its leadership and staff over the past nine months. She also mentioned that the ministry has conducted extensive monitoring and support activities to improve performance. Chairperson of the House Standing Committee on Planning, Budget, and Finance Affairs, Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, praised the ministry for its achievements. He specifically highlighted that the ministry successfully prevented a potential loss of 88.85 billion Birr, turning it into government revenue, a result he described as very encouraging.

On April 29th, four institutions presented their reports. The Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority submitted its nine-month performance report for the 2017 fiscal year to the Standing Committee for Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs. Getachew Mengiste, Director General of the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority, delivered the Authority's nine-month performance update. He noted that while 600 employees are currently providing services, there is a shortage of human resources, prompting the training of 100 air traffic controllers. Habtamu Ashine,

Lead Executive for Air Navigation Construction and Airport Tower Construction at the Authority, explained that out of seven planned airports to ensure equitable accessibility, two have been completed, with five under construction to improve access to air services. Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Professor Mohamed Abdo, emphasized that for Ethiopia to remain competitive in the global aviation industry, the sector must be strengthened with the support of a robust national airline. He further underscored the importance of addressing the feedback received and ensuring that the necessary implementation measures are carried out promptly and effectively.

On that day, the Power Equipment Manufacturing Factories of the Ethio-Engineering Group presented an operational audit report on performance and environmental management to the Standing Committee for Government Expenditure, Administration, and Control Affairs. CEO Colonel Shegaw Mulugeta, involved in constructing electrical cables, transformers, and solar power generation centers, stated that from 2013 to 2015, the factories only achieved 28% of their planned 5.5 billion Birr in revenue from product sales and other sources. This shortfall was attributed to institutional reform challenges. Additionally, gaps were identified in environmental and social impact assessments, workplace safety, and asset management.

The third institution to present its report on the same day was the Ministry of Health. Its nine-month performance report for the 2017 fiscal year was reviewed by the Standing Committee for Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sports Affairs. Madam Chair of the Standing Committee, Honorable Workesemu Mamo, noted that the Ministry of Health has made significant progress in coordinating with relevant stakeholders to prevent and treat malaria and other related epidemics. The Committee recognized



the ministry's efforts in tackling these health challenges as a key strength. Additionally, Workesemu highlighted the ministry's effective cost-saving initiative, which included providing training to improve the maintenance of medical equipment and rehabilitate damaged devices in certain regions. Because of this initiative, the ministry was able to save an estimated 48.7 million birr, an achievement also acknowledged as a major strength by the Committee. However, several weaknesses were identified and highlighted for attention: a decrease in family planning beneficiaries (from a planned 81.7% to 72%), the failure to lower the mortality rate in intensive care units, and a lack of progress in reducing adolescent pregnancies (still at 13%, with a target of 9%).

The final report of the day was presented by the Industrial Parks Development Corporation to the House Standing Committee on Government Development Organizations Affairs. The Committee reviewed the Corporation's nine-month performance report for the 2017 Ethiopian fiscal year. During the session, the Standing Committee emphasized the need to identify and address the ongoing challenges facing the industrial sector, one of the key pillars in the national economic transformation agenda. Deputy

Chairperson of the Committee, Honorable Dr. Engineer Selshi Kore, acknowledged the positive contribution of industrial parks to the country's economic growth. He noted that the Corporation had achieved commendable results in several areas, including transferring industrial sheds to investors, utilizing cultivated land, providing infrastructure, and creating jobs over the reporting period. While significant progress has been made in employment generation, proxy production, and infrastructure development within the industrial parks, the Committee also identified several areas needing more attention. These include waste management, raw material supply, land tenure issues, and surface construction quality.

Chief Executive Officer of the Industrial Parks Development Corporation, Dr. Fisa Yitegesu, reported that more than 72,000 jobs have been created across the thirteen economic zones and industrial parks. However, he acknowledged ongoing challenges, particularly the high rate of labor turnover caused by low wages, limited benefits, and inadequate housing for factory workers. He also noted that issues related to land tenure and raw material supply remain critical and confirmed that the Corporation is

working with relevant institutions to develop sustainable solutions.

