



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL  
*Justice, Peace and Freedom*

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**TESTIMONY TO**  
**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**EXTRAORDINARY JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**ETHIOPIA -**  
**ONE YEAR AFTER THE ELECTIONS**

**May 15, 2006**

Ms. Luisa Morgantini, Chair, Committee on Development; Ms. Helène Flautre, Chair, Subcommittee on Human Rights, Ms. Elmar Brok, Chair, Committee on Foreign Affairs and members of the committees.

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you about the human rights issues facing the Anuak of the Gambella region of Ethiopia. My name is Obang Metho. I am here not as a member of a political party. Instead, I am here as human rights defender and an individual who is thirsty for justice. It is my honor and privilege to talk to you today at the extraordinary joint committee meeting on Ethiopia. I request that my statement be submitted into the record in its entirety.

I am here because of the work of many people who are working tirelessly to bring justice, peace, prosperity and opportunity to Ethiopia, regardless of race, ethnic background, religion, language or culture. We are united by our humanity.

The European Parliament is an example of what can happen if many people work together, uniting people of diverse backgrounds around common goals to the benefit of all. By doing this, you have become a symbol for us and others of what can happen through a united effort. I am appreciative to those who had this vision as it has something in common with the meaning of the name of my ethnic group, which is—Anuak. The word (**Nuak or Anuak**) means sharing and the word sharing means reaching out and including everyone.

You have now reached out to the Anuak, a tiny group of no more than 100,000 worldwide, including me before you today. You may have never before known about us, but you care about others beyond yourselves, you have now given us an opportunity to tell you of the tragedy that happened to us as people.

It symbolizes that you want us to have a better world that unites us as one—a world that protects each other, as we need each other. You have already done much to make this world of pain, grief, suffering and injustice become a better world. We know we have a long journey ahead and we will need all our resources joined together. This means including those who have never before been included, those from the dark corners of our world such as the Anuak.

However, in my statement, I do not want to speak out only for the Anuak, but to reach out and speak for all other people in Ethiopia because I have heard the horrific stories of others throughout our country and it has reinforced my conviction that I should speak for the voiceless—the marginalized—the oppressed. I must add their stories or it will seem that I am devaluing their pain. It is this pain that unifies us. It is this pain that prevents me from turning a deaf ear and blind eye to it.

I will start with the Anuak. The Anuak are Nilotic people whose ancestral land was divided in two by the British in 1902, causing Anuak to be found in both Ethiopia and Sudan. In 1956 the Ethiopian government became more active in their territory when it was ceded to Ethiopia. During the last three regimes, the Anuak and the region as a whole, was marginalized and discriminated against. The evidence can still be seen.

Currently, there is only one hospital in the entire region and it has no access to clean water and has only one doctor. Eighty-six percent of those in the entire region have no access to clean water. Very few women, less than 10 percent, have access to an education. During the communist regime, some schools were opened in the area while at the same time, Mengistu brought in thousands of settlers causing the indigenous to be displaced from their land. That land was then not only used for the settlers, but also for cotton farms and for the Sudanese refugees who were streaming over the border due to the civil war in Sudan.

During this time, the Anuak were mainly valued as fighters, resulting in hundreds of young men, as young as fourteen or fifteen, being forcibly taken from their school classrooms in order to fight in a war against Eritrea. Most never returned. Others returned without legs and with other severe injuries, but were never compensated. The Anuak became convinced that their only value to Mengistu government was to be exploited as a commodity of war.

The Anuak started to resent this and went to the bush to fight with the rebel group, the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) that was led by the current Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi. It was at this time that the organization, Cultural Survival, first warned that the Anuak were an endangered people. After the TPLF succeeded in taking over the government of Ethiopia, the Anuak spoke up for the right to self-autonomy as laid out in the new Constitution. However, the new government of the Ethiopian Peoples Republic Democratic Front (EPRDF) did not want to give it and instead started disarming the Anuak and arresting their leaders.

The Anuak formed a political party in 1999, the Gambella Peoples' Congress, (GPC) to challenge the only other political party, which represented the government. During the election of 2000, this political campaigned strongly and won the election after a ballot count, despite harassment and attempts to cover up the results. However, the federal government in Addis then sent representatives to Gambella to tell the people that the ruling party had won the election—a tactic similar to what happened during the last election in 2005. When those from the opposing party spoke up, they were arrested. Their political party was then forced to dissolve.

The EPRDF became suspicious of any educated Anuak because these were the people who questioned the government. The EPRDF then placed Anuak pro-government puppets in political positions to run the

government, but at their direction. They then bribed and threatened Anuak to join the pro-government political party, giving money or jobs in exchange for cooperation or arresting and detaining others for lack of such. As a result, tensions built up further as advisors from the federal government essentially ran the governments through their own appointed leaders who were unable or unwilling to speak up. The government appeared to be democratic on the outside, but in reality, they were the ones running it as well as the judicial system. If anyone challenged them, they were arrested or harassed such as was done to the chairman of the Anuak political party. The chairman of the party and executive members were imprisoned without charges. They were only released three years later after Amnesty International exerted pressure on the government.

Tensions continued to build until May of 2002 when an agreement was signed between the Ethiopian Minister of Mining and Resources and the Malaysian oil company, Petronas, giving them the petroleum rights to the Gambella region without ever consulting with the regional government. (As of today, despite the continued development of the oil reserves in the area, the local people have still never been included in any decision-making.) However, at the time, the regional government started questioning the federal government regarding this, but the EPRDF failed to respond. When they continued to pressure them for local involvement, the federal government began an attempt to divide the ethnic groups in the region—particularly the Nuer and the Anuak in order to justify sending more troops. By doing this, they were able to occupy the area and gain control of the region and resources.

The EPRDF succeeded in disarming Anuak farmers and police, but did not follow through to do the same with the Nuer. People knew right away that the tensions over the land that had been going on in the past between the Anuak who were farmers and the Nuer who were pastoralists, needing more land for their cattle, would be significantly more serious if one side had guns and the other did not. As anticipated, the government used it as a reason to call the regional government ineffective and out of control, necessitating more overt federal control in the area. As a result of this, they succeeded in fomenting ethnic conflict between the Anuak and the Nuer in 2002 when the fighting led to the killing of over sixty Anuak and the internal displacement of over two thousand other Anuak. The Red Cross and UNICEF became involved helping the displaced Anuak.

