



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL  
*Justice, Peace and Freedom*

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**Speech to Ethiopian community in London, UK, May 14, 2006,**

Good afternoon brothers and sisters. I am very honored and delighted to be here with you in this great city of London. I am glad to be here as part of the great family of Ethiopians who want to contribute to a more beautiful Ethiopia. I thank you for inviting me to talk about the human rights abuses going on back home that most of you know about, but may not know specific details.

As I begin, I want to start with two questions I want you to think about. The first is, what is Ethiopia and the second is, what is it to be an Ethiopian? As you think about it, I will tell you what I think. To me, Ethiopia is a country on the map—a place and Ethiopians are people who are born or found on the land inside the country of Ethiopia. It is as simple as that. For me, I am Ethiopian because I grew up in Ethiopia and I need no more explanation than that. The Anuak are in Ethiopia, so they are Ethiopian. Just like finding fish of different colors, sizes and shapes in the same lake is similar to the reason why you can look at me and see a dark, tall, bald-headed guy with white teeth and a moustache and still say I am Ethiopian even though I may not look like you or some other Ethiopian. My point is that there is no basis to say an Ethiopian is only a someone from a certain ethnic group, class, look or type. It is very simple. So today, I will talk to you as an Ethiopian.

Tonight, is the one-year anniversary of the elections of May 2005. I have been asked to speak on some of the human rights abuses that have occurred in our country since that time, as well as leading up to it. I feel called to speak up about the human rights abuses and widespread injustices that this government has perpetrated against its own people. It is not my interest to overthrow the government. Instead, it is my goal to bring out the truth so this kind of abuse by a government will stop. Then, we Ethiopians must know where we are at before we navigate where we are going to or we may not find the right road to better our future. The African proverb that we all may know says, if you are lost in the bush, it is good to stop first and look where you have come from so you can find the which way to go. We cannot do that without knowing the truth of what has been happening to the Ethiopian people.

I will not talk to you as a member of a political group. I am not a politician. I am not expert. Instead, I will speak to you as an individual who is thirsty for justice. I have been thirsty for justice since I have been young, but since the massacre of the Anuak in December of 2003, I have reached a new point of urgency and that is why I am excited to be here—because I am hopeful that more will join in this search for justice in Ethiopia as well as all over Africa.

My dream is that Ethiopia will be free and that Ethiopia will find true government and leaders who will promote a free and just Ethiopia. My dream is the same for all of Africa. Then I hope I can go back to Ethiopia and do what I have always been passionate about—community development, working at the grass roots level to empower women, men, and youth. I want to do such things as digging water wells, dirtying my own hands along with the simple, local people, as I am one of them. We are equally valuable in God's eyes. We must work together to make Ethiopia a better place for the next generations to come.

Several years ago, I would have never dreamt that I would be invited to stand before you today to speak this urgent message for all Ethiopian people who value a free and just Ethiopia, where the individual rights of each of its citizens would be upheld. I am especially honored to stand next to Ana Gomez, the

election observer from the European Union who has spoken out with such courage and conviction regarding the failures of this election to come up to international standards of democracy.

Ms. Ana Gomez, I believe I speak for all of us in thanking you for being here. You have stood for the truth first, rather than weakening it by putting diplomacy before the truth. We know that it is only by stating the truth that we are set free. Even when the truth causes great discomfort, we must not be afraid of it as it is the only road out of our confusion and suffering. Yet, many oppose it, wanting to maintain a system of deception and control that they cling to for self-protection, but ultimately, these systems always fail. It is usually just a matter of time. No wonder why the Ethiopian authorities have diminished your position, instead emphasizing those who reinforce their own spin on the election and political climate of the country.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Bereket Simon and the Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States Fesseha Asghedom Tessema, all repeatedly misuse Jimmy Carter's diplomatic statements to promote deception about what really took place during the election and what has been going on in Ethiopia until today. It is this deception that is making the world stand still while thousands of Ethiopians are being held in five concentration camps around Ethiopia. It is this deception that is immobilizing the powerful democratic countries of the world to not do enough. It is this deception that is making some individuals and countries afraid that if Meles goes, Ethiopia will spin out of control and into the chaos reminiscent of Rwanda. It is this deception that perpetuates the illusion that Meles is "part of a new breed of African leaders." It is this deception that causes someone so highly esteemed as Prime Minister Tony Blair of this great country I am standing in today, to still have Meles as the head of the African Commission, despite his complicity in the killing of the innocent protesters one year ago—despite the fact that he has imprisoned the leaders of the opposition, journalist, political activists, human rights activists and anyone else who has challenged this government. In fact it is because of this deception, that charges of genocide have been fabricated against the opposition and other political opponents, despite this government's own alleged complicity in what may be considered a real genocide against the Anuak of Gambella.