On April 30th, the Ministry of Culture and Sports and its affiliated institutions presented the final nine-month performance report to the Standing Committee on Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sports Affairs. Minister of Culture and Sports, Shewit Shanka, reported that the Ministry is working to nurture a reading and reflective generation. She further explained that under the theme "Arts and Literature for Peoples' Coexistence and Image Building," a wide range of activities has been carried out in regions and city administrations to align arts and literature with national unity and nation-building narratives. Madam Chair of the Standing Committee, Honorable Worksemu Mamo, noted that significant progress has been made in promoting multicultural inclusion and strengthening social cohesion. He commended efforts such as producing accessible documentary films, organizing workshops on social harmony, developing the languages of nations, nationalities, and peoples, as well as initiatives aimed at enhancing their accessibility and use. These activities, he stated, are regarded as strong achievements and should be sustained and further expanded.

Institutional and Field Visits

In April, the Ethiopian House of People's Representatives conducted visits to various federal and regional institutions, including 45 field visits, to assess their current situations. These oversight activities are central to the House's constitutional mandate to ensure transparency, accountability, and service delivery to the public.

Institutional Visits

On April 28, 2025, a high-level delegation led by the Speaker of the House of People's Representatives, the Honorable Tadesse Chafo, visited the Mesob One-Stop Service Center. The main goal of this visit was to closely observe the center's role in citizen service delivery and to evaluate its operational processes. The center, which consolidates 41 services from 12 government agencies, aims to provide fast and efficient services to citizens by streamlining procedures under one roof through modern operational methods. The Standing Committee for Planning, Budget, and Finance Affairs conducted three major visits within the finance and revenue sector during April. Early in the month, the committee visited the Ministry of Finance to thoroughly review its eight-month performance. During this visit, they inspected the tax policy and performance monitoring sections, renovated offices, data center, cafeterias, and a library containing historical documents dating back to 1933 E.C. On April 15th, the committee visited the Jimma branch office of the Ministry of Revenues and received a report noting 1.8 billion Birr in revenue, a 46.44% increase compared to the same period last year. The following day, April 16th, the committee visited the Jimma branch of the Customs Commission. Officials from the branch provided a detailed explanation of the technologies they are using to combat contraband and modernize tax administration.

On April 1, the Standing Committee for Water, Irrigation, and Environmental Development visited the Water Technology Institute to assess progress based on earlier recommendations. During the review, they noted that only 30% of staff recruitment targets had been met, and the Institute faced a budget shortfall. The committee called for corrective action. In April, the Standing Committee for Government Expenditure, Administration, and Control Affairs also visited the Ethiopia-Djibouti Standard Gauge Railway Share Company (Dire Dawa), evaluating its operations based on the 2014 E.C.

Federal Auditor's performance audit report. Additionally, the Dire Dawa branch of the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission was assessed based on the findings of its 2014 E.C. legal compliance audit. The committee also examined the corrective measures taken by the enterprise in response to the Chief Auditor's findings and the system implemented to address future vulnerabilities.

The Standing Committee for Government Development Enterprises Affairs thoroughly reviewed the performance of development enterprises in April. The committee visited the Filwuha Service Enterprise, confirming that it serves over five thousand customers daily with organized revenue collection. They also visited the Ethiopian Postal Service Enterprise, observing its mail services, customer service, and surveillance rooms. The CEO of the enterprise, Dagmawi Haile, highlighted efforts to modernize services and requested support in expanding delivery hubs. At the end of the month, the Standing Committee for Democracy Affairs visited the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA). CEO Seyife Deribe explained ENA's multilingual reporting. During its visit, the committee recognized the agency's vital role in promoting Ethiopia's national interests.

Field Visits

In April, Ethiopian representatives conducted important visits of national significance. The Standing Committee for Legal and Justice Affairs focused its April visits on justice and correctional institutions. The committee visited the Sheger City customary courts in the Oromia region, observing firsthand their efforts to restore public trust and administer justice. Additionally, the committee visited the Oromia Supreme Court. While court officials explained the extensive work done in technology implementation, the committee emphasized the need to provide opportunities for juvenile offenders in correctional facilities to participate in various vocational



activities until they complete their rehabilitation.

The Standing Committee for Trade and Tourism conducted several visits during the noted month, focusing on issues related to trade and tourism. The committee visited the M.S.A. Business Group in Bahir Dar and observed 468 projects that replace imports with local products. They also learned that a problem involving transformer malfunctions and shortages of horticultural products in the Bahir Dar region is being investigated in cooperation with the Amhara Regional State government. During their visit to the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX), the committee noted expansion to 26 new branches and digital export support services. Finally, the committee visited the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration and its affiliated institutions, including the Ethiopian Standards Institute, the Petroleum and Energy Authority, and the Conformity Assessment Enterprise, to review their organizational structures and functions. The Standing Committee for Agricultural Affairs engaged in extensive activities this month related to agricultural development. The committee received a nine-month performance report evaluating the “Green Legacy” initiatives underway in the Benishangul Gumuz Region and community farming in Assosa Zone. In the Afar Region, the committee observed active participation from beneficiaries in livestock fattening programs. Concluding the month, the committee visited coffee exporting companies in Addis Ababa, specifically Daye Bensa and Testy Specialty Coffee. Following this, they visited the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority, where they assessed its nine-month performance and reviewed the upcoming free phone call service set to launch next week.