Further conflicts were then fomented by the EPRDF between the Anuak and the highlanders, between the Anuak and the Majenger, another indigenous ethnic group, and between the Anuak and the Sudanese refugees. These actions disempowered the Anuak who previously were the dominant political force in the area and the ones most likely to speak up for their rights. They paid the price with their lives as the government refused to intervene.

The Anuak governor objected and went with six district governors to Addis Ababa to question why they were not defending the Anuak and disarming the refugees who were coming from Sudan with many guns. Apparently, the government was threatened as Anuak were working together to find a way to protect themselves. In response, the regional governor, four other district governors and forty-four other Anuak leaders were arrested. Sixteen of these leaders were just released six months ago. The others remain in prison in Gambella and in Addis Ababa. One of these, Mr. Okok Ojullu, was never even involved in political affairs. He was a pastor and was managing a project funded by the World Bank. The reason he was arrested is believed to be because he was educated.

Many of the educated were either arrested or lost their government jobs. Even the Anuak Parliamentarian for the Gambella region, Mr. Peter Opiti Cham, spoke up for those arrested, asking that they be released. After he did this, his life was threatened. Fearing that he would either be killed or arrested, he sought asylum in the Netherlands where he remains today. The EPRDF government then hand-picked another governor, Mr. Okello Akway Ochalla, who later also disagreed with them. Finally tensions built up until the government sponsored the massacre of the educated Anuak on December 13, 2003.

## **Operation Sunny Mountain**

Information uncovered by human rights investigators indicates that members of the EPRDF cabinet were aware of and involved in secret high level meetings in Addis Ababa, beginning in September of 2003, where the a government initiated plan was laid out for the removal of those Anuak who were standing in the way of the government's plan to exploit the area of its vast natural resources, in particular, its oil which was found on their indigenous land. The plan had a Code name, **Operation Sunny Mountain**, and the objective of it was to eliminate any resistance to the federal government's control.

Almost simultaneously with the beginning of the human rights abuses, an oil company from China, Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (ZPAEB) 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. The Ethiopian government gave the Gambella oil rights to Petronas of Malaysia. Petronas then sub-contracted with ZPAEB.

Preceding the massacre of the Anuak, Ethiopian government troops moved into Gambella to protect the oil company workers from any local resistance. It has been learned that part of the agreement with the oil company was that the government would have to pay \$25,000,000 (US) should any oil worker be killed; thus requiring high levels of security so as to ensure that the Chinese and Malaysian workers would stay. It is in this backdrop that these human rights atrocities began and continue today.

### **The Massacre of the Anuak of December 13, 2003**

What may eventually be called a genocide, began over two years ago, on the morning of December 13, 2003, unknown assailants ambushed a vehicle 20KM away from Gambella town, killing nine persons, including an Anuak driver. Without investigation, the Anuak were immediately blamed for the killings. Testimony from a highlander police officer, present at the site, revealed that offers to pursue possible assailants into the bush were rejected. Instead, Tadessa Selassie, Chief of the Gambella Police and Major Tsegaye Beyene, the EPRDF Defense Force Commander, ordered them to mutilate the bodies.

Mr. Okello Akway Ochalla, the former governor of Gambella at the time, reported that Major Tsegaye Beyene and Tadessa Haile Selassie then brought the dead bodies of the ambushed refugee workers to the regional government office, looking for Governor Okello. When Okello was not there, they waited about twenty-five minutes until in apparent frustration; Selassie shot three bullets into the wall of the regional government cafeteria. Witnesses reported that Selassie then told them that Governor Okello was going to have to bring these highlander corpses back to life. He then went to the police station where he left the bodies in the car while he met with other highlander police who would later be involved in the massacre.

The mutilated bodies, with the exception of the Anuak driver, were then displayed in front of the regional hospital. Within a very short time, many converged on the location; federal troops in their vehicles, including the federal commander of the forces, as well as highlanders, prepared with machetes and other weapons in their hands. Nearly 250 people came. One highlander businessman brought two bags full of machetes to the scene. As highlander women cried for the dead, witnesses report that Chief Selassie and Major Beyene were openly and loudly laughing. Finally, the commander shot into the air and said, "That's it! Go!" At this point, the people dispersed to various areas of Gambella town and the massacre began.

Tadessa Selassie, the defense forces, other police officers and some highlander civilians choosing to join, went to the Omininga area of Gambella where most Anuak lived. These Ethiopian Defense troops, police

and highlander militia groups then went home to home in Gambella town, pulling out Anuak men from their homes.

One of the first on the list was a devout middle-aged pastor, Okwier Oletho, whose church was growing in the community and also the father of my sister-in-law who I have known since I was a child. His wife was returning from visiting a sick relative when soldiers and highlander militia came to his home during a prayer meeting. After they set his house on fire, he jumped out a window. As he ran he was hacked and mutilated with the highlander's machetes before being shot in the back by Ethiopian soldiers in uniform. His wife witnessed his death along with the death of other male relatives and attendees of the prayer meeting. Choir members at the church were also killed that day. Human Rights Watch gives further details of his death in their report. Please see <http://hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0305/>.

As the killing went on in an orgy of violence, Ethiopian soldiers stood by, cheering and laughing with members of the highlander militias, as these civilian militias brutally hacked the Anuak victims with machetes in front of their mothers, wives and children. As the victims attempted to run, the troops then shot and killed them in their backs.

