



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL
Justice, Peace and Freedom



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Joint Press Release from the Anuak Justice Council and the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia

Remembering that the December 13 Massacre of the Anuak is Going On Throughout Ethiopia!

“My husband (Okwier Oletho) was a pastor who knew and loved God. This is what he would want: to teach people to not do this kind of cruel thing to another human being, to love each other and to be one of the people to stop this kind of thing!” (Pastor Okwier’s wife’s comments in 2006 as she reflected on her husband’s murder by the TPLF/EPRDF on December 13, 2003.)

(Ottawa)—December 13-15th, 2011 marks the eighth anniversary of the Anuak genocide that began with the brutal massacre of 424 Anuak leaders and young students in less than three days, but continued for another two years. Up to 1,500 more were killed, many more atrocities were committed and the limited infrastructure of the region was significantly destroyed. *Today we clearly understand that the TPLF/EPRDF’s intent was to take over control of the land, water, oil and natural resources from the Anuak and other indigenous people in the region—the Nuer, the Majanger, the Opo and the Komi.*

Even the words chanted by the militia groups and Ethiopian military troops as they marched through Gambella town looking for Anuak on their list to kill next gave evidence of what they wanted. They chanted, “*Today there will be no more Anuak land.*” *The Anuak were simply “impediments” to gaining access to the land.*

In Gambella today, the pace of land grabs has become astronomical as land and rights to water and natural resources are being given away to TPLF cronies and foreign multinational companies for next to nothing for decades while the local people are being forced from their homes. Many more will be moved in 2012. What would those 424 Anuak leaders, like Pastor Okwier, do today were they still alive? Yet, we know, God can raise up other leaders like them, not only in Gambella, but all over Ethiopia for Ethiopians are suffering in every part of the country and our heart goes out to them in their pain.

As the Anuak commemorate the darkest of days in their memory, they are not alone as countless other Ethiopians and justice loving people beyond the borders of Ethiopia remember this day with them, but tragically, many precious members of our greater Ethiopian family have faced or are facing their own December 13ths. Right now, the Gamo people of the South are being victimized by this regime. So are others in the south as well as the people of the Ogaden, Afar, Oromia, Benishangul, Amhara, Tigray and within Addis Ababa. We are a family at risk and as we remember the Anuak today, we must not forget our fellow brothers and sisters who are also struggling.

When the TPLF/EPRDF singled out the Anuak in 2003, they believed that they could easily trample on this tiny, marginalized and unknown people without any consequence. They were wrong. *The TPLF/EPRDF wanted to single this one group out as a tribe that they could dehumanize and destroy and that no one would care; making the Anuak all the more isolated and alienated from the mainstream. Instead, it led to the formation of the Anuak Justice Council with its commitment to reach out to other Ethiopians to stop the never-ending cycle of tribal conflicts and revenge; believing this was the only way to bring sustainable freedom and justice to all.*

Out of the suffering of the Anuak, the idea evolved that **no one will be free until all are free** and that the image of God can be seen on the face of every human being that he created. *Because of this, each person has shared worth and value beyond the differences of ethnicity, religion, viewpoint or any other differences. If we Ethiopians are to survive and flourish as a people and for justice to prevail, we have to value others by “putting their humanity before their ethnicity.”* The government wants to single out groups, but now it is the job of all of us to not be isolated from others. Wherever these horrors have taken place, it should be shared among us.

The TPLF/EPRDF regime is destroying our country (Ethiopia) as they attempt to hold onto power at any cost as they rob the country of its resources. Life in Ethiopia is becoming unbearable and unfit for human beings. The Ethiopian dream of most of our young people is to leave Ethiopia for most anywhere else. Many thousands of our young women are taking jobs as maids in Arab countries where we have heard countless heartbreaking stories of physical or sexual abuse or being forced to work for no pay; like the horror the whole world witnessed about our beautiful Ethiopian sister Ms. Shweyga Mullah who was burned by Gaddafi’s daughter-in-law in Libya. Despite all of these negative things coming from Ethiopia, the God that created our beautiful land and people will never abandon his children if they cry out to Him in faith.

Had Pastor Okwier still been alive, how would he have “stopped this cruel treatment of other human beings?” How would he have taught Ethiopians to love other—even our enemies? He was a man of prayer and right before he was killed he had been praying with others—prayers that would never die with him—but he was also a person who took his faith into action, regardless of the risk. In his case, he had been in the United States visiting only months before the massacre. He had been warned not to return due to rumors that his life may be at risk, but he chose to go back to help the people anyway. It cost him his life.

What would happen in Ethiopia if “Cush” genuinely submitted to God, person by person? Only a genuine inner moral transformation will change us and our country. Every Ethiopian must see it. Even though Meles and his TPLF/EPRDF are using ethnic hatred, greed and division to try to keep as a tribal, divided nation rather than a nation of diverse people, tongues and tribes, we must counter this with the truth that we are human beings, capable with God’s help, to repent, to forgive and to reconcile. We must show this by our actions. Only this would bring about a true African renaissance!

Meles and his TPLF/EPRDF never thought such a day as this would be remembered eight years later. Neither did he ever conceive that the deaths of these Anuak people could be turned around, by the grace of God, to become instruments of reconciliation and the transformation of our country into a New Ethiopia where we celebrate the beauty of God’s created people as we care about the justice, freedom and opportunity of our brothers and sisters as we care about our own! When this happens we will know that these people did not die in vain.

What man intended for evil, God will have used for good. The good that God can bring from our tragedy may be beyond what we can imagine and it starts with each of us! Who knows, even those in the TPLF/EPRDF are not immune from the loving hands of God as He calls Cush to submit to Him!

May God heal our land from the blood, death and sorrow that has wounded our souls. May God make our own hearts fertile soil for healthy growth so we can look at each other as part of our precious Ethiopian family. Long live this beautiful, ancient land of Ethiopia we call our sweet home.

=====ENDS=====

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