



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

Remembering December 13th:
Let us take this day of sorrow and make it a day of reconciliation and healing among all peace-loving Ethiopians.

For immediate release: December 13, 2008

December 13, 2008 marks the five-year anniversary of the brutal massacre of 424 disarmed Anuak in Gambella, Ethiopia by Ethiopian National Defense Forces armed with guns and militia groups armed with machetes. Not just the families of the victims, but all Anuak, will forever remember that dark day that brought so many pains, tears and suffering.

Even after five years, some widows, some fathers, some mothers and children are still waiting to bury their loved ones properly. Some day their bodies, which were buried in mass graves, will be exhumed and buried with proper respect by their families and loved ones. **Some day a memorial of remembrance may be erected in Gambella in their honor, to remind people that behind every name on that memorial, is a human life, given as a precious gift from God, our Creator.**

Such memorials may be erected all over Ethiopia where innocent lives of Ethiopians have been taken. **Some day, a large monument—a wall of shame—could be erected in Addis Ababa with the names of the Anuak and the names of all other people throughout Ethiopia who have lost their lives at the hands of this government that devalues human life..**

On this Anuak Memorial Day, Anuak in Gambella cannot join with Anuak in the Diaspora in observing this day. It is prohibited by the TPLF or EPRDF government. Instead, they will have to look forward to the day they will be able to join together in a service such as the ones being held in Minnesota, Kenya, Sudan and in other cities where there are Anuak where they are free to remember the death of more than 1500 other Anuak who were killed in the next two years following the December massacre. **Because public mourning is not allowed, those who want to remember family members, friends and community members who died, must quietly carry out some kind of observances within their homes and hearts.**

This TPLF regime wants to erase it from the memory of the Anuak, but this will never happen. Some day, all the details will be revealed for all to see on the shame-filled pages of our Ethiopian history books. Until then, Anuak are still waiting for those responsible to be brought to justice. As one Anuak who lost a family member recently said, “Meles and his killers have moved on, but we will never stop grieving or rest until the killers have been brought to justice and until our family members are buried properly.”

For the AJC and supporters of the Anuak, let us all remember this day together. Let us take this day of sorrow and make it a day of reconciliation and healing among all peace-loving Ethiopians. This pain we feel was brought because of hate, anger, envy and greed and we want to create a different Ethiopia.

The AJC was established from the beginning because of the horror of the Anuak, but we have learned that unless all are free, we will not be free. With that in mind, we extend the invitation to others to grieve together with the Anuak and for the Anuak to grieve with you regarding your pain and losses for the Anuak are not alone in their suffering and losses.

Every day, somewhere in Ethiopia, there is a day of grieving for some beloved family member or friend whose life has been prematurely taken at the hands of this government. Since they have come into power, we cannot begin to name all of the incidents in every region of the country where lives have been lost because Ethiopia has a government that robs, kills and oppresses its own people. We must fight to bring the God-given sanctity of human life back to Ethiopia. How can we do this?

One way to restore our humanity is to remember that God cares about each of us. As we see that same humanity in every person that we see in ourselves, we can affirm our neighbor whether they are like us or not. This is the kind of Ethiopia we need.

One person I know from Minnesota recently told me he had stood in line to buy something to eat and was inspired to pay for the person behind him without that person knowing until after the first person left. The next day, when the first person returned, the worker was there. She told him what had happened.

She said, “After you paid for the man behind you, he paid for the next customer. That customer paid for the next in line and then that person did the same for the person behind.” She said one of them had exclaimed, “This is the kind of world I want to live in!”

It only took one person to start this chain event that affected four other lives. Giving can be contagious. In Ethiopia, too often, we see chains of retaliation that create a world unfit for anyone. As we grieve for the losses on this Anuak Day of Remembrance, let us consider how we can build a different Ethiopia where humanity is valued and justice and mercy are present.

Let this day remind all Ethiopians that it is time to reach out to others to build bridges between all Ethiopians who are suffering. It is time to put humanity before ethnicity and to join together, valuing our sameness and our differences. If God had not loved diversity, we would all look alike so let us come together to build an Ethiopia where there is more joy than pain, where there is more love than hatred, where there is more peace than violence, more justice than injustice and where the rule of law applies equally to all, especially to those in power.

May you extend your hand to another to build this new Ethiopia that can help mend broken hearts and broken lives.

A new Ethiopia cannot be built by one ethnic group, one political party, one religious group, or one region. It requires all of us coming together. Let each of us be like the drop of rain from the sky that when it combines with other drops, refreshes the ground that can bring new life. Let each of us be like a ray of sunlight when combined together with other such rays, becomes the light that shines on our path so we do not stumble as we walk forward together through the darkness.

Ethiopians are beautiful, hardworking, loving and caring people who can be a blessing to each other, to all Africans and to the whole world. Let us pass on such a world to the next generation.

May God guide us and give us the wisdom to free our souls, our minds, our communities and our country. May God bless those Anuak who are alone and grieving today as they remember their husband, father, mother, son, daughter or other loved one.

May God bless all of those who are remembering this day of tragedy and may God help bring about an Ethiopia where truth, justice, freedom, reconciliation and harmony prevail over death and destruction.

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