Mary, a young mother with a baby, witnessed her husband's death. She reports:

**On December 13, 2003, my husband, who worked for the regional government was killed. He was one of first men to be killed. He was a well-educated man and openly opposed the Ethiopian government's policy of taking over control of the local government from the local people. He had brought attention to the fact that the government was not following the Ethiopian Constitution in this matter.**

**I remember first hearing the sounds of gunfire starting about 12:45 in the afternoon, when the shooting started in front of the regional hospital in Gambella town. My husband and I heard from others that they were killing Anuak men so my husband and I quickly went inside our house.**

**Almost immediately, I heard the sounds of approaching Ethiopian defense soldiers walking towards our house yelling, 'Kill them!' 'Whenever you find an Anuak man, kill him.' 'Today is the day for killing Anuak.' All of us heard it. My husband wanted to get out of the house and face them, but I pushed him back and blocked the door so he could not leave.**

**The troops came inside our fence...and set the house on fire. They began to repeatedly shoot at the house. My six-month-old baby started choking on the smoke because it was so thick we could not breathe. I held my baby as I crawled down low through the door to the outside of the house.**

**The troops started shooting inside the smoke filled open door and my husband was shot in the stomach, chest and right arm, but he did not die. He kept telling me, 'Mary, go!' 'Go with the baby!' 'Let them kill me!' After my husband was injured, I jumped on top of him to protect him while I was still holding the baby with my other arm. I begged them to please not kill my husband. A highlander then grabbed me and pulled me off of him and made my husband stand up. I heard my husband say, 'Just kill me!' I was screaming and the baby was crying. They started beating me with the barrel of their guns on my back and on my head. One of defense forces said, 'You say this is your land? After today, there will not be any more Anuak or Anuak land!' He pointed his finger at me and demanded, 'Shut up! Just wait and see! Today we will do to you what was done to the Jews during the holocaust!'**

**Eight soldiers were around my husband---repeatedly hitting him. He kept saying, 'Please shoot me.' The soldiers stopped for a minute and then highlander militia started hitting him on the head with machetes and clubs. As he tried to defend himself with his hands, three militiamen then slashed him with machetes on his head, neck and face. They repeatedly hit him with a large club on his forehead and face until his face was smashed. He finally fell down, face forward towards me. Another highlander then hit him on his temple. He opened his eyes a bit and closed them again before his body started jumping. I stopped crying because I could not believe what was happening. I was numb. Then they all left me, alone with my husband and baby.**

**I went to my husband. As I was holding him and my baby, an older Anuak woman came to me along with two boys, one nine and the other twelve. My husband was opening and closing his mouth. I could hardly recognize him as his face was so bloody and his nose was missing. My husband's body started jumping. When the soldiers saw the Anuak boys and woman come, they came running back shouting, 'Kill them! Kill them!' The old woman grabbed my baby and my hand and started running with us. My only comfort is my husband died before I ran away. I never saw him again. I don't know where his body is. The Ethiopian army did something I will never forget. How could a human being do this to another?**

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Women and young girls were raped, at times in front of the men before they were killed, while the perpetrators taunted them with the slogan, 'Today is the day for killing Anuak,' and telling the victims of rape, 'Now you won't have Anuak babies.' They then set their homes and crops on fire, leaving countless widows, children and elders with almost no means of support.

One Anuak woman told the AJC that when she recently saw Saddam Hussein in Court on CNN, that it strangely gave her hope. Two years ago, she witnessed her husband killed in front of her on December 13, 2003 by Ethiopian defense troops and highlander militia. Several days later, she was raped by seven Ethiopian defense troops, carrying their uniforms on their arms. They took turns with her, raping her for four hours. **She states, "They ripped me apart. I will never be the same. When I look at myself, I think of myself as 'dirty.' I feel helpless. I am not going to forget these people. What the Ethiopian troops have done to me is what some people call 'crimes against humanity'.**

**They say these people could be brought to court, not today, but in some years. Now when I see Saddam on TV, someone who was at the top of the government, being held responsible for what his government did, it gives me hope.**

**Meles was the one who gave these men the authority to do this. He is not less accountable than those men who did it. Those men may disappear, but their leader will never disappear. He will be tracked down and found wherever he goes, like the African snake that leaves its trail of dirt for you to follow. There may be many holes nearby, but as long as there is dirt on the ground, the trail of the vicious snake will identify which hole he is in. We, the Anuak, who have survived this unthinkable evil attack, will be like the dust that shows the trail of the snake through Anuakland. There will always be one of us who will be able to tell the tale of those who did not make it, to those who will carry on."**

The highlander militias, police and Ethiopian Defense troops roamed the streets, looking for any men, young or old, which they then viciously attacked. Between two and three thousand Anuak took refuge in the Mekane Yesu Church compound and the Catholic Church compound. Many highlanders, Nuer and other ethnic groups did not participate. Some were real heroes, warning Anuak, hiding them in their homes and standing up for them as friends or fellow human beings.

In less than three days, at least four hundred and twenty four persons were slaughtered in a well-calculated plan utilizing a prepared list of the names of educated Anuak men and leaders. As the killing subsided, men from other indigenous ethnic groups were forced to collect the bodies. A Nuer man gave the following testimony to the AJC. He reported:

**Some of us Nuer were forced to collect bodies of the dead Anuak. In front of the Gambella Secondary School, we picked up the bodies four or five Anuak men. One man's whole face was smashed, his right arm was broken in about five places. I knew he tried to defend himself. His face, nose and upper and lower jaw were missing. My body started shaking. Another man had fallen on his back and I could see his face. He was still talking, quietly asking me, 'Please help me—please help me.' I didn't know what to do. One of the defense troops asked me what was wrong. I told him that this one was still alive. He told me to put him in the truck. I**

couldn't look in the face of the dying man. As I carried him, he opened his eyes and said, 'Please help me or kill me.' He then closed his eyes and died.

That minute, my body stopped feeling. I had no more emotion. I felt like I was collecting rocks—not human beings. I stopped feeling like I was one myself. My hands worked like a machine, but it was like I was not there. There were about twenty bodies piled on top of each other and we were told to take two more bodies into the truck before unloading it outside the town. I took a breath and saw blood pouring down from the truck as it started to move. I looked in the back of the truck and the bodies were going in all directions. I realized these Anuak had been alive four or five hours before and now looked like fish in the back of a canoe. With all the human blood on me, I smelled like one of those fish. I could hear gunshots and knew more Anuak were being killed. I will never be the same person anymore. I cannot go on like this.

We, the Anuak and Nuer, have been fighting for many years, but we never have killed each other in this way. Now, like it or not, I have become part of it. I cried for some time before going to the river to wash off the blood. I then went back to my family. I have never told them what I did. You are the first person I have ever told. I do not want to remember. Sometimes I wish I were one of those guys in the truck. Why? Because those guys will never remember, but I am here and I am dying every day. I don't know why human beings do these things. Thank you for wanting to know. If others want to know so they can help stop this from happening to others, it gives me the reason why I remained behind instead of being one of those guys in the truck who can no longer speak.