Genocide is the crime of all crimes. First of all, we should all understand the meaning of the word genocide. The crime of genocide has been defined in international law at the Geneva Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, Article II, to mean, "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." It includes (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The real genocide has been committed by the same EPRDF government who conspired, incited and carried out what evidence may soon show to be a genocide against the Anuak people of Gambella. Through oneself, one knows others. In other words, you wrongly accuse others of what is in your own mind—what you have done yourself. You accuse others of committing genocide while denying your own genocidal actions. It is crazy making to the victims who know a different reality.

Beginning on December 13, 2003, Ethiopian Defense Forces, in their government uniforms, accompanied by regional police and militia groups made up of some highlanders in the area, went from home to home in Gambella and pulled out educated Anuak leaders and mutilated their bodies with machetes and clubs. When the victims attempted to run, Ethiopian Defense Troops shot them in their backs, killing them in front of their families.

Many of the victim's names were on a previously prepared list of Anuak who were against the government control of the region and who had called for regional involvement in the extraction of the oil Obang's. E-mail: [advocacy@anuakjustice.org](mailto:advocacy@anuakjustice.org)

reserves in the area. They were identified as being “anti-government” and were to be eliminated as part of a plan to intimidate any resistance to the government’s plan of beginning the oil development. It is not surprising that it occurred at the same time that the Chinese oil company from China, Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (ZPAEB), contracted by Petronas of Malaysia, who were given the oil rights to this area by the Ethiopia government, began working in the Gambella area to set up extraction of oil reserves that are purported to be of major size, perhaps even exceeding those in southern Sudan. It is in this backdrop that these atrocities began and continue.

Let me come back to the phrase in the Geneva Convention’s definition of genocide, which indicates that destroying an ethnic group “in whole or in part,” such as its educated members, is also genocide. The impact of these horrendous crimes, have destroyed the intellectual leadership of the Anuak. Approximately only small per cent of the Anuak worldwide currently have a post secondary education. As a result of the EPRDF action a good percent of the educated Anuak have been eliminated.

After three days of killing, four hundred and twenty-four victims were identified as being killed. The Anuak bodies were then buried in one of three mass graves, one grave reportedly holding 193 mutilated bodies of the dead. As Anuak were horribly slashed and beaten to death in their homes and on the streets of Gambella, as some have said, “like dogs,” the perpetrators throughout the Gambella town were heard laughing and chanting an apparently rehearsed slogan, “Today is the day for killing Anuak.” As Anuak women were raped, sometimes in front of their families before the men were hacked to death, the perpetrators chanted, “Today there will be no more Anuak land and no more Anuak babies.”

Genocide also includes causing serious bodily and mental harm and trauma to members of the group through widespread rape and sexual violence. Through the EPRDF defense forces chants it was apparent that they were trying to eliminate the next generation of children from being Anuak.

The definition of genocide also includes the planning and incitement of others to commit such acts. Human Rights investigations have found information that officials from the very top offices of this government were involved in planning “a genocide” as early as September of 2003 at a meeting in Addis Ababa. The plan had an actual name, “Operation Sunny Mountain.” Reports received indicate that the plan to intimidate the Anuak by killing their leaders was linked to the resistance from these leaders to the federal control of the area, particularly in respect to the exploitation of the oil without any local involvement, something that is clearly contrary to the Ethiopian Constitution.

As Anuak were killed, many escaped to Pochalla, in southern Sudan for safety as Anuak also live on the other side of the Ethio-Sudanese border after the British drew a line through the middle of Anuak indigenous land in 1902, dividing the Anuak in half between Sudan and Ethiopia. They are living in dire conditions, without clean water, adequate food, education for their children and minimal health services.

Despite the government reports that the Ethiopian economy has grown by 9 % in the last year, conditions in Gambella and in other parts of Ethiopia are horrible. In Gambella, EPRDF Defense Troops have left a trail of destruction that has wreaked havoc on the already limited infrastructure that the Anuak possessed prior to this crisis.