The Standing Committee for Urban Infrastructure and Transport Affairs visited infrastructure and transport projects in April. The committee closely observed ongoing infrastructure development, safety net programs, and corridor development activities in Semera city of the Afar Region. They particularly highlighted the Milidoni-

Manda Bure (Assab Corridor) road project, which spans 70 kilometers and is of great importance for border areas and the country's import-export trade. Additionally, the committee visited the Ethiopian Roads Administration Training Center to review its research and training roadmap and held discussions with the management. During the visit, the committee emphasized federal efforts to improve fuel and cement supply. In April, the Standing Committee for Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sports conducted several visits across sectors related to health, social development, and culture. The committee visited the Integrated Blind and Persons with Disabilities Training and Rehabilitation Association, where they observed that 68 individuals with disabilities are currently employed and three income-generating buildings are under construction. At Alert Comprehensive Specialized Hospital, they evaluated surgical, pharmaceutical supply, and maternal and child health services.

The committee also confirmed that the 20th Tesfa Birhan Feeding Center in Addis Ababa, which was commended for its community support. During visits to the Somali Region, the committee evaluated service delivery at the Gerab Ale Woreda Ayir Dega Health Center and Karamara Hospital, recognized for its digital patient data system. They also visited the Somali Region Arts Group and Museum, noting positive progress in collecting and organizing heritage items. The Deputy Bureau of Culture and Tourism stated that they are working to transmit cultural values to future generations. Furthermore, the committee carried out field assessments of the Physical Rehabilitation Center (which provides physical support and machine-assisted therapy), Tuli Guleed Woreda Tuli Health Center, Dikrile Health Post, Ararso Health Center, Women and Children Development Center, and sports facilities in Ararso Woreda of the Jerer Zone.

In the same month, the Standing Committee for Human Resources Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs assessed the education and human resource



development sectors. The committee visited Qabridahar University. While positive learning and teaching environments were noted, there were notable gaps in vehicles, laboratory resources, and funding. Additionally, the committee visited the Somali Region Education Bureau. They observed that although the bureau is working to improve student performance, ongoing teacher shortages continue to pose a challenge.

The Standing Committee for Mining and Industry Affairs conducted visits in April, focusing on the mining and industry sectors. During their visit to the Afdera Zone in the Afar Region, the committee observed that the TTR Salt Factory has ceased operations, while the ECD Salt Factory is producing at full capacity. They also noted that the Bentonite Mine, with a capacity of 160,000 tons, was hindered by machinery shortages. The committee emphasized the importance of replacing foreign products with domestically produced ones. Finally, the committee confirmed that out of 25 manufacturing industries in the Afar Region, 19 resumed operations after reforms, while nine closed due to earthquakes and structural issues. At the end of April, the Social Security Standing Committee visited government employees in the Jimma Zone. During the visit, the committee confirmed the enrollment of government employees in social security programs. Additionally, they noted the ongoing social security projects in the Afar Region.



Parliamentary Diplomacy

In April, the House of People's Representatives held a diplomatic meeting. A delegation led by Dr. Maximos Charakopoulos, a Member of the Greek Parliament and Head of the Inter-parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO), was received by Speaker Tagesse Chafo and members of the House's Ethiopia and Western European Countries, along with the European Union Friendship Committee. Speaker Tagesse expressed Ethiopia's interest in gaining experience from Greece in sectors such as trade and investment and is willing to share its own experiences in return. Ambassador Dina Mufti, Chairperson of the Ethiopia and Western European Countries Friendship Committee, emphasized the need to strengthen the long-standing friendship between the two countries. He highlighted the importance of further developing bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Greece. Areas for mutual cooperation mentioned include technology, trade, agriculture, tourism, and energy. Dr. Maximos, representing the Greek delegation, conveyed Greece's willingness to share its expertise in construction, maritime transport, and various technological fields with Ethiopia. He also called for Greek investors to expand their investments in Ethiopia.