Many bodies were never identified and were buried in one of three mass graves. The exact locations are unknown although it is known that the bodies were subsequently moved from one of these mass graves and burned on February 4, 2004. Most of the bodies have never been returned to their families for a proper burial. Although the government alleges that only 65 persons were killed, we have the names, ages and pictures of most every one of the 424 victims.

Similar actions were taken by Ethiopian troops in many of the rural towns in the Gambella district, causing many more victims and much more destruction of homes, crops, property and granaries. In addition to those killed in Gambella town, it is estimated that over eighteen hundred more people have been killed since that time.

Preceding and following the incident, over a thousand other Anuak were arrested, imprisoned without charges and tortured. The sick have been denied medical treatment. Two years later, thousands of Anuak men and some women still remain in crowded and unhealthy conditions in prison, many still subject to torture. Their court cases are continually delayed for "another six months" despite most never being charged a crime and essentially being innocent prisoners of conscience. The Ethiopian government reports 111 Anuak as being incarcerated; however, the AJC has obtained only a partial list of names and that list includes well over 800 persons.

Nearly ten thousand Anuak fled to Sudan for refuge. Approximately four thousand remain today, afraid to go back home, as it is still unsafe. Many who have returned, have been arrested or killed. Therefore, they remain in the refugee camp where they are living in horrible conditions, without clean water, adequate food, education for their children and any health services. Others have been internally displaced and as they have slowly returned home, they face hardship and conditions they had not seen for fifty years.

Anuak men and some women continue to be subject to harassment, arbitrary arrests, beatings, detentions and extra judicial killings. Rape of Anuak women remains widespread, and while it is greatly unquantifiable, human rights investigators have concluded that Anuak women throughout the region have almost universally suffered from this crime against their person by Ethiopian Defense Troops.

During the last three years, human rights violations were committed against the Anuak by the same government who was supposed to defend them. It is the worst kind of betrayal—like a child who is killed

by his own father. As typical in a culture where citizens are terrorized, some Anuak colluded with the central government, gaining access to power, protection and privilege. Others became increasingly passive, losing hope of a better future. Some escaped, leaving for Sudan and Kenya, until stability returns to the area. Understandably, as political expression led to intimidation, imprisonment and death, some Anuak decided to join resistance movements, attempting to defend themselves, their families and their endangered fellow Anuak.

The extent of the genocide probably could have been reduced had the Anuak not been disarmed by the government, leaving them unable to defend themselves. The goal of most of these resisters is in reaction to this and has been an attempt to bring a halt to the continuing extra judicial killings, beatings and rape. However, unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, some scattered rogue groups of Anuak have gone beyond defending themselves, retaliating in pent up anger against some innocent highlander citizens or against Anuak who have collaborated with the government.

In response, Ethiopian Defense Troops have arrested, beaten or killed Anuak farmers or other easily found, but innocent Anuak targets. In fact, even before the massacre, it had been common practice for the government controlled police or military to go into villages where suspected assailants were thought to be hiding, and for them to randomly kill uninvolved Anuak men, women and children.

## **Crimes Against Humanity Continue Against the Anuak**

Ethiopian defense troops continue to protect the oil company workers who are now drilling the first exploratory well in the Gambella concession. Reports indicate that they should complete the first well within the dry season in another month.

The government and the oil company have essentially pushed the Anuak aside and moved onto land previously considered to be the indigenous tribal land of the Anuak. Ethiopian troops have turned local Anuak farmers into “slave-laborers” as they are forced to build and to set up their military camps to protect the Chinese and Malaysian workers. The Anuak farmers receive no remuneration despite the fact that this is the time of year when the farmers would have been preparing their land for the planting their crops. These camps have amenities such as electricity and clean water, while a parallel economy exists in nearby Anuak villages, where there are no such advantages.

As Anuak see the central government in Addis working directly with the oil company, making all the decisions regarding the oil without any consultation with regional authorities, in violation of international and Ethiopian law, they are realizing that they will never have a share in any of the benefits of this resource unless substantive action is taken.

Worse than that, nearly three years after the massacre, the Anuak are still subject to extra-judicial killings, disappearances, rape, torture and arbitrary arrests. We have documentation of who has been killed, imprisoned and raped. We have documentation of the refugees who still are living under dire conditions in a refugee camp in Sudan. Only a month ago, Ethiopian troops were going to attempt to cross the border to go to the camp, allegedly searching for Anuak resisters. International action succeeded in stopping them, but they still killed twenty Anuak, arrested others and burned many huts in the small Anuak villages near the border before reaching Sudan. Now it is suspected that the Ethiopian troops have supplied guns to Murels a small ethnic group in southern Sudan who are now attacking the Anuak of Sudan whereas previous to this, they had been able to live more peaceably together.

## **Direct Reports from Witnesses in Gambella**



I received information from an Anuak in Gambella who had gathered information regarding the current abuses. He stated, "The Anuak are going to 'get fished slowly' if the world does not respond soon." He went on to report that the region is full of government troops who are violating the rights of Anuak by continuing beating, looting, raping and killing the displaced community members and the other innocent civilians within and outside of the region. The number of the troops is being estimated to be over ten thousands, with the majority being situated close to the oil. He indicated, "Mentally, people are dead. Women cannot fetch water easily and freely due to the fear of rape. Many farmers have been unable to cultivate their land for planting due to fear of being killed. Because of this a serious food shortage is predicted.

Anuak are afraid to conduct the business of their lives if it means leaving their homes and villages because if someone is found some distance from the village he/she will be considered a rebel and will be killed immediately. Many people have disappeared in such away. Those who took refuge in Sudan are afraid to come back and instead the number of refugees is increasing in Sudan and in Kenya. For those who are in the region, they have given up. Each is waiting for his or her time to come to be killed innocently like those who have been killed almost daily since December 2003."

He reported an incident occurring on April 30, 2006 when an Anuak man (name withheld) was beaten badly by the troops in Gambella town and was taken to the troops' barrack in the center of the town, the same place where the details of the plan of the massacre of December 2003 were made. There, he met many Anuak who also had been arrested, many being taken at night without the knowledge of others. The majority of these people are caught on the roads when they are coming to Gambella for shopping.