Before December 2003, there were 119 water wells in Anuak areas, currently only five wells are in working condition. Previously there were 136 schools in operation in Anuak areas, now there are 17. Previously, 21 health clinics were functioning, now there are only 9 left. In the last week, fifteen people died in Gambella due to watery diarrhoea and new cases are being reported daily in different locations. All health centers are reported to be overwhelmed by over two hundred more new cases. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said 260 cases of the illness had been seen at three treatment centers since April 25.

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The problem was worsened because even the hospital in Gambella had a severe shortage of clean drinking water, which is indicative of the whole region. Almost a whole generation of Anuak children are not able to attend school with fewer than 8% of boys and 4% of girls attending school in two Anuak districts.

Again, let us go back to the Geneva Convention definition of genocide as “deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to destroy a group including the deliberate deprivation of resources needed for the group’s physical survival, such as clean water, food, clothing, shelter or medical services.” Many more Anuak will die from this kind of passive genocide, yet these conditions are covered up so the west cannot see it.

It is this deception that makes the Ethiopian people feel like they are in a river filled with crocodiles, while those who could help, stand around, waiting to see what happens with Ethiopia before sending in the rescue boats. Instead money from good-hearted donor countries, who would not tolerate this kind of human suffering and brutal killing of innocent people in their own countries, is supplying the means to continue the oppression.

There are many victims of human rights abuses throughout Ethiopia. Even though the victims are true Ethiopians, this government has not treated them as its own true citizens, deserving the dignity, respect and basic human rights as laid out in our Constitution. Instead, the EPRDF government who should be their defender has become the predator, “munching on its own children.” This is a shocking perversion of its role, yet, this comes on the trail of other such governments who have acted similarly against disfavored groups of Ethiopians such as the government of Mengistu.

We must stop this progression of brutal governments being replaced by the next brutal government. To do this, we cannot forget what has happened in the past. We must speak the truth about what has happened in **Gambella, Tigraya, Ogaden, Sidama, Oromia, in the Southern region** and other places of suffering, even if we have participated in some way or not done enough to defend the victims.

It is essential in changing our future actions. Let us embrace the shame of our action or inaction so that we might be liberated from repeating it. God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love for us even when we have failed, can make us alive again. He can bring the kingdom of heaven to Ethiopia and to all of Africa. It is time! The question is—how can we start? Perhaps, one lesson may be learned from the Anuak, one of the smallest ethnic groups in all of Ethiopia. However, God can use even the smallest and weakest amongst us to show us something of much larger significance.

First of all, you might ask—who are the Anuak? Are they 25% Ethiopian? 50 percent Ethiopian? 75 percent? Or are they 100 percent Ethiopian like any other of the over eighty ethnic groups that live in Ethiopia? Yes, they are 100% Ethiopian because they live on Ethiopian soil.

The Anuak are darker skinned than many in Ethiopia, yet many others who share this ancient land, share their skin color. Is there room at the table in Ethiopia for both dark skinned and light skinned? Can both be accepted as true Ethiopians? I am asking about the future because during previous governments and now including that of Meles Zenawi, the answer has been a resounding “**NO**”. Ethiopians are so proud of defeating the Italians at Adewa in 1896, but as we celebrate this victory as the first victory of Africans defeating a western country. However, we should also remind ourselves of the shameful things we have done to each other.

The Ethiopians should accept their history, even if it is not good. In the lowlands, people were sold as slaves up until Menelik’s time. This is why the river that runs through Gambella does not go by the indigenous Anuak name of Opeino, but it has been renamed as the Baro River, meaning the slave’s river.

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This is also why the tiny river that divides the lowlands from the highlands is called Baro Kella, meaning “slave’s gate or border.” This kind of marginalization has continued until today.

The Anuak and others from more African looking ethnic groups have been marginalized, excluded and discriminated against throughout the country—even in our places of faith. We have not cared about the physical, economic, mental and spiritual well being of those outside our exclusive groups. This lack of acceptance has led to what I will be talking to you about today. I am convinced that as long as we exclude some, to the benefit of others in our society, our country will remain predators of our own children and will destroy our future. The question is, how has this happened and how can we become a country of people who love ourselves and others as God loves us, embracing our differences as assets rather than using them to divide and defeat us?

