

FRANK R. WOLF, Virginia  
Co-Chairman  
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey  
JOSEPH R. PITTS, Pennsylvania  
TRENT FRANKS, Arizona



JAMES P. MCGOVERN, Massachusetts  
Co-Chairman  
TAMMY BALDWIN, Wisconsin  
JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY, Illinois  
KEITH ELLISON, Minnesota  
DONNA F. EDWARDS, Maryland

One Hundred and Twelfth Congress

## **Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

### **Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern**

#### **Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing**

#### **Co-Sponsored by House Hunger Caucus**

#### **“Horn of Africa: The Continuing Food, Refugee, and Humanitarian Crisis.”**

**B-318 Rayburn HOB –Thursday, March 8, 2012 – 10:00-11:30 AM**

---

Good Morning. Thank you all for being here today for this important hearing on the continuing food, refugee, and humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa. This hearing is co-sponsored by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and the House Hunger Caucus. In August last year, the House Hunger Caucus held one of the first briefings on famine crisis in the eastern Horn of Africa, so we very much appreciate their sponsorship of today’s hearing.

I want to thank my fellow Co-Chair, Congressman Frank Wolf, for encouraging the Commission to hold this hearing and reminding us all that the food crisis in the Horn is far from over. I want to thank our Administration, U.N. and NGO witnesses for testifying today; and I would very much like to thank Rupal Metha, Jordan Tama, and the staff of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for organizing this hearing.

It is impossible to begin a hearing on the Horn of Africa without remembering our dear friend and colleague, Congressman Donald Payne, one of the great leaders in Congress on Africa policy and on foreign policy more broadly. I was terribly saddened when I learned earlier this week that he had passed away. For over two decades, Congressman Payne pushed hard for the United States to prioritize human rights and humanitarian assistance in Africa and other regions. He was remarkably effective in advancing these goals, and we will miss his leadership greatly.

The Horn of Africa's worst drought in 60 years has created catastrophic food shortages. Last year, these shortages were so extreme in southern Somalia that the United Nations characterized them as a famine. Since then, the provision of large amounts of humanitarian aid and the arrival of some rain have improved conditions somewhat. But drought conditions persist, and 250,000 Somalis remain at risk of death from starvation. Millions more are in a situation of severe food insecurity – as a result of the failure of crops and death of livestock caused by the drought, as well as soaring prices for staple foods. Nearly 10 million people still need food assistance.

The insecurity generated by this terrible food crisis has been compounded by the ongoing conflict involving the Al-Qaeda-linked militia Al Shabaab and the governments of Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. This conflict has featured extreme brutality – particularly, but not only, by Al Shabaab – leading many Somalis to flee their homes in search of safety elsewhere. The conflict has also further disrupted food production and commerce, exacerbating food shortages. As a result of the combination of war and hunger, some 2.5 million Somalis have migrated within Somalia or to a neighboring country in search of security and food. This extraordinary movement of desperate people has created an extraordinary refugee crisis in the region.

Most Somali refugees are living in camps just across the border in Kenya and Ethiopia. In some of these refugee camps, conditions are extremely poor. For instance, in the massive Dadaab [Duh-DAAB] camp in Kenya, nearly half a million refugees are crowded into a camp that was constructed to hold just 90,000 people. As a result of this severe overcrowding and great insecurity in and around the camp – including widespread sexual assault against women – the U.N. has only been able to provide very limited, life-saving services in the camp.

There are also staggering numbers of internally displaced people within Somalia – including several hundred thousand people living in IDP camps in Mogadishu. Conditions in these camps vary, but most of them have no formal management and are quite dangerous. The terrible conditions in these camps increase the likelihood of communicable diseases spreading rapidly.

I take heart that the United States and the international community have responded strongly to the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa. I remember meeting last July with USAID Administrator Raj Shah and other State Department and USAID officials on how to respond rapidly and effectively to the growing crisis in the eastern Horn. Over the past 7 months, food aid and other humanitarian assistance from the United States and our international partners have saved countless lives in the region.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many U.N., international and non-governmental humanitarian and relief organizations who have been working to provide food, water, medicine, shelter, emergency assistance, and psycho-social support to the millions of people in the eastern Horn of Africa suffering from this famine and food crisis. Their staff in the field often work in very perilous conditions, especially inside Somalia. Some have even lost their lives in trying to save the lives of others. They do not seek the spotlight, and they rarely are acknowledged for their great service – and I would just like to take a moment and recognize their work here today.

No one knows better than the workers in the field how much more remains to be done. It is essential that we remain focused on this continuing crisis, even as new crises emerge elsewhere. We must do all we can to ensure that food and other essential aid are being delivered in the Horn to as many people in need as possible. At the same time, we must invest in longer-term programs that can boost the resiliency of communities and make it less likely that new humanitarian disasters will occur in the Horn in the future.

I hope this hearing will shed light on the continuing human rights and humanitarian challenges in the Horn of Africa, and generate ideas for acting to address these challenges.

With that said, I want to turn to my fellow Commission and Caucus Members and ask whether they would like to make opening statements.

WITNESSES

I would now like to turn to our witnesses for this morning. I would like to note that along with their oral testimony, I would submit into the Record any written testimony provided by our witnesses today.

I would like to welcome our first panel of witnesses. They are:

Nancy Lindborg, Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance at the U.S. Agency for International Development

Margaret McKelvey, Director of the Office of Assistance for Africa at the U.S. Department of State

Deborah Malac, Director of the Office of East African Affairs at the U.S. Department of State

Ms. Lindborg – if you would please begin.