He reported on the following examples of those killed within one week in April of this year. In the Itang District, a man was killed in Ilea village on April 2, 2006 and a woman was raped and later murdered on April 3. In the Abobo District, a man who was working on his field was shot dead on April 4. In the Gog District, a man was murdered on April 5 when he went to cut wood for his home.

He also indicated that many troops were sent to the village of Gok Dipach where there is only borehole for all of the community members to use. However, the troops have taken it over, forcing the people to move near Gilo River as the people fear being killed, raped or beaten if they are found by the well. They still face the threat when they go to the river, but they have no choice and have nowhere else to run.

The following are a few of the names of people this reporter learned of who were murdered between April 1-12. The first four are female and the rest are male: Ajulu Akway Omot, age 50, Akelo Obang Ojway, age 45, Dimuy Okach Gier, age 9, Omot Okiiir Othow, age 60, Oman Ojulu Nyigwo, age 14, Opiew Nyigwo Obang, age 34, Local chief ( Nyeya) , Abela Odiel Medho, age 60, John Omot, Ojulu Okuch and Opiew Olok. He stated that there are more dead people for whom he was still looking for their names.

This man finished providing his information by pleading, "Please, I am an eyewitness calling for help from anybody who is willing to rescue Anuaks before we get finished. Please don't keep silent. Anuaks have no option, but need to be saved now."

Other reporters gave further information on incidents occurring mostly in the rural areas. Reportedly, one week ago, in the Abobo district of Gambella, Ethiopian troops were looking for a young Anuak man who someone had said had a gun and did not "like" the government. They searched for him and killed him. During the fight, he killed two soldiers and wounded three others. His body was left for four hours as the troops spread the word that his family should pick up his body. Yet, due to fear, his family did not come. They then beat up some Anuak who finally told them where his family lived. They then went to his home and beat up the victim's 58-year-old father, trying to force him to tell them any information. After

torturing him very badly, they took him with them and his whereabouts are currently unknown. Other family members ran away.

In another rural area, of Dimma district, where much gold is found, the Ethiopian Defense Troops are terrorizing the Anuak. Some Anuak men, who previously went to the mines, are being hunted down. A witness from another ethnic group told me that the Anuak are really traumatized as they are unsafe everywhere but in the town. The troops go outside the town and people repeatedly hear gunshots coming from the gold mining area and know they are killing any Anuak who is by himself. The reporter said, "If you are found alone, you are done." The people want to run, but there is nowhere to go. Some men have been harassed, beaten and forced to carry boxes of supplies for the defense troops. If you speak up, you may pay the price with being beaten, arrested or killed. The troops are succeeding right now because they do not think the information will get out. But we have gotten it.

In the rural district of Gog, the troops have occupied the farmer's homes and are using the local people's water well, sometimes leaving the locals without any. When women go to the well to get water or walk in other areas, they are frequently raped.

In Pinyudo, near the Ethio-Sudanese border, the Ethiopian troops have stationed themselves between the town and the border, making it extremely dangerous to travel. In the nearby small villages, Anuak are being robbed, killed or raped as they walk to the market in Pinudo for food and other necessities.

Near the area where the oil is found, two young women were raped as they bathed in a river after Ethiopian troops spotted them. The troops have also stolen wood from Anuak after they had worked to cut it up to sell it.

Reportedly, Anuak men are only safe in Gambella. Elsewhere, the defense troops do not try to differentiate between Anuak resisters and others. As the defense troops state their mission is to protect highlanders from the Anuak, the Anuak are feeling a growing anger as the government is dividing them. They remember building huts for these Tigrayan when they were resettled there years ago. Yet, as one elder Anuak said,

**"Now we, the Anuak, and the highlanders know who our enemy is—it is our government who is using us against each other. They are throwing us into a cage like two roosters who will fight to death while our government stands aside and watches. Now we have easily identified it. We are just like the roosters and cannot ask for help from the EPRDF government because they are the ones causing it. The highlanders who taught my children have now become the people I have been led to hate, but I am not stupid. People must realize there is a motive behind it. When the settlers migrated here, I helped them build their huts and shared my food. I have never harmed them. I have seen them as neighbors and we have learned some of each other's languages. We have become friends, but since the killing, we do not greet each other anymore. It has hurt me so deeply. Worse than that, if we talk to our previous friends, the government will suspect the Tigrayans of being sympathetic to the Anuak or Anuak resisters will think we Anuak have sided with the government. We are caught in between. Right now, all we can do is to wait for a good thing to happen. I hope it is not long or there will be more casualties between us."**

If you compare the loss of Anuak life to that of Darfur, there will be far less in numbers, but it may actually exceed Darfur in terms of percentage of the population. Those in the international community must come to see with their own eyes as those at risk, cannot leave.

## **Limited Infrastructure Destroyed by Ethiopian Defense Forces**

The Ethiopian Defense Forces left a trail of destruction that has wreaked havoc on the already limited infrastructure of the Anuak community. Many institutions have been destroyed by the troops and all of necessary equipment has been looted. Many Anuak say it is as if the progress made over the past years by community members, development organizations, churches and other contributors, has essentially disappeared. They are forced to live under conditions reminiscent of life twenty or more years ago. In addition, in most Anuak districts, freedom of movement is restricted by the Ethiopian government to two days per week, on Mondays and Fridays.

A primary loss of infrastructure involved the destruction (overuse) of wells accessing clean water. Before December 2003, there were 119 water wells in Anuak areas. Currently only five wells are in working condition. Currently, there has been an outbreak of watery diarrhoea that has killed a number of people.

Previously, there were 136 schools in operation in Anuak areas, now there are 27. The Anuak rates of school attendance in the Gambella region show that fewer than 8% of Anuak boys and 4% of Anuak girls are attending school in two Anuak districts. The attendance rate of children from other ethnic groups in the area is much greater, being 50% for boys and 30% for girls. The same report previously mentioned that was completed but not released by a UN entity, warns that an entire generation of Anuak children are going without an education.

A recent visitor to the area viewed some of the vacated Anuak schools. In plain view inside these schools were piles of charred hardware from the desks, tables and chairs that had been used as firewood by Ethiopian troops who had occupied the schools, using them for barracks. Nothing of any value was left in these schools, including books and supplies.

