



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL
Justice, Peace and Freedom

April 3, 2006

Honorable Representative Christopher Smith
United States House of Representatives
Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations

Regarding: Subcommittee's Hearing on Ethiopian's Troubled Internal Situation, held March 28, 2006

Dear Chairman Smith and other members of the Subcommittee on Africa:

I am taking this opportunity to thank you on behalf of the Anuak Justice Council and the Anuak people. We are overwhelmingly delighted with the opportunity you gave to the Anuak and to the other oppressed people of Ethiopia at the recent hearing regarding Ethiopia's Troubled Internal Situation at the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations on March 28, 2006. It was at this hearing where it was possible to present information regarding the current plight that the Anuak and many others face as victims of human rights abuses perpetrated by their own government, despite their Ethiopian citizenship.

I have talked with most of the witnesses whose individual stories were included in my testimony. Each of them had a message for you and the others on your Subcommittee, who made this possible.

Pastor Okwier's wife said the following:

I am very happy. This is what my husband would have wanted. He was a man of God and would never have taken the life of another. Now people know what happened and people will work to make sure it does not happen again. We need people like Chairman Smith and the others on the committee to get the truth out so our voices, which have not been heard before, can do something for the Anuak and others who have also experienced this kind of killing. My tears are now dry because of people like you who have been brave enough to stand up for us. The government of Prime Minister Meles has, all along, killed its people and then covered their bloody hands with gloves. The hearing is making them stop and we are now looking beneath the gloves. Soon the truth will come out and the gloves will come off, showing the blood of the innocent people. Once it is seen, the identity of the criminals will be made known and they will be brought before the courts of justice. Then, reconciliation will come and people will teach each other that we should never take another human's life because we are all equal under God. Good things will not only come to the Anuak, but to all who have suffered. It will be because of brave people like you.

Mary, the young mother whose husband was killed before her, says:

It is good that this hearing educated the people about what happened to my husband and to the Anuak. We cannot bring back the dead, but we can find those who did these crimes and hold them accountable by bringing them to justice. I thank the people who gave the opportunity for others to hear our voices---it is the first step towards investigating these crimes and the beginning of justice.

Still today, I do not know where the body of my husband is; yet this will help me to move on even if I never find his body. I am happy that the process of justice has started, even if it takes two or three years to complete----it does not matter how long. Those who are guilty will be held accountable.

The Anuak woman who was raped by Ethiopian soldiers for four hours states:

For us to hear our voices come through before you, we feel blessed and thrilled! As I realized that one of the reasons I am alive was to get this out, I feel so consoled by it that my happiness is returning to me. This has not only been a bright day for the Anuak, but it has been a bright day for all people going through this same kind of thing. Because you and others at the hearing listened to us and were touched by it, we are beginning to see the light of happiness, not only for me and the Anuak, but for every person whose been oppressed.

The government and the Anuak may disagree about the oil, but they have no right to kill us. It helps to know that others like yourselves agree that we should not be killed and that you are willing to work towards finding a solution. People like you are needed who are in their positions, not for politics, but because of your passion for standing for the truth and for the rights of people. I believe you were brought by God to protect others and that is why you raised up the issue of the Anuak people at the hearing.

Now we can say that those who died can rest in peace. Now we can start to move on. Our own government will never do what you have done. All of us are citizens of the world. All of us are touched by your work and passion. Some of the Anuak will sleep peacefully now, feeling that we are not different from other human beings----that we are valuable and good. We accept this. Our own government has never told us that.

We are seeing you as a light for those in the darkness of this world, for those who have been oppressed and killed for political differences. On behalf of the Anuak who are still alive, we realize that if we had more people like you, who will seek the truth and stand up for it, that our extinction may not happen. We thank you for what you have done. Now, we Anuak will be here to stand up for not only Anuak, but for other human kind, as you have done for us.

The Tigrayan man who protected the two Anuak men said:

I know I was not alone to defend those Anuak. Other people are doing the same in different ways, like you are now doing. You may not stand up with a machete, but you are doing what all of us have as our main goal and that is finding justice. We need everyone. Now, the Chairman and others have the responsibility to do something. I have done my part in bringing this information to you. Now I am happy that I have passed it to you for you to carry on.

The Nuer man reported:

I am thrilled for the first time since this happened. It is a good thing I help.

The Anuak elder woman watching over the graves of her five family members states:

I am most very, very happy! I deeply thank you! You are someone who knows that every human being is equal before God and because of that, no one should take the life of another person. It makes me so happy to know that there are people brave enough to stand up for those who are dead or persecuted.

The judge indicated:

This is what I have been wanting all along. What all of us want is to be able to live life to the fullest, but we have been prohibited from doing this. The blessing is that there are people like you who will hold a hearing like this. The government has been telling everyone how good they are. Instead, as in life, you should not be the one to go out and preach your own beauty or how great you are. You should leave it to others to say. Right now, Meles is the one telling you how beautiful they are, but the people of Ethiopia should be the ones listened to and they are not backing him up.

I also thank you Chairman Smith and other members of the Subcommittee on Africa for giving me the opportunity to represent the Anuak and other oppressed people from Ethiopia. I am certain that if they could, those who died would be applauding you for becoming the light that removed the darkness surrounding the events of December 13, 2003, June of 2005 and November of 2005. In this great city and in this land of freedom, you spoke up and won a victory for accepting people who are weak in the eyes of this world.

You won a victory against the exclusion of people who are not valued in many circles, but who are all equal before God. Your stand for truth where half-truths or lies are considered “diplomacy” is the foundation of setting people free despite it frequently being an unwelcome message. Thank you again. Your part in this will not be forgotten.

Please continue to work as you have towards the perpetuation of the human rights of the Ethiopian people and others in the global community. We will do whatever we can to stand beside you in this effort.

Sincerely and gratefully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Obang Metho', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Obang Metho
Director of International Advocacy
Anuak Justice Council