

## GENOCIDE IN WESTERN ETHIOPIA

A genocide of potentially devastating consequences is unfolding in Ethiopia where over the last week, more than 200 individuals from the Anywak (Anuak) ethnic group have been killed in the most violent ways possible, including at least 3 Anywak American citizens. There is no end in sight to the killing.

### **What has happened?**

It has become apparent that Ethiopian government troops have been rounding up and killing civilians in large numbers, mainly from the Anywak ethnic group in Gambella, Ethiopia, a region bordering southern Sudan. Among the dead are 3 United States citizens (Obang N. Ogalla, Houston TX, left US Nov 26, 03; Oriem Agda Akwai, Minneapolis MN; Omot O. Bawar, Austin, MN, left US on Nov 24, 03). The whereabouts of 1 or 2 other United States citizens are unknown (Okwa Omot, Washington DC, left Oct 4, 03, supposed to return to US Dec 8).

The attack is apparently in response to an attack on a vehicle on December 12, 2003 near Itang, Gambella that resulted in 8 Ethiopian Highlanders and 1 Anywak being killed. While it has subsequently been found out that those carrying out the attack were in fact another ethnic group (as identified by a survivor of the attack), this did not stop the Ethiopian military from attacking a nearby Anywak village in revenge. This attack resulted in casualties on both sides (believed to be 11 Ethiopian defense personnel and 1 Anywak and led to the Ethiopian military attacking civilian Anywak in Gambella town in revenge for the deaths. This follows approximately 18 months of ethnic violence in the region between the Nuer and Anywak, which resulted in the October 2002 imprisonment of senior regional government officials who were imprisoned without charge (24 are presently in Addis Ababa federal prison and 44 are in Gambella regional prison), the abolition of the regional police force, an increased presence of Ethiopian troops, and the removal of democratically-elected regional government leaders followed by the installation of a federally appointed regional government (ignoring the democratic process required under Ethiopian law). Conflicts between the Anywak and federal government troops have steadily been on the increase ever since as government troops exert their control on the area and its people. Reports from the region indicate that following the December 12th vehicle attack, Ethiopian government troops began approaching those Anywak that were previously identified as "troublemakers". This list of Anywak has been well-publicized and is made up of those that are sympathetic to the former regional government, those that hold positions in the present regional government, and those that are outspoken against the federal government's policies in the region. Of the Anywak on this list, some were arrested with no charge, but the majority were shot and killed in cold blood. On December 13, 2003, following the first day of violence, 44 Anywak civilians were buried in mass graves at the insistence of government forces in Gambella town, 38 of which had died from bullets to the head from point blank range. The American casualties were among those buried there. Any attempt to document the massacre by regional government officials or concerned citizens was met with beatings and intimidation. Killings in the days since have continued (as of December 16, 2003, 151 Anywak have been killed and buried, more than 200 are in hospital and many more are missing and presumed dead), the military has blocked road access to the region, the hospital is substantially over capacity, up to two thirds of the Anywak homes in Gambella town have been burned to the ground, and all flights have been cancelled. The massacre of the

Anywak continues by Ethiopian troops with no end in sight. Reports from the Ethiopian Ministry of Defense suggest that the conflict is a land dispute between different ethnic groups (presumably Oromio and Anywak in Gambella. This quite simply is false-Ethiopian troops are systematically annihilating the Anywak population, including Anywak foreign nationals, and blaming others for the atrocities. Given the present scale of the conflict, the reported movement of "rebel" troops, the presence of the Oromio Liberation Front (OLF), and the region's close proximity to the civil war in Sudan the need for immediate action is imperative before the intensity of the conflict dramatically increases.

### **Who are we?**

We are the *Anywak Community Association in North America* who are a non-profit organization made up of Anywak-American citizens. We represent the interests of the Anywak in North America.

### **What can you do?**

As we speak, the slaughter of Anywak civilians is continuing unabated today. We urgently ask you to put pressure on your local and state government officials to investigate the incidents and to put pressure on the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to stop the killing immediately. The United States federal government puts millions of your dollars into development projects to Ethiopia every year. Your tax dollars should not be going to support activities in a region where these sorts of atrocities are being committed.

We urge the United States Department of State, and appropriate state representatives to strongly condemn this unlawful and immoral act, and to urge the government of Ethiopia to ensure that the conflict is halted and that the appropriate steps are taken to punish those responsible for the atrocities. Furthermore, we request the United States government to undertake an independent enquiry into the conflict in Gambella, including but not limited to the deaths of United States citizens, and that the United States puts pressure onto the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to live up to its human rights obligations as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international treaties.

Sincerely;

The Executive Committee