Standing Committees of the House



In April 29, the House of People's Representatives of the FDRE, during its 27th regular session of the 6th House's 4th year, appointed new leaders for vacant standing committee positions. The Honorable Professor Mohammed Abdu was appointed as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee for Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs, and the Honorable Meles Mena was appointed as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee for Government Development Enterprises Affairs. The resolution, presented by Speaker Tagesse, was approved by a majority vote with one abstention.

The House currently has the following 13 Standing Committees:



Women Parliamentarians' Caucus

The House of People's Representatives Women Parliamentarians' Caucus recently reviewed its performance over the past three and a half years. The review was led by the Caucus chair, Honorable Kimiya Jindi, who reported that the Caucus has gone beyond its legislative mandate to provide skills training for female university students. Honorable Lomi Bedo, the Caucus patron, explained that the Caucus effectively

fulfilled its social responsibility by mobilizing 65 million Birr worth of material support for citizens affected by man-made and natural disasters. The report also detailed and discussed various initiatives and their outcomes, including efforts in women's capacity building, gender mainstreaming, caucus information organization and image building, and local and international experience sharing programs.



Bridge Research & Innovation's Observational Insight

On Media Proclamation No. 1374/2017

On April 9, during its 25th regular session, the House of Representatives approved a highly criticized proclamation. The House passed this amendment, known as Media Proclamation No. 1374/2017, which updates the previous Media Proclamation No. 1238/2013 on eleven points. It was approved by a majority vote with one objection.

Yesteryears'

Ethiopian modern media began at the start of the 20th century and has experienced various phases throughout its century-long history. Until the 1974 revolution, it mainly focused on supporting Emperor Haile Selassie's efforts to modernize, with newspapers in particular limiting themselves to praising the monarch. As the imperial regime started to weaken, the media's ability to push for economic system reforms also declined. The revolution brought a brief period of ideological openness, but the Derg regime soon imposed strict censorship, completely shutting down spaces for free expression; however, the Derg regime, which came to power after the revolution, fully silenced the emerging free expression that existed during the Emperor's era, even suppressing debates among reformist intellectuals and influential 20th-century writers. Intellectual and journalistic freedom virtually disappeared for 17 years. After enduring 17 years of such extreme suppression of free speech, the EPRDF rose to power and introduced a new proclamation, which is still praised in Ethiopian history.



34/1985, issued by the then-Transitional Government two years before the current constitution, serve as a landmark moment in legally prohibiting pre-publication censorship and establishing freedom of the press. This proclamation, highlighting the guarantee of free expression in Ethiopia's Transitional Period Charter, also calls for government transparency and recognizes the press's role in holding authorities accountable. The 1985 proclamation regarded the press's role in providing citizens with a balanced understanding of national issues and enabling public feedback on government leadership as "significant," and to support this, it declared the elimination of pre-publication censorship. Following this, hundreds of private newspapers and magazines mainly appeared in the capital city, and television outlets multiplied, covering a wide range of political, religious, economic, and social topics.

To regulate the private media, which started its journey in 1985, various laws have been enacted over the past three decades. Following

the 1985 proclamation, notable previous legislation includes Broadcast Proclamation No. 178/1991, Broadcast Service Proclamation No. 533/1999, Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation No. 596/2000, Advertisement Proclamation No. 759/2004, Proclamation No. 1185/2012 (issued to prevent and control hate speech and disinformation), and Media Proclamation No. 1238/2013. The most recent amendment (No. 1374/2017) builds on this legislative framework, introducing changes supposedly aimed at addressing current media challenges while balancing freedom of expression and national security.

Many countries' Press Freedom Proclamation No.



Why was it amended?

On April 17, the amendment proclamation was approved by a majority vote among the 248 representatives present. The main reason for this amendment was to strengthen the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA), which was seen as weakened by the organizational structure under the previous proclamation. It was explained that although the original Media Proclamation had been enacted and was in effect, the amendment was needed to address administrative gaps and regulatory challenges that hindered the EMA's effective operation.

The House of People's Representatives' Standing Committee for Democracy Affairs further clarified that a legal loophole existed regarding the authority of the EMA board, which restricted the Authority's daily operations. It was considered essential to transfer this authority back to the institution's executive body to ensure proper sector management, hence the need for amendment. The Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, Minister in charge of Government Affairs at the House, is reported to have said that the amendment would strengthen media outlets and guarantee their independence. Tesfaye emphasized that the government's efforts toward institutional neutrality have brought tangible changes, noting that reforms in the sector over recent years have increased the number, variety, and accessibility of media outlets in the country.

