

Press Release

US Congress Takes a Historic Stance Against Land Grabs-Related Forced Evictions in Ethiopia

Oakland, CA – In a historic move, the US Congress has taken a stance on land grabs-related human rights abuses in Ethiopia. The 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Bill contains provisions that ensure that US development funds are not used to support forced evictions in Ethiopia.

The bill prevents US assistance from being used to support activities that directly or indirectly involve forced displacement in the Lower Omo and Gambella regions. It further requires US assistance in these areas be used to support local community initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods and be subject to prior consultation with affected populations. The bill goes further and even instructs the directors of international financial institutions to oppose financing for any activities that directly or indirectly involve forced evictions in Ethiopia.

According to Anuradha Mittal, Executive Director of the Oakland Institute, “We welcome this move as it aims to address one major flaw of US assistance to Ethiopia. The step taken by the US Congress is very significant, as it signals to both the Ethiopian government and the US administration that turning a blind eye to human rights abuses in the name of development is no longer an option.”

Several [reports](#) from the Oakland Institute have raised alarm about the scale, rate, and negative impacts of large-scale land acquisitions in Ethiopia that would result in the forced displacement of over 1.5 million people. This relocation process through the government’s villagization scheme is destroying the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and pastoralist communities. Ethiopian security forces have beaten, arrested, and intimidated individuals who have refused to relocate and free the lands for large-scale agricultural plantations.

Ethiopia’s so-called development programs cannot be carried out without the support of international donors, primarily the US, one of its main donors. Oakland Institute’s on-the-ground research has documented the high toll paid by local people as well as the role of donor countries such as the US in supporting the Ethiopian policy.

With this bill, USAID, the State Department, as well as the World Bank, will have to reconsider the terms and modalities of the support they provide to the Ethiopian government. According to Frederic Mousseau, Oakland Institute’s Policy Director, “This is a light of hope for the millions of indigenous people in Ethiopia who have sought international support from the international community to recognize their very destruction as communities and people.”

For more information see:

[Development Aid to Ethiopia: Overlooking Violence, Marginalization, and Political Repression](#)

[Ignoring Abuse in Ethiopia: DFID and USAID in the Lower Omo Valley](#)

[Omo: Local Tribes Under Threat](#)

[Lower Omo: Local Tribes Under Threat](#) (video)