



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

Anuak Mourn the Passing of Their Anuak King in Southern Sudan

December 3, 2011

The **Anuak Justice Council (AJC)** shares in the profound grief of all Anuak and friends of the Anuak throughout the world upon the loss of the king of the Anuak, His Majesty King Adongo Agada Akwai Cham, who died on November 30, 2011 following a serious illness. After seeking medical help in India and Kenya, he passed away in Nairobi, Kenya, only ten years after he assumed the throne of the Anuak kingdom in 2001.

King Adongo was living in Ottawa, Canada with his family when his father, who had been king for 58 years, passed away in Otallo town near Pochalla, Sudan, the headquarters of the Anuak kingdom. King Adongo had already had the opportunity to obtain a college education, a first for an Anuak king, before it was revealed that his father had designated him as the first in line to kingship; something that is only revealed by an elder close to the king following his death. His decision to assume this enormous responsibility and to return to this very remote area of southeastern Southern Sudan was not an easy one. He initially was reluctant to do so. In a Canadian documentary film produced about him, **A Man Who Became King**, he explains, *“At first I said no. I don’t want to assume so much responsibility, but then I thought, but who will go and take it?”*

King Adongo rose to the responsibility, leaving the conveniences of the western world behind and facing the daunting challenges ahead of him, he accepted the kingship and thereby became the 23rd in a line of Anuak kings dating back centuries. Under his highly respected leadership, King Adongo brought more peaceful relations between the Anuak and other Southern Sudanese peoples in the region—such as the Dinka, the Nuer and the Murle—and saw it as a priority to continue to do more. In an interview posted by House of Nationalities,¹ he spoke of how his mission was “to see development,” “to reduce conflicts with neighboring tribes” and “to be good neighbours for the North.” He explained: ***“We cannot build a country with differences. We are one people, one nation, one nationality. We should harmonise ourselves.”***

Certainly, many more accomplishments were cut short with his death; particularly in light of the new acceptance of Southern Sudan as a country. He had high hopes that the new Government of South Sudan (GOSS) would assume an increasingly positive role in contributing to future peace and development, especially as people and groups competed with each other for new opportunities never possible before. His Majesty King Adongo put hopes in the new government; saying, ***“...any dispute within the community can be solved by the government,”*** acknowledging that as of yet, the GOSS was ***“not very strong, but it is there. A commissioner has been appointed...I can go to the government directly, to GOSS, to Riek [Machar], to Salva [Kiir]...we need to give them a chance.”***

Interestingly, King Adongo and the new president of the Republic of South Sudan, President Salva Kiir, were former school classmates. They had enjoyed a very warm relationship that went back many years; giving each, easy access to the other. This friendship, as well as respect for King Adongo’s former leadership and kingship, was visibly demonstrated by the way President Kiir, Vice President Riek Machar and the Government of South Sudan have taken extraordinary measures to bring back King Adongo’s body from Kenya to Juba for funeral services before providing a plane and helicopter to fly his family and his body back to Anuakland, located near Pochalla, South Sudan, where he will be buried. Both of them, along with other GOSS officials and many Anuak and other Southern Sudanese, met the body at the airport before joining a long processional of many vehicles accompanying the body to the church in Juba where they attended a service in keeping with the King’s Christian beliefs.

With the seat of his kingship being located in South Sudan, King Adongo would certainly have played a positive and formative role in helping to shape this new country into one that brought greater unity, equality

and opportunity to all the people. He also knew the particular challenges facing the Anuak as they recovered from decades of conflict, displacement, marginalization and hardship. He had already helped in this transition but there remains much more to be done to make sure the Anuak, as well as others, are fairly included in this fragile transition to a new era of leadership, development and opportunity. Now it is the responsibility of the living to take on the work he has started.