First of all, misunderstanding each other can be caused by two different reasons; one, we lack awareness or two, because we purposefully promote misunderstanding of each other in order to get more than we deserve. If we simply are ignorant and lack awareness, we can be educated. However, if we misuse other people due to our own evil desires for power, wealth or vengeance, no amount of education will penetrate our hearts of stone. Only God can convict a heart of stone, turning it into a heart of flesh. Some of us may have both problems. Until we open ourselves up to a new awareness and until we repent of our selfish ambitions or hate towards others, we will not recover from the poisoning of our Ethiopian minds and of our Ethiopian society. Ethiopia will fail as a people first, and then, Ethiopia will fail as a nation. God has something very different in mind for us if we are willing and trust in Him.

We must first understand how this poison is foundational to the massacre of the educated Anuak in December of 2003 and to the continuing human rights abuses to the Anuak that are still going on as we speak. There are people who misunderstood the Anuak and there are Anuak who have misunderstood other Ethiopians. There are some who do not feel Anuak are Ethiopians or that Gambella is part of Ethiopia. These ideas are both false. There are some who believe that the Anuak do not want others to live with them in Gambella. This is wrong. Now, there are people who think that the Anuak do not want to share the bountiful resources in the Gambella region. This is wrong. The word Anuak means, “Sharing.” Sharing is a deeply ingrained value within the culture and the Anuak history is one of sharing, but not if they are excluded from coming to the table. Then, they will stand up for their rights. Yet, the killing happened because the government did not want to include them. Instead, the Anuak were excluded from the start and when they protested, they were killed or imprisoned.

Since the massacre in December 13, 2003, it is estimated that nearly 1800 Anuak have been murdered. Being such a small group, we know the victims. Many more have died from causes associated with their hardship. In addition, the daily killing of Anuak continues. If EPRDF Defense troops spot an Anuak man or sometimes a woman, walking in the rural areas, they will kill him or her, thinking they are supporters of the resistance groups. Additionally, after the election, the government recruited young, uneducated dark-skinned Anuak and brought them to Addis and other major urban cities where they were given guns and ordered to deal with the protesters without adequate training or knowledge of the Amharic language. Apparently, during the reaction to the protest, one of these participants reported to us that they had been ordered to shoot the protesters in order to scare and control them. As a result, some of them shot and killed some lighter-skinned persons, further building up the hatred in Addis towards dark-skinned persons. Even though they bear some culpability, it appears they were “set-up” to do the “dirty work” and then were scapegoated for it.

There is an Anuak proverb about a dead elephant’s meat can only be finished off by taking one piece of flesh at a time. This proverb seems very real regarding the Anuak. If the EPRDF Defense troops can take one Anuak at a time, there will be a time when the Anuak will disappear like the elephant whose flesh is

taken bit by bit. The Anuak are a tiny group of people. Every Ethiopian needs to do the very best you can do to not allow this to happen to the Anuak or to any other Ethiopian.

We do not have to pick up a gun, but we can do it peaceably. Start by listening to the stories of those in all corners of Ethiopia who are being taken bit by bit—where division, which also started little by little until it has reached to where it is today, has gained momentum by promoting misunderstanding. As a result, lives have sometimes been lost as a result. This division has spilled over to the UK, Europe, the US, Canada and wherever Ethiopians are found in the Diaspora. Even now in Washington DC, non-Ethiopians are more conscious of ethnic divisions. No wonder that when they meet you, one of the first questions they ask is which ethnic group you belong to—Amhara, Oromo or Tigray.

We must stop this. For those of you who are the political leaders of these groups, you must put together a strategy of how reconciliation and acceptance of each other's differences can become characteristic of the Ethiopian culture while at the same time we celebrate our diversity. I hope that whatever the politicians come up with would include a National Conference on Reconciliation where all the ethnic groups and all political, religious, cultural and civic institutions in Ethiopia who are seeing injustice, can come together to find a solution to the deep-seeded problems we face.

My beloved fellow Ethiopians, I call you to rise up like the Southern Star. You are the international community. More than that, this is your home. Rise up and embrace others. Work for peace to leave behind a better Ethiopia. Be a model for the rest of Africa.

Africa is known as the Dark Continent. Let the Southern Star flood the darkness of this continent with rays of light. May you be those rays of light where together we will bring a great light of hope to this beloved continent of ours, from where human life first emerged. Jesus calls his followers to be "the light of the world." He says that we should let our light shine before men, that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven.