The Minister reminded the representatives that the number of media outlets, which was 122 before his government-led political change, has now increased to 272. He added that television stations grew from

Many countries' Press Freedom Proclamation No. 34/1985, issued by the then-Transitional Government two years before the current constitution, serve as a landmark moment in legally prohibiting pre-publication censorship and establishing freedom of the press.

just 25 to 103, radio stations from 52 to 125, and the number of languages used by media outlets doubled from 29 to 58. Information from the House indicates that he further stated the amendment would help these media outlets operate responsibly and enhance their contribution to nation-building.

For his part, Yonatan Tesfaye, Deputy Director General of the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA), stated that the amendment mainly revises the organizational framework of the previous law. He cited ongoing conflicts and the upcoming national election as reasons for the amendment, accusing some media outlets of worsening conflicts. According to Yonatan, the amendment also considers potential situations that could occur related to the upcoming election.

What was amended?

The amendment introduced significant changes aimed at redefining the Ethiopian Media Authority's governance and regulatory powers. The explanation

for the amendment, presented to the representatives, states that the changes seek to allow the Ethiopian Media Authority's (EMA) management board to focus on key policy issues. It emphasizes that, in principle, the EMA's management board should be a policy-guiding body; however, based on Article 13(2) of the previous proclamation, daily regulatory tasks were being performed by the board. In this regard, the explanation refers to the amended provision of Article 9/5/a/, which states that "members of the Board shall be drawn from various relevant bodies and sections of society that have proximity and relevance to the media sector." The previous Media Proclamation, Article 5/a, stipulated that "two of the board members shall be from civil society, two from the media, and two from various institutions and sections of society relevant to the media sector." This has been replaced by the new proclamation, which states, "Members of the Board shall be drawn from various relevant bodies and sections of society that have proximity and relevance to the media sector." Additionally, the provision in Article 5/b, which states, "three shall be drawn from relevant government bodies," remains unchanged. Importantly, the amendment repeals the ban on political party members serving on the board, allowing individuals affiliated with political parties to hold board positions.

The appointment process for the Director General of the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) is a key area for change. Previously, the EMA board hired the Director General, who was then nominated by the government and appointed by the House. The new amendment now gives the Prime Minister the power to nominate, and the House to

appoint, the Director General directly. Another major change involves media licensing. Under the previous proclamation, the EMA board had the authority to make decisions such as non-renewal, suspension, or revocation of licenses. However, the April amendment shifts all this authority to the EMA itself. The Authority now also has the power to take actions such as suspending a program. One of the reasons given for this amendment was that the previous proclamation's restriction of the board to daily regulatory tasks prevented it from making timely decisions needed to carry out its legally mandated duties.

The amended provisions also include changes to the deadline for a media outlet to respond to an accusation when its license is not renewed or has been revoked. Under the previous proclamation, the media outlet was given 7 working days to respond to licensing decisions. However, the amendment extends this to 14 working days to appeal to the board, which must then issue a ruling within 30 working days.

Another part of the proclamation that was amended concerns Live Broadcast Content Regulation. Regarding broadcast content, Article 55/1/f of the previous law stated that a broadcast license holder's duties included "ensuring that the content of any program, except for live broadcasts, complies with the law before being broadcast by the station." The revised proclamation has strengthened this provision, now stating: "ensuring that the content of any program complies with the law before it is broadcast or while it is being broadcast by the station." Honorable Ewunetu Alene, Chairperson of the House of Representatives' Standing Committee for Democracy Affairs, explained this change by saying that live broadcasts should not be used to pit citizens against each other or to incite conflict between different religions.

A significant and noteworthy change in the new proclamation concerns the fee structure for broadcasters. Under the previous Proclamation Article 46(1), any broadcast service licensee was generally required to pay a license fee, a radio spectrum fee, an annual fee, and a license renewal fee. However, the amended proclamation now states that the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) will collect the license fee and the annual license renewal fee, while the radio spectrum fee will be paid to the Ethiopian Communications Authority.