In talking with many Anuak, many of them have described feeling a deep sense of loss at the death of King Adongo who many had hoped would work closely with the new government and other leaders of Southern Sudan to bring peace and development to this region. Some have even said that only the brutal genocide of the Anuak by the current Ethiopian TPLF/EPRDF dictatorial regime of Meles Zenawi had greater impact on the Anuak worldwide. It is even more painful that his death comes nearly at the same time as Anuak will be remembering the 8th anniversary of this horrible crime that will never be forgotten; particularly because evidence reveals it was planned months before, in Meles' office, as a means to destroy Anuak leadership so as to take over Anuak land and resources.

His Majesty King Adongo knew about that genocide very well. He had been in Pochalla, Sudan when thousands of Anuak had fled to a refugee camp there from Ethiopia following the massacre and human rights atrocities that began on December 13-15, 2003 in Gambella, Ethiopia and continued for over two more years. Thousands of Ethiopian Anuak still remain in either the Pochalla Refugee Camp in Sudan or in Dadaab (Ifo) or Kakuma Refugee Camps in Kenya. After the South attained its independence, King Adongo pointed to conditions of Anuak in Ethiopia as the next concern, saying, “[Now] *the problem is really the Ethiopian side. We don't care about these borders.*” As Anuak know, the colonial borders were drawn through the middle of Anuakland; leaving half of the Anuak on either side, but all under the kingship.

He was fully aware of the continuing human rights abuses and repression of rights in Ethiopia. He also knew about how the future of the Anuak in Ethiopia was being threatened by “land grabs” as they were now being forced off their indigenous land by the same authoritarian regime that had planned the genocide of 2003 related to exploiting the oil reserves on their land; now it was related to acquiring their fertile land and water and giving it away to foreign investors like Karuturi Global of India and Saudi Star of Saudi Arabia as well as many government cronies. His Majesty knew that the future of Anuak children and adults was being stolen as they continued to flee the country and that many who had fled in 2003 continued to languish in over-crowded refugee camps where there was little opportunity for education or advancement. He understood what it was like because he had also been a refugee; leaving Sudan during the war when he felt unsafe. He had spent three years in Cuba as a refugee before being resettled in Canada.

As Anuak throughout the world mourn his passing, may all value, uphold and demonstrate the legacy King Adongo has left behind and now become part of the means to fulfill his mission to bring peace, opportunity, development and freedom. It is up to Anuak throughout the world to become active contributors for as King Adongo said about his first reluctance to assume his own responsibility as king, “...*but who will go and take it?*” Each should ask that same question. Only one person will take on the title and responsibility as the new king; yet, many can help support and fulfill this large vision he held.

May God provide strength, comfort, love and guidance to King Adongo's family, extended family, community and to all Anuak and friends of Anuak everywhere at this very sad time and for the difficult days ahead. Let us be confident that at such a time as this, we can be assured that the God, in whom King Adongo believed, remains with us. May God bless the Anuak and make them a blessing to their neighbors, their countries and to those beyond the land divided by rivers. May they bring gifts to the LORD Almighty on His Holy Mountain!

For further details and information, please contact: Mr. Ochala Abulla, Chairman of the Anuak Justice Council (AJC): Phone: +1 (604) 520-6848 E-mail: Ochala@anuakjustice.org.

Thank you so much for your support from—Ochala, Ojulu, Ojoy, Obang and the rest of AJC the team. Please see the next page for pictures of funeral services of His Majesty.

¹ http://www.houseofnationalities.org/Profiles_15.asp



The public waiting to received His Majesty body at Juba airport



Arrival of VP of Republic of South Sudan at the airport to received His Majesty King Adongo Agada. *Photo by Obang Jobi*



The public waiting to receive the body of His Majesty. *Photo by Obang Jobi*



His Majesty King Adongo Adaga

1959-2011





His Majesty body on it way to Juba. *Photo by Obang Jobi*



In the above Picture: President of Republic of South Sudan, Salva Kirr and VP of Republic of South Sudan, Dr. Riek Machar are giving comforted words to the member of the family at the Church parking lot at end of the services.

Photo by Obang Jobi



Republic of South Sudan Minster being Interviewed about His Majesty





Funeral service in the church