It is time for the kingdom of God to come to Africa for the entire world to see. We need healing and divine help. The leper said to Jesus, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus said, "I am willing, be clean." He is willing to cleanse us from our division, our corruption and to heal the deep wounds of our hearts. As I said, it is time to change our ways and to look for a new breed of leadership. As it says in Psalms 24: 3-4 in the Bible, "Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart..." We Africans must clean our hands and open our hearts to the truth

We need a new breed of leaders. Not leaders who have come from the bush to the mansion, oppressing the people and exploiting the land. Africa has failed miserably to create a peaceful and viable Africa. We blame colonization, but we ourselves are perpetuating such a system through our own greed, corruption and collusion with unethical multi-national corporations. Why are we known as the continent of greatest misery where millions are dying of HIV/AIDS and other diseases that have been eradicated nearly everywhere else in the world? Why do we have more children dying when we are one of the richest of all continents in natural resources?

We cannot live a life of blaming. It paralyzes us, giving us a pathetic excuse not to take action. If there is a problem, do not simply complain, do something about it. We Ethiopians take pride in being the nation that was never colonized, but we are in no different shape than others who were colonized. We are in serious trouble. We must not participate with those who come to leach out our natural resources and leave the people aside. Our leadership must draw a line in the sand and refuse to sell out the people for their own material gain. I am not saying we should not welcome economic partnerships, but those partnerships should be based on agreements and contracts that also benefit the stakeholders.

The oil company and EPRDF Defense troops in Gambella are moving Anuak off their land and created camps for themselves that have all the benefits such as clean water, electricity, sanitation and adequate housing whereas the Anuak farmers were forced from their fields to provide slave labor to build the camp for the military. They have not benefited from new opportunities for jobs. Their wells, schools and health clinics have been taken over and frequently destroyed, leaving the Anuak in worse shape than they were in twenty years ago. At the same time, a parallel economy of affluence exists next door to them. This is exploitation.

Some have chosen to leave the continent in a huge brain drain, yet we all cannot leave. Some will not be able to make it. Until we speak up for those who cannot immigrate west, the misery will go on. In these peaceful countries to which we have immigrated, they did not become peaceful without the sweat, hardship and the loss of lives. We are part of the puzzle to make Africa the kind of continent we want and it may take our sweat, hardship and even the loss of our lives.

The enemy we Anuak, Ethiopians and Africans face is not a visible one—it is the enemy within—it is the lack of awareness or consciousness, it is the lack of institutions, it is because of one tribe, region or country going against another. It is because of a lack of democratic process, of education, of respect towards each other, of acceptance, of faith in a God who values each human being and because we lack the self-confidence that comes from loving ourselves and one another as God loves us.

You are part of the team to leave this kind of Ethiopia and Africa behind. You must be like a city planner, looking for a better vision and then making a concrete plan for the future. Many of us have been educated in the west because of the lack of stability, peace and opportunity in Africa. Be one of those to open up opportunity to the continent. Prevent those from coming to Africa who will only leach the blood of our people and resources. Make Africa so attractive that our people want to stay home. In Washington DC alone, there are thousand Ethiopian doctors. Why in Ethiopia is there only one doctor for thousands people?

What can we do? First of all, our faith must be authentic and bear good fruit. We cannot bear fruit of lasting positive change unless our faith is real, affecting us in every dimension of life. As Jesus said, “A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit...and by their fruit you will know them.” Faith that is only on the surface, is not the kind of faith that will make a difference for the Anuak, for Ethiopia and for all of Africa. Instead, we must turn from wrong ways and attitudes, forgive each other and reach out to others in love.

We do not have to break Ethiopia into pieces because they harmed or oppressed the Anuak, the Oromo, or others. The TPLF has committed injustices and abuses to many ethnic groups, but yet they deserve some credit for certain other accomplishments. Even though they have not followed the Constitution themselves, the Constitution is mostly a good one. Even though it has not been practiced, it provides for local autonomy of the regions. The Anuak have been given greater opportunity in the schools to learn to read their own language, something I cannot do. Yet in such a diverse country of so many ethnic groups, it is impossible for all 80 ethnic groups to have their own language so our challenge is to learn how to come together as a united people while still celebrating our diversity.

One way is to declare war on ignorance and to fight for a new awareness. Each person must become conscious about who they are in God’s eyes. They must be empowered through this awareness to become self-reliant. We must value education for every child. Some children in Ethiopia have never seen a car or held a pen and paper in their hands. If we want Ethiopia and Africa to become a more prosperous land, you have to take more initiative to reach out to the dark corners—to the forgotten people.