Due to ongoing human rights abuses in the rural areas, many of the schools in operation have few or poorly trained teachers, as many of the teachers were targets of the massacre. Of those who lived, a majority either escaped to Sudan following the genocide or since that time, have moved to Gambella town where they are safer and not subject to arbitrary killings and arrests. Gambella, as the largest town in the region, is in the public eye and therefore is safer. The government has deceptively used the relatively better conditions and stability in Gambella as their proof to outsiders of the stability in the area.

Ethiopian defense forces also took over health clinics, again using them as barracks. Previously, 18 health clinics were functioning, now there are only 7 left. Most of the clinics have no supplies, medication or equipment left.

Malnutrition is a continuing major crisis. Anuak have suffered disproportionately in comparison with other ethnic populations. Within the internally displaced Anuak population in the rural areas, the rate of acute malnutrition earlier in the year has been estimated to be 36.5% and continuing to rise. (Acute malnutrition in children under five years of age is 11% in Ethiopia.) This is astonishing considering that the Anuak have most always been able to support themselves due to their fertile land.

The rates of malnutrition outside the town, in the rural communities, may be even higher due to Ethiopian Defense force interference with farmers. Rates of disease, malnutrition and susceptibility to disease, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are extremely serious. According to one medical official, the prevalence of TB amongst the Anuak is eight times what is considered to be an epidemic.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst the Anuak of the Gambella region is over 21.9%, whereas the rate in Ethiopia is much lower. Due to the widespread incidence of rape of Anuak women, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS will certainly increase. In addition, many of the Anuak women have untreated sexually transmitted diseases due to the lack of health services in the area.

### **Human Rights Violations Running Rampant-- Has Ethiopia Become a Vampire State?**

Manmade destruction can tear down years of work towards the development of the area. We can see the poverty and hardship amongst people who usually can provide for themselves through their own hard work. We can see how denying food, health care, clean water and education has and is being used to oppress these people and further jeopardize their lives—in a passive form of genocide. Under this backdrop, providing humanitarian need becomes a huge black hole unless the manmade source of the problem is confronted.

George Ayittey, a highly respected African economist from American University in Washington DC, convincingly points out that the corruption by governmental leaders of what he calls “vampire states”, has created a climate where investment and development cannot take place because their leaders’ own objectives, of exploiting the people and resources for their own power and gain, lead to taking over and subverting every key institution of government in order to serve their own interests. He states in his article, “Down and Out! Who Broke Africa?” that they have their hands so steeped in blood and their pockets so full of booty that they are afraid that all their past gory misdeeds will be exposed if they are removed from office, so they cling to power at all costs, implementing only the barest minimum cosmetic reforms that would ensure continued flow of Western aid.”

In Ethiopia, human rights abuses have been going on for a long time in some areas, but more recently, the abuse seems to have become more rampant and severe as the government loses the support of the people. I will focus on several areas of Ethiopia from where I have recently received information from persons on the ground.

#### **Ogaden (Somali Region)**

In an interview I had with someone from the Somali ethnic group of Ogaden this past week, I learned that serious abuses have been going on there for a longtime. These include extra judicial killing, torture, rape and daily arbitrary arrests. The basis the government uses to justify this is in order to suppress the armed resistance group, the Ogaden Liberation Front, who is opposed to the government. However, the reporter states that the EPRDF is taking action indiscriminately against anyone, regardless of whether they have any ties to the armed group. The witness reported that if the government knew he was speaking up, that they would kill him.

Like in Gambella, he indicated that the brutal actions were linked to Petronas Oil, the same oil company from Malaysia who was involved in the Gambella region. The man also reported that within the last two weeks, 8000 more Ethiopian defense forces had come to protect the oil company’s exploration site. The local people will not venture close to the area or they will be killed. On May 10, six more people were killed, four villages were burned to the ground and the EPRDF government declared that everyone had to stay 90 KM away from the perimeter of the oil operations or they would be killed. Outside that area, when the troops encounter any young men, they sometimes force them to carry their gear and supplies. As they do so, the troops call them “talking donkeys.” If they resist, they are beaten.

He also informed me that rape has become very common. Because their ethnic group have conservative views, when the women are raped, they are afraid to tell their husbands for fear that they will be

abandoned or beaten so instead, the wives will continue to sleep with their husbands, spreading HIV that they have contracted from the soldiers. Three months ago, UNICEF provided testing for HIV. Out of 400 persons tested, 80 persons tested positive for HIV. The rapes are continuing and no one is doing anything about it.

The reporter also said that medical care and education were both very lacking in the area. He said there were only two hospitals in the whole region and only one was functioning, but at a very substandard level. For instance, if any woman needed a Caesarian, she had no chance of survival. Only one high school is available and this school is not really functioning. He summarized by saying that the people were better off during the time of Haile Selassie than they are now. In fact, the people are now saying that it was better when the teacher taught the students under a tree and they were wishing for those days.

He further stated that the men in the area were regularly stopped and arrested for no reason. Recently, some men disappeared after some Ethiopian Federal troops found them listening to the BBC on a radio. He said that they all are looking for some way out, but the increased activity of Petronas is accompanied by worsening human rights violations as more and more troops come to the area. The man explained that resistance groups have formed as a result of these crimes. Their intention is not to break away from the country, but yet they cannot stand by and do nothing. He concluded by saying, “The EPRDF is not oppressing us, they are killing us. There is no stability and we are terrorized. That is all I can say!”

## **Oromia Region**

The reporter in the Oromia region told me that human rights abuses were going on every day, even before the election. This included disappearances, harassment, killing, torturing and arrests. He said it was happening to people of every age. Anyone who asked questions would be tortured, beaten, arrested, detained or killed. This could happen over something as insignificant as someone saying he was proud to be an Oromo.

He said that the evidence of human rights abuses was everywhere and is the reason that men no longer walk together and why no one is in school due to fear of danger while going back and forth. When farmers meet, they are considered suspect. Oromo activists are in prison all over the region. The problem is so large that even the little children know that the government is doing something terribly wrong. He said, “People may think the killing stopped after the incident in Addis Ababa in November, but it is not true; instead the killing is going on everyday in our region. We have been terrorized by the troops. Now, when we see men in uniform, we wonder who will be next—it is terrible for the children.”

