

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 22, 2011

His Excellency Isaias Afewerki
State of Eritrea
c/o Embassy of Eritrea
1708 New Hampshire Ave, N.W.,
Washington, DC 20009

Dear President Afewerki:

We write to you to express our deep concern about the arrest and detention of James Berisha, an American Citizen. It is our understanding that Mr. Berisha flew into Eritrea in August on a peaceful, private mission to urge recognition of the Republic of Kosovo.

Mr. Berisha was born in Kosovo in 1972, but emigrated to the United States in order to fulfill his dream of becoming a pilot. After years of hard work and dedication, Mr. Berisha became a pilot and flight instructor in the United States. In 2009, he began a campaign called "Flying for Kosovo," where he flew to different countries in order to persuade governments to recognize Kosovo. He began his journey by flying to 34 Latin American and Caribbean nations to thank the governments that had recognized Kosovo and to encourage the governments that had not. In October 2010, he began the second stage of his journey where he passed through several European countries on his way to Africa, where he planned to visit 54 countries. He suffered a crash landing in Sudan, and because of the condition of his plane, he continued his journey to Eritrea via commercial aircraft.

Our understanding is that Mr. Berisha was detained shortly after his arrival in Asmara and has never been charged with a specific crime. Furthermore, we are concerned that from the moment of his detention, Mr. Berisha has been denied consular visits by U.S. embassy officials. We respectfully request on humanitarian grounds, that Mr. Berisha be permitted consular visits by United States Embassy Officials without delay.

We would like to emphasize most clearly that Mr. Berisha was visiting Eritrea on a peaceful, private mission, as he has scores of other countries, and, to the best of our knowledge, committed no crime, whatsoever. We, therefore, urge you to release Mr. Berisha immediately so that he can return home to his family as soon as possible.

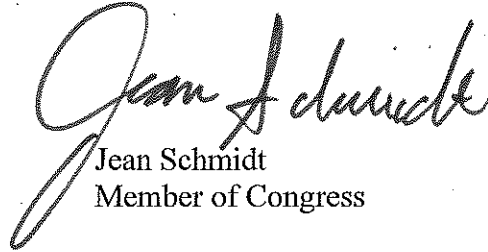
His Excellency Isaias Afewerki
November 22, 2011
page two

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Jean Schmidt
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Hillary Clinton
Department of State

Dr. Jakob Kellenberger
International Committee on the Red Cross

His Excellency Dr. Jean Ping
African Union Commission