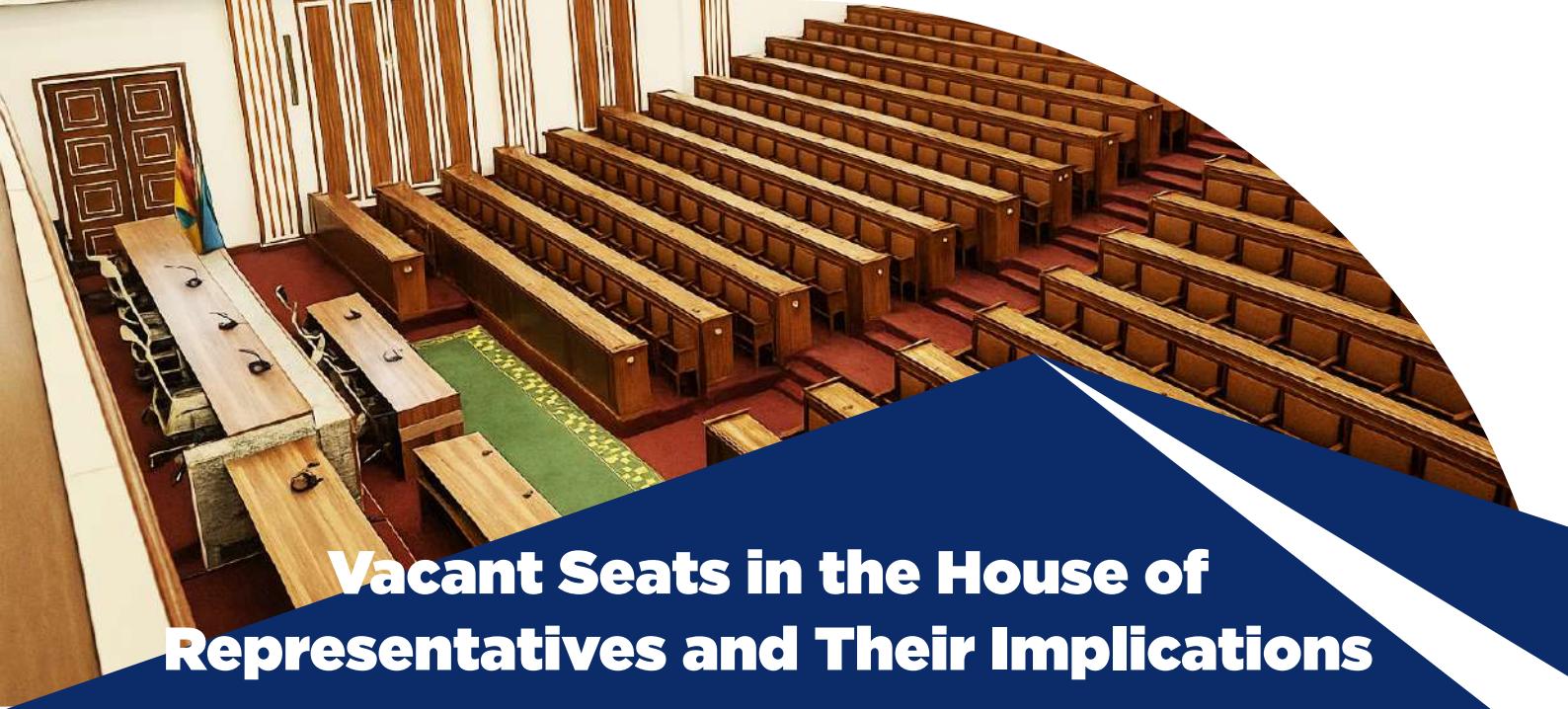
Bridge Research & Innovation's observational insights

The government led by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed is widely recognized for its efforts to reform laws that were

previously considered suppressive. Among these, the Media Proclamation No. 1238/2013, enacted in 2013, was a significant piece of legislation regarding the country's media landscape. While the Media Proclamation No. 1238/2013 was a landmark law, its rapid amendment within two years of enactment raises concerns for Bridge. Officials involved stated that the amendment was necessary because the original proclamation hindered the Ethiopian Media Authority from fulfilling its legal responsibilities properly. However, frequent changes to fundamental laws weaken legal predictability, a key principle in governance. Additionally, while the current conflicts within the country and the upcoming national election were cited as reasons for the amendment, this raises a crucial question: Will the space for freedom of speech and media independence become increasingly restricted during politically sensitive times as elections approach? This issue could reignite criticisms previously directed at the former ruling regime. If the House of Representatives continues to rapidly amend core laws, it will directly challenge the principle of legal predictability. Therefore, our institution's primary recommendation is to learn lessons from this experience to prevent similar rapid amendments to other proclamations, which could undermine the stability of any law.