He went on, “We Oromo have been looked at as being against the government, but some of us have been more neutral, but it makes no difference since we are all seen as one. We have no hope because this government terrorizes us. We have no hope because we do not know how to get out of it—even talking about it may cost you your life.”

## **Addis Ababa**

I interviewed a man from Addis Ababa. He agreed to talk to me. He said, “I have no fear anymore because I have nothing to lose anymore. My life is not much better than those being detained. Because of this, I am going to give you this information, but I want this evidence to bear fruit because I may bear a price for it. Yet, I am willing to make this sacrifice so that other people can live. If we talk or do not talk, we can still be killed. If I do not say it now, later someone will say I look non-sympathetic to the government and I will be arrested and detained. When that happens, I will not have the opportunity to tell you these things so I must do so now.

He asked me if I had heard about the bombs that had been going off in Addis and I said I had. He told me that many strongly believe that the government is doing it because they are accusing the OLF and the Opposition Party for it. They suspect they are doing this so they can tell the US that they need more help to fight terrorism. He said similarly, people believe that the federal government had planned a genocide if the opposition party had won, yet they are charging others with what they themselves have actually carried out against the Anuak.

This man said that people in Addis were being beaten, tortured and harassed at night by government security forces who drove through the city. He believed that the government is terrified of the people and that their fear is making it more difficult for them.

### **Southern Nations Region**

The person I interviewed from the Sidama ethnic group in the Southern region told me that the human rights abuses in the area worsened after the May election of 2005. During a rally that was held on March 12, 2006, Ethiopian Defense Forces killed twenty-one persons and detained sixty others. Many of these were tortured and continue to be held as political prisoners. Others at the rally have disappeared. Since that time, the government has been intimidating people, beating them and committing other human rights abuses against them to the point that they have become afraid of their own government.

### **Tigray Region**

I then interviewed a Tigrayan man from the same region of the country from where Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has come. He indicated that this regime is established on hatred and Leninism and said there is little hope they will change as they have always been this way. He stated that under a dictatorship like this, all people are affected, not just one group.

He said it has been very difficult for the Tigrayans as others think we are better off. He added, "For us, we feel like we are in a cell encircled by barbed wire, restricted by what we take in or out." He explained that the government was pressuring them all the more as they lost the support of the people, as this region is where they came from and represents their only stronghold of acceptance, even though many are against them. Because of this, they are trying to force their viewpoint and plans on the people. For example, in the Adwa district, where Meles Zenawi ran, no one would challenge him for fear of his/her life. They have only one newspaper that only represents the viewpoint of the TPLF. The government has set up restrictions to advance their plan from the very top of the central government to the region to the district, to the village and to the family and it has now divided people at every level, even in the homes between husbands and wives.

He indicated that it is believed that there has been so much investment in the Tigrayan region, but that this is an exaggeration because the shareholders are not the people of the region, but the TPLF members who are benefiting from it. They are protecting their investments by any means and know that if the regime goes, so do they. The majorities of Tigrayans have been silenced and know if they speak up, they will be killed. He said that even though Tigrayans know Meles is not good, they are afraid of being oppressed by the Amhara. He stated that there are too many generalizations about people leading to misunderstanding because not all Tigrayans are like Meles. Currently, he said that Tigrayans are divided into two groups, ones who are afraid of being oppressed and the others who are fighting for democracy and freedom.

This man stated very strongly that being an Ethiopian means that any crime that is committed against a different ethnic group should be taken as a crime against one's own. He added, "If I am for justice, it

means I am for justice not only for myself, my family and my ethnic group, but for all of Ethiopia. We must fight with people who are like-minded against those who are against justice, even if they are within our groups.

He reported that beating and killing was going on in the area, but not to the same degree as elsewhere; however, the government was suppressing everyone, even Tigrayans. He said they have no hope of eradicating this or of being able to speak up. He said, “If the government finds out I had spoken to you, I will be dead.”

## **Why is it Imperative that the European Union Take Immediate Action?**

Human rights abuses are being perpetrated throughout the country and people are dying every day. As we reach out to the people of Ogaden, Oromia, the Southern region, in Addis Ababa and even in the Tigrayan region, what we hear is very much the same as what happened to the Anuak. People in diverse locations and of different ethnic groups are being traumatized by their own government—a government who has become like a wild animal “munching on its own offspring.” How long can we wait? The Ethiopian people are now being exposed to barbaric and arbitrary killings, torture and mass incarceration on an incredible scale.

The ruling party has lost the support of the people and is using power to hang on by any means. The educated leaders who have spoken up are paying a price with their lives or their freedom. By looking at repeated examples, those speaking out have been given three choices, all ways to silence and disempower them. They can leave the country, be arrested or they will disappear. This last option essentially means losing their lives. This has created a silenced nation and a vacuum of leadership.

This would not be tolerated in any of the democratic and peace loving countries. Think about our last election. We know the current regime did not win. This can be verified by examining the report of Ana Gomez, MEP, after concluding her charge of the EU Election Observation Mission. She asserts that the election did not meet international standards for genuine democratic elections and gave reasons for her conclusion.

Consider some of these reasons. In Addis Ababa, out of 138 positions in the Addis Ababa City Council, the ruling party only won a single position. The other 137 positions went to the Opposition Party. The only reason that this seat was won by the ruling party was because there was no one running against them.

The same outcome resulted in Addis Ababa regarding the 23 positions for the Ethiopian Parliament. Every position was taken by the Opposition Party. As a result, over ten key ministerial positions in the government were lost that had been previously held by members of the ruling party. These included the following positions; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Defense, the Minister of finance, the Minister of Information, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Capacity Building, the Deputy Prime Minister and others. How can the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi claim they won the election after this astounding loss?

This leads to other like-minded questions. How can the ruling party claim to have won in the rural areas when the people so overwhelmingly voted against this regime in the capital city? Are the people in the rural areas so different in their political views? The truth is, it may be in the rural areas where this is most opposition, but the least freedom to exercise it. Is it not in the rural areas that the human rights abuses are the worst? Is it not in the rural areas where the ruling party has most easily dominated the regional affairs? Is it not in the rural areas where you find the darkest corners of oppression, away from the international public eye? Think of the case of the Anuak of Gambella. The dead would be alive today had they had any true regional autonomy. So how can you explain the ruling party’s claim to have had such

victories throughout the rest of Ethiopia? The answer is already indicated in the results of the EU Election Observation Mission. As Ana Gomez points out, it was a rigged election.

