



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL
Justice, Peace and Freedom

**11-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ANUAK MASSACRE OF 2003 WILL BE REMEMBERED
BY MANY ETHIOPIAN ANUAK LIVING IN REFUGEE CAMPS AFTER BEING FORCIBLY
UPROOTED FROM THEIR INDIGENOUS LAND**

This year, members of the Ethiopian community in the Greater Houston, Texas, have sent a significant gift of encouragement to the Anuak who have been uprooted from their land and homes.

December 13, 2014

PRESS RELEASE. FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Vancouver, BC, Canada) December 13, 2014 will mark the 11-year anniversary of the horrific massacre of 424 Ethiopians of Anuak ethnicity in Gambella, Ethiopia. Even though it has been over a decade, it still seems like yesterday to the Anuak, especially to those who lost members of their families. Some of the victims remain in unmarked mass graves. The Anuak as well as the other people in the region have never really recovered from this traumatic tragedy, let alone the fact that no justice has been done.

Part of the reason for this is that the lives and livelihoods of the people surviving the tragedy have been in turmoil ever since. Seventy-eight thousand Anuak and others in Gambella have been forcibly evicted from their ancestral land in order to lease the land to foreign investors and TPLF/EPRDF regime cronies. The Anuak have never been consulted or compensated as would be done in a country where there was a rule of law.

Those who survived the 2003 massacre and the following three years of destruction, harassment, and human rights abuses, only had temporary relief before the TPLF/EPRDF began a master plan to remove them from their homes and land. Those that resisted quickly discovered that their lives were in danger. Those that complied, found it nearly impossible to survive in the resettlement sites designated to them by the regime due to inferior land, difficult access to water and absent services. Many were forced to leave Ethiopia in order to save their lives. They are now living in refugee camps in South Sudan and Kenya. Yet the ethnic apartheid regime of the TPLF/EPRDF continues to round up Anuak men in Gambella who are now in prison in Addis Ababa. With all of these actions, these past eleven years have been some of the most painful for the Anuak.

Today, December 13, 2014 these Anuak refugees and other Anuaks throughout the world, namely in Europe, United States of America, Canada and Australia will be holding a memorial service to commemorate this tragedy. As they remember what took place at mid-day eleven years ago and as they reflect on the needless loss of the lives of their loved ones, it will rekindle much emotion.

Widows will try to describe what fathers, brothers, sisters, or other relatives were like to their now grown children and try to explain how a regime that is supposed to protect its citizens could do such a horrible thing to their own people. It is difficult enough when you are in a stable environment, but it is all the more difficult being in a refugee camp, trying to find ways to move on with such few resources.

In the midst of this darkness, out of the hearts of the Ethiopian community in the greater Houston Area, has come an unexpected source of hope and encouragement—a large monetary gift to help the Anuak who have been displaced. In their letter of explanation they say: *“We would like to kindly request that this small token be allocated to our fellow Ethiopians that have been uprooted from their land and homes by some greedy land grabbers who have little to no regard to their fellow mankind.”*

The funds will be divided between Anuak in refugee camps in South Sudan and Kenya and Anuak in Gambella. The Anuak Justice Council (AJC) has chosen to distribute the funds to both refugee camps in conjunction with the December 13th memorial gatherings in both camps; but in Gambella, no commemoration is allowed, other than privately, so we are still working out the best way to distribute the funds.

Mr. Ochalla Abulla, Chairman of the Anuak Justice Council (AJC) was very moved by this generosity, *“This gift has been a tremendous encouragement to the people in the camps, but what these Ethiopians did when they reached out to the Anuak should now be an example to all of us, including the Anuak, to reach out to others beyond their ethnic groups. The impact of this could be huge and could inspire us as a nation to help our people—not only those from our own groups. There are some other examples of Ethiopians who are already doing this. Some Ethiopians have formed small groups of five members who all contribute \$20 a month to support the family of some of our Ethiopian political prisoners who used to be the breadwinners of their families.”*

AJC Vice Chairman, Mr. Ojulu Lero, added his thoughts, *“This gesture is reconciliation in itself! These people have reached out to the Anuak and now the Anuak can reach out to other people like the Majangir or the Oromo who can reach out to the Amhara or Tigray who can reach out to the Southerners or the Afar and so forth. It reminds me of the recent SMNE forum in Washington D.C. that encourages us to talk to each other rather than about each other. In this case, these Ethiopians from Houston helped others rather than only helping themselves. If we all follow this model of action, it will be another way to unify the Ethiopian people. Once the people are unified, the leaders will be more unified.”*

As the Anuak in South Sudan and Kenya come together on December 13, 2014, they will know they are not alone. They will be thinking of those fellow Ethiopians far away who have torn down a wall of isolation through their gift of love. These funds will be put to good use, but the impact of it will live on as building blocks to a New Ethiopia. The power of love can break the walls of hostility and division like nothing else.

May the actions of these and other Ethiopians like them, inspire our people to reach out to others with love, humility, and generosity. May God deeply comfort the Anuak during this time of remembrance of the massacre of December 13-15, 2003 as well as all Ethiopians who have lost loved ones over these past years at the hands of the TPLF/EPRDF. May He also bring freedom to all political prisoners from every region throughout the country who are locked up simply for trying to bring justice and freedom to Ethiopia.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Mr. Ochalla Abulla, Chairman of the Anuak Justice Council (AJC): Phone: +1 (604) 520-6848 E-mail: Ochalla@anuakjustice.org