On the other hand, during the drafting of the amendment, forums engaged stakeholders, including media and human rights advocates, many of whom urged keeping the 2013 law. This rare consensus highlights concerns about the amendment's potential effects. Bridge wants to stress that, although stakeholders do not support rewriting it now, remaining open to ideas during its future implementation is important.

Another significant amendment concerns the composition of the Ethiopian Media Authority's (EMA) board members. The new proclamation now allows members of political parties to serve on the board. It is generally understood that for the media to effectively fulfill its role as the fourth estate, it must remain insulated from political influence. The decision to include politicians as board members in this media regulatory body significantly increases the likelihood of the EMA falling under the influence of political appointees. The amendment's new provisions could allow political interests to dictate licensing and regulatory decisions, potentially leading to media censorship or persecution based on partisan agendas. In summary, the amended proclamation, which has faced considerable criticism, carries the risk of narrowing the media space, reversing the nascent democratic progress, and hindering human rights freedoms. We strongly urge the House of Representatives, in particular, to exercise vigilant oversight to prevent such adverse outcomes.



Vacant Seats in the House of Representatives and Their Implications

In Ethiopia, ongoing conflicts and security issues have prevented elections in some areas, leaving about 70 seats vacant in the House of People's Representatives of the FDRE. These seats have remained empty for an entire election cycle. While these vacant seats are spread across different regions, the Tigray National Regional State is completely unrepresented in the House. Although the House of Representatives has enough votes to form a government, the inability to hold elections in Tigray and other areas, along with the resulting gaps in representation, has seriously undermined its legitimacy and inclusiveness. This lack of representation means that the diverse interests of various groups are not adequately reflected in the legislative process. The absence of representation challenges the constitutional federal system, which was designed to accommodate identity and ideological differences and ensure self-rule, making democratic representation incomplete. The result is a flawed democratic process, raising serious concerns about the inclusiveness of governance. Therefore, this analysis aims to explore the implications of this representation gap and potential solutions.

What did we lose?

The main consequence of partial or complete lack of representation is the failure to uphold the principles of political participation and representation, which are vital for protecting the interests and aspirations of voters and citizens. As the renowned political philosopher John Locke states that legitimate governance comes from the consent of the governed, a social contract. The denial of representation, as experienced by citizens in Tigray and other unrepresented areas, breaks this contract by excluding them from law-making and governance. This disenfranchisement leads to political alienation and could increase instability if not addressed. Although self-

governance and political participation are guaranteed by the Ethiopian Constitution, the rights to vote and be elected have not been exercised in the Tigray Region and other areas where elections were not held. This practical lack of voice has deprived citizens of their ability to be represented and to express their interests and perspectives.

Political scientist Donald Horowitz emphasizes that institutional inclusiveness is vital for reducing intergroup conflict. The gap seen in the House of Representatives due to the Tigray crisis has weakened the constitutional social contract, harmed national unity, and increased distrust between federal institutions and Tigrayan administrations. Another key issue involves the debate between legitimacy and legality. While the current legislative process of the House of People's Representatives, conducted through a majority vote, is constitutional and legal, it is not fully legitimate in the eyes of the public. Laws passed by a majority are undoubtedly legal, but the gaps created in the House of Representatives because of conflicts in Tigray and other areas, though not nullifying their legality, have weakened their legitimacy. Legitimacy goes beyond legality; it also depends on inclusive participation, which is especially crucial in a federal system. Therefore, legitimacy involves more than just following the law. It requires serious consideration within a federal framework, as laws lacking full representation may not gain broad acceptance or social support.

The other gap stems from the non-participation of members of the House of People's Representatives from regions where elections were not held, in overseeing the executive body, as well as in parliamentary debates and oversight committees. In a federal system, the oversight functions of parliaments over the executive must be comprehensive. The absence of representatives

The last, but not least, gap arises from the absence of representatives from Tigray and other areas in the House of Representatives, which led to their limited participation in forming the National Dialogue Commission and its subsequent processes.