You do not have to belong to that ethnic group in order to go to those people. As long as there are those in the dark corners, who are not appreciated, we will not be complete in our beauty and our people will not be free to pursue a better future.

During the elections, more people came out than ever before. Many walked three to four hours without shoes in order to vote. Some could not read or write, but because they heard that this election could improve their lives and the lives of their children, they went to the effort to vote. This is a beginning that is worth celebrating despite being a rigged election. We must keep up the momentum so that at the next election, we will see the fruit of it. The election is over and we know it was not up to international standards, yet, many of us have become more politically conscious as a result. Thousands and thousands of Ethiopians went out in protest, raising up their voices. They were executed, paying the price with their lives, but what they died for was their eagerness for a better life for Ethiopians. The message of their deaths should be carried on and celebrated.

Right now there are five concentration camps where thousands of those calling for freedom and justice in Ethiopia are living in unsanitary conditions, including even some women with young children. But they have been willing to speak up for a better Ethiopia. We in the Diaspora should not be silent at such a time as this, for like when a baby does not cry, the mother or father will assume their child is okay. If you in the Diaspora do not speak up, grieve and keep talking about what has happened, everyone else in the international community will think it is okay.

Be the messenger to bring their voices to Europe—to the UK and to all seven continents. Be the angel who watches over the suffering and dying in those horrid conditions. Be the tool God uses as He hears the prayers of His children. Get the message out of the country by any means you can. Sing the song until the day God gives you victory, when every Ethiopian will come out from every Ethiopian street, village and town to celebrate by singing the song of Ethiopian freedom with all the different tongues of Ethiopia, from the south, north, east and west corners of our nation. We then can sing one song of joy.

After I gave my testimony to the US Congress Subcommittee on Africa, I was interviewed on a radio station. During the call in part of the program, I received a call from another radio station in Washington DC who was contacted by an Ethiopian woman. Together, they called me. The woman told me that her son had been one of the student protesters killed in Addis Ababa in June of last year. He was a third year university student. She said her son had stood up for what he believed. She asked me, “Please, I want you to spread the word of forgiveness. She told me that God might be working through many people to spread this message and reassured me that lots of people in Ethiopia were listening. She told me that she did not know anything about Gambella and said she had never met anyone from there. She said she had seen some from Gambella walking down the streets of Addis, but now as a mother who lost her son, she is connected to the Anuak mother who lost hers in Gambella, in Addis and anywhere else in the world. She said that she and others had shared coffee over the weekend and talked about unity, healing the wounds and forgiving each other. The mother then told me she loved me and that I could be her son. I told her I loved her too and from now on, you can count on me as your son.

This woman is the strength of Ethiopia. She is a woman of God. She has suffered the deepest of losses in losing her child, yet she wants to share the message of forgiveness and unity. Her testimony is an inspiration to me. She wanted to do something to help. I told her to pray for Ethiopia. However, when I think about our conversation, she has touched me and I want to pass on her example to others.

We cannot bring back our loved ones, but we can make choices. We can become bitter, vengeful and full of despair or we can choose to be part of a solution that can make Ethiopia a place where people will want to stay and raise our children.

I am concluding by leaving you with my thoughts of what I think could make meaningful change in a way that many would never think possible, but yet it must be said. My thoughts are directed to our Prime Minister and his cabinet. I am calling on them to do the unexpected. I am calling on them to do what could heal this country.

I do recognize that this regime has committed many crimes against its own citizens, including the Anuak, but I call on each of them in this regime, as human beings, to recognize that they are capable of change if they are willing. I am calling on our Prime Minister and others in the government of the EPRDF to change their hearts and by so doing; abruptly change the direction of Ethiopia. It is not too late to alter our path. Yet, it will not be easy. It will take the courage to fearlessly examine your hearts and the very soul of your administration. The chains that were to bind others, have now bound you, but despite that, there is a precious opportunity available for good. Do not ignore it. You can be instrumental in bringing about a change for the good of the people of Ethiopia, beyond what you ever imagined. You can give a tremendous gift to the Ethiopian people for which you will forever be remembered.

You cannot change what you and others have already done, but knowing that our lives are short on this earth, you may find unexpected peace from finding the forgiveness that comes from deeply and meaningfully changing your ways. I am sure all of you do not want your children, your grandchildren, your ethnic group, your country and your continent to continue the downward spiral towards destruction. Neither is this what God wants. It is not too late. You can make a tremendous difference. Admit to the truth, hold people accountable, apologize and reconcile and you may discover satisfaction of which you have never dreamed possible.