Even in Addis Ababa, within the view of the international community, some election observers were kicked out of the country for concocted reasons. Another question—how often after an election, do you as the previous incumbent, use your power to call for another election after losing yourself? How often do you then later claim yourself the winner even when others opposed the very grounds for calling such a re-election and refused to participate? Such a manipulation of the foundation for democracy led to a boycott of the election by the Opposition Party who already had been elected under the scrutiny of international observers. Regardless, the ruling party went ahead on their own and then claimed that most of their candidates were re-elected.

Knowing this, how do you in the EU respond? Look at the evidence? Knowing this, would you sit in such an illegitimate parliament that stood for everything you opposed? Would you sit down next to others who would manipulate and control every outcome making you part of the false front paraded before the international community of lovers of democracy who might be tricked by the deception? Put yourself in the shoes of these people.

In the EU, the foundation of your being able to effectively function is by upholding the rule of law for everyone, as being valuable and equal under God. Now, knowing this evidence about the rigged Ethiopian election, not even including the deaths of so many innocent protesters, what would you do about it had it happened in Europe? Now with the deaths of over 100 innocent protesters, the lack of any independent investigation into their deaths, the imprisonment of the Opposition leaders, hearing of the human rights abuses going on all over Ethiopia and knowing that this government is terrorizing its own people, the urgent question is, what will you do if this was going on here?

The second urgent question is what will you in the EU now do to uphold the principles upon which your society and culture were founded? Such actions should not be tolerated anywhere. I know you cannot intervene everywhere, yet you are already heavily involved in Africa and in Ethiopia by providing great financial and other support. This does give you a right to examine your relationship with EPRDF government and the basis for your generosity to them. Do not be misused and manipulated.

I call you to take major action such as implementing strong sanctions like you have done in Zimbabwe and Belarus. What these two governments have done is no different. I call on you to examine how aid is disbursed. Giving money to the regional governments or the district governments is no different from giving it to the central government. Due to total federal control over every institution and level of government in Ethiopia, you will discover that they are all corrupt and repressive.

Massive change in the system of justice and the rule of law must take place before your gracious help reaches the real people of Ethiopia. These are the people who do not want endless handouts, but instead want an education, health care and a way to work hard in contributing to creating sustainable development and prosperity for Ethiopians. They hunger for moral underpinnings to their political, civic and social institutions. They seek the freedom that comes from being able to walk freely in their world without being constantly vigilant due to being in constant jeopardy to the bully—this current government of Prim Minister Meles Zenawi.

I spoke with an Anuak man from Gambella regarding what message he wanted to give to the EU. He said, “I want the EU to do more. Our own government has been killing us for three years and the international community is no place to be found. Infectious diseases are killing us. We do not need our own government to kill us no more. What we need is vaccinations and medicine, not bullets from our own government.”



The question is, how long will the Ethiopian people put up with this severe brutality before a full-blown crisis results? Ethiopia, as a failing state, needs substantive diplomatic and economic intervention in order to avert such a national crisis and to protect its citizens from additional suffering and the loss of life. An imploded Ethiopia can be more dangerous than exerting pressure for diplomatic solutions at this time!

For years, the Ethiopian people have looked to the EU as allies and friends. You have supplied much aid, but too much of it has been misused by this government to fund its dirty work and own interests. Instead of putting pressure on this regime, lack of engagement has given passive permission to this them to continue its brutal and corrupt ways. Ethiopians are calling out for help, but are not being heard.

The EU has made a large commitment to Ethiopia, but more needs to be done. I call on you to not play the “catch-up game” where you wait until full-scale chaos erupts before taking action. Intervene now to prevent the destruction that such chaos will cause to this country and its people.

The EU is in a desirable position to support Ethiopians in shaping a better future for generations to come. If we fail now, new friends may immerge for the Ethiopians, some with whom we may not share common values and vision. Some of these new economic or political partners may actually further exploit the Anuak and other Ethiopians. In this strategic area of the world, where stability is already in delicate balance, the impact of meaningful action may have far and long reaching benefits.

Can we afford to ignore this opportunity? Do not wait; I call on each of you today to hear the voices from the dark!

### **Recommendations to the EU and international donor community**

1. That the EU authorities condemn the atrocities and bring diplomatic (financial and other sanctions) pressure to bear on the Ethiopian regime, calling on them to refrain from the gross violations of human rights that it is committing against any of its citizens.
2. That the EU would live up to their commitment to safeguard and defend human rights in Ethiopia as a member of the global community, where arbitrary killings and incarceration have become the order of the day under the current regime.
3. That the EU put pressure on the Ethiopian government to immediately and unconditionally, release all Anuak political prisoners, the entire elected CUD leadership and other prisoners of conscience; dropping all the absurd charges of treason and genocide.
4. Denounce the current regime for illegally and unjustly derailing the vibrant democratic environment, identifying it as the true engineer of a national crisis that aims to divide ethnic groups and spread confusion, mistrust and suspicion across the nation and instead call on them to promote good governance, personal freedoms and respect for the rule of law as laid out in the Ethiopian Constitution.
5. Fully support an international inquiry into the Anuak massacre of December 13, 2003 and the killings in Addis Ababa following the derailment of the democratic election that began so well, but ended in an unfortunate post-election crisis.
6. That the EU intercede with immediate action so as to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.
7. That the EU express their solidarity with the oppressed and suffering people of Ethiopia by clearly speaking out against the tyrannical tactics used by this regime to repress political expression and basic freedoms.
8. That the EU reconsider, examine and reassess all its bilateral agreements with the current dictatorial regime of Ethiopia.
9. That the EU encourage the process of a dialogue with Ethiopian communities both at home and abroad with the objective of promoting democratic freedoms in Ethiopia.

Thank you, Chair of the Committee on Development; Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and members of the committees for your efforts of wanting to bring justice, peace, true democracy and economic development in Ethiopia.