from certain areas hampers effective parliamentary oversight of the executive and weakens discussions on issues affecting those regions. This problem worsens when parliament raises concerns about unrepresented areas. It undermines the credibility of the democratic process, potentially escalating and prolonging unresolved conflicts, and creates an environment that hampers reconciliation. Ultimately, it risks jeopardizing lasting peace and development. A clear example of current institutional challenges faced by the House of People's Representatives is the inability of representatives from the Tigray region to conduct institutional or field visits within their own region, as is biannual in other parts of the country. This not only denies Tigray citizens the chance to voice their political and economic concerns but also limits the rest of the country's ability to understand and address the region's urgent issues. Additionally, it restricts Tigrayan representatives from effectively representing their constituents' needs and priorities during legislative debates. This gap is especially visible when the House, through the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, discusses the conditions of displaced persons and refugees in shelters in regions like Gambella, and attempts to develop suitable responses. In such cases, assessing the humanitarian situation in Tigray, home to many displaced persons, remains highly limited. Moreover, during the declaration and enforcement of the state of emergency, which directly impacted Tigray, the absence of regional representatives in the House appeared to question the legitimacy and inclusiveness of the law's enforcement.

The last, but not least, gap arises from the absence of representatives from Tigray and other areas in the House of Representatives, which led to their limited participation in forming the National Dialogue Commission and its subsequent processes. Conflict resolution expert John Paul Lederach emphasizes that inclusive, trust-based dialogue involving all stakeholders is essential for sustainable peace. Therefore, his warning that peace can face setbacks without genuine participation and a spirit of trust indicates that conflict can reignite if fundamental issues are left unaddressed. He underscores that reconciliation is a social healing process that explores deep relationships and historical grievances among people, rather than just a political agreement. For this reason, he highlights the importance of structures being effective from top to bottom. In Ethiopia, as Parliament is a key institution at the top, the laws it enacts are indeed

crucial for policy implementation.

When Parliament delisted the TPLF from the terrorist list a few years ago, it was seen as a sign of its willingness to take part in reconciliation and implement the Pretoria Peace Agreement. However, because it failed to influence the federal government

to meet its responsibilities when the TPLF's role in the interim administration went beyond what was outlined in the Pretoria Peace Agreement, additional legislation and an extended period for the interim administration became unavoidable. This suggests that the near-total absence of Tigray and other unrepresented areas in the House of Representatives could pose a barrier to national reconciliation. As various sources have shown, the de-legitimized Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and other political organizations based in Tigray have continued to decline participation in the National Dialogue Commission process. As mentioned earlier, this ongoing lack of representation highlights how the absence of inclusive political engagement hinders national reconciliation and consultation efforts. We also fear that Ethiopia may risk prolonging conflict by excluding key actors from reconciliation processes.

Finally, it is essential to recognize that vacant seats in Parliament could threaten both federalism and national unity. Ethiopia's federal system is clearly based on the principles of self-governance for its nations and regions. Different political groups might exploit these vacant seats and feelings of marginalization to deepen grievances, thus weakening the federal social contract and risking long-term stability and unity. For example, in the Tigray region, the lack of representation within the federal system has led to perceptions that Tigray is effectively excluded from participation in the Federation. As a result, this exclusion has sparked calls for secession from the federal system. This sense of political and institutional isolation not only fosters rejection of laws passed by the House of People's Representatives but also creates the perception that the House views the region with bias or disdain. Such feelings could intensify public disillusionment and help political actors who want to exploit instability for their own gain.

Therefore, it is essential to work hard to make sure there are no empty seats in the House of Representatives in the next election. Ensuring regional representation in Parliament is not just a democratic principle, but also a crucial tool for maintaining stability and national unity.



Recommendations

To address the serious consequences of non-representation, Bridge proposes the following measures:

- ◆ Ensure Elections in Unrepresented Areas: It is crucial to resolve the security and political issues that prevent elections from being held in the Tigray Region and other regions. This will legitimize the current legal process in the House of People's Representatives and move toward greater peace and development. To close this gap that has persisted for an entire election cycle, it is essential to meet the necessary political and social preconditions to prevent further extensions of the interim administration's term. The Seventh National Election plan should explicitly include these areas to prevent additional interim extensions and promote broad participation.
- ◆ Ensure Tigray's Inclusion in the National Dialogue Commission: Parliament must pressure the National Dialogue Commission to create mechanisms for residents of the Tigray Region to be involved in the process at this stage. Since agenda setting has been a primary focus so far, it is vital to include the region's residents, at least through an interim administration. This inclusion is key to a credible and comprehensive peace process.

Finally, the issue of vacant seats in Ethiopia's federal parliament goes beyond administrative details. It significantly impacts the country's political stability, democratic integrity, social unity, and international reputation. Tackling this problem by ensuring full representative democracy must become an urgent, ongoing priority for the federal government, political leaders, and the international community.



ENDERASIE IS A PARLIAMENTARY MONTHLY

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