Do whatever you can by whatever means to repair the damage caused by division. Release all the political prisoners. Promote an independent inquiry into the massacre of the Anuak and the June and November killing of student protesters. Be the one to call for a new election, one that exceeds the highest of standards of integrity. As part of this process, call for a national conference on reconciliation. Do not forget why you went to the bush as a rebel. You went for the injustice, but now that same kind of injustice is going on under your leadership. Resurrect this principle for which you fought. Share the power. Share the control. Share the resources. Promote the small, weak and disenfranchised. Tell Ethiopians you have made a serious mistake, but that you are willing to make amends. Ethiopians are ready for democracy. They have voted for change for Ethiopia by raising their voices. Listen to them.

They voted for change as they came out in such large numbers to cast their ballots, using their pencils or their ink-dipped thumbs if they did not read. They have voted by their actions for the betterment and development of a peaceful, viable, prosperous country where every child has the promise of freedom and opportunity. Now, the election is over and the outcome is known. The outcome is the readiness amongst Ethiopians for a country free from the disease of division, oppression, poverty and vengeance, an Ethiopia that can be a light to others. To do this, you can ignite the flame of change through your courage to come to the table where real reconciliation can begin. We are in a mess and there is no other way out other than destruction to all.

I call you to take this opportunity to restore to Ethiopia a sense of unity and joy that only comes through giving up something for others and through seeing the light of God's mercy and forgiveness. It is only He who can heal the deepest of wounds and bring light to the dark corners of our country, to our sons and to our daughters. Consider these verses from Isaiah 60.

See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the  
peoples,  
but the LORD rises upon you

and his glory appears over you.  
Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your  
dawn.  
Lift up your eyes and look about you:  
All assemble and come to you;  
your sons come from afar,  
and your daughters are carried on  
the arm.  
Then you will look and be radiant,  
your heart will throb and swell with  
joy...  
Then you will know that I, the LORD,  
am your Savior,  
your Redeemer, the Mighty One!

Prime Minister Meles and others, we are waiting for you to respond to consider a different path out of this crisis. You are at the crossroads of a great decision. If you choose the road to reconciliation, you will not regret it. You will not be shortchanged. It is the time for the kind of decision that separates men from true leaders. This is your chance to be that leader. Bring peace and unity to Ethiopia.

However, like children whose parents abuse them, sometimes the parents are unwilling or unable to provide for their safety and well-being, instead causing them to be at continued risk of harm. When this harm is life-threatening, others must intervene to protect them from further risk of harm. Sometimes that intervention is so urgent that immediate action must be taken to remove the children due to the threat of imminent harm. Then, court action is crucial to set up a plan for the parents to change their ways or the children will have to be permanently removed from their care. Where a crime has been committed, they may be charged and then a court makes the decisions.

I ask how long can we {Ethiopians} wait while our children are dying every day? We must become the neighbor or relative who reports this life endangerment to those who can take immediate action. It is time to remove the children before they are killed, maimed and destroyed. They are now unable to defend themselves and need to be protected from serious injury. Either the current government of EPRDF must make immediate and comprehensive changes or we must take urgent action as a united group of Ethiopians.

That might include calling our own National Reconciliation Conference to be held outside of Ethiopia. Such a meeting must represent people from all over Ethiopia and from different kinds of groups so that all voices could be heard.

However, because of the serious situation where people are at daily risk of harm, an emergency pre-conference meeting might be necessary so as to present an urgent plan of action to the international community even before we can organize a larger conference. We cannot delay. People are dying, being tortured and being raped as we speak. This is not a time for political platforms, but for the protection of Ethiopians. There will be time in the future for those other discussions. For now, we must put these aside in order to focus on protecting the lives of our people and to prevent our country from breaking into chaos. The obstacles are great, but yet achievable if we seek divine help.

Now, I call on all Ethiopians everywhere to pray for Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his administration that they would be deeply convicted and make drastic and immediate changes to relieve the harsh conditions under which Ethiopians now live. However, if Meles and others do not do this, I call on you to Obang's. E-mail: [advocacy@anuakjustice.org](mailto:advocacy@anuakjustice.org)

pray for God to open up a path of protection to our suffering fellow Ethiopians. Do not give up praying until God makes the impossible, possible—until all Ethiopians are free. May we be faithful and obedient to Him?

May God protect all Ethiopians and heal our land!

Thank you.