

Master Planner of the Anuak Genocide is the New Governor of Gambella: Omot Obang Olom Is Rewarded for His Loyalty to the EPRDF

(October 4, 2005)

Omot Obang Olom is the new governor of Gambella Regional State of Ethiopia. He earned his way to power by becoming “a true citizen of the government” as he was dubbed by the Head of the Federal Government Security, Alemaw Alamiru, who congratulated him after a rigged election on Thursday, September 29, 2005. Mr. Alamiru was one of Olom’s co-partners in planning the Anuak genocide of December 13, 2003 when 424 intellectual Anuak leaders were massacred within three days. As one of the primary masterminds and executors of the genocide, Omot Obang Olom, is himself an Anuak, making him the most despised of all Anuak. He was the one who provided the list of hundreds of names of those educated Anuak who might speak out against the corrupt, brutal practices of the Ethiopian government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Omot Obang Olom has now been rewarded for his fawning devotion and obedience to the EPRDF government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. His blood-drenched path to power has come at the expense of the lives, freedom and the well being of thousands of his own people. He has traded his heart, soul and Anuak blood for the fleeting rewards of power and favor---probably a very bad decision. He has put everything he has at the feet of a weakening government, one that is tottering out of control from the outburst of anger from millions of Ethiopians, infuriated by the rigged national election and the murder of student protestors.

Since the previous governor, Mr. Okello Akway Ochalla, who was threatened with his life for not cooperating, escaped from Ethiopia in January of 2004, no new governor has been appointed until Omot Obang Olom was appointed last week. Instead, the region has been under the control of the federal government, represented by the Head of Federal Security, Almaw Alamiru, who knows that Omot Obang Olom will “faithfully” represent the interests of the government. This is a convenient arrangement, especially as the EPRDF enters into the next phase of oil development on Anuak land.

It is really quite amazing how important it is for this government to “look” democratic! Olom was actually appointed to his position. However, in another attempt to twist reality, Alamiru, met with Omot Obang Olom regarding his plan to give the governorship to him. Omot said he wanted the job, but that the people would probably not want him in that position. That did not matter to Alamiru, who said he did not care. He said that Omot Obang Olom was the only one who had been true to the government. He told him that he did not want someone who could “betray the party” like the former Governor Okello had done.

On September 25, 2005, Alamiru went to Gambella and met with the top officials in the region. Alamiru told them that Omot Obang Olom was the only one capable of implementing the government’s plan for the region and that could be counted on.

On September 26, 2005, a meeting was called of the newly elected representatives of the Gambella Regional Council. Alamiru was again in charge of that meeting. At that meeting, Alamiru announced Omot Obang Olom as the new governor and that they should congratulate him and the government of the EPRDF.

He said that they would love to work with them on the Regional Council and that they should see the EPRDF to be like parents to them. He went on to say that they should respect and obey the government, as they would lead the area and the country into peace and prosperity. Almeru then gave them specific instructions as to the impending “election” meeting to be held on September 29. He said he wanted one Anuak, one Nuer and one Majenger to raise their hands and to nominate him. Following that, he wanted an Anuak, a Nuer, a Majenger and a highlander to make statements about how Omot Obang Olom was the only one capable of bringing peace, prosperity and development to the area. Alamiru said he would then say, ‘Everyone in favor, will you raise up your hands?’ He then instructed, ‘I expect all of you to raise up your hands because this is why you were elected for the ruling party.’ He further lectured, ‘The only true citizen of the Ethiopian government, who puts the nation first and his own life and ethnic group second, is Omot Obang Olom! It is everyone’s responsibility to vote for him!’ He asserted that he had the right and the authority to appoint Omot.

The response from the Anuaks was fear and many are talking about leaving the area for Pochalla, Sudan. They felt that Omot Obang Olom had masterminded the genocide and had created more violence, imprisoned more Anuaks and done more harm than anyone preceding him and now he had more power. Because he worked so closely with the federal defense troops, he or they could do anything and get away with it.

Secondly, it was believed that he would create instability in the area and increase the ethnic violence. The Ethiopia government, represented by Alamiru, and Omot Obang Olom, were now saying that because of the peace accord in Southern Sudan, that the Nuer should leave, but most did not want to. This would cause additional ethnic tension in the area; something the government was expert at doing.

Thirdly, some of the family members of those who remain in prison, were crying and expressing deep despair because Omot Obang Olom was primarily responsible for the imprisonment of their loved ones. They believed that he would never release these intellectual Anuak leaders who could threaten his hold on power.

Fourthly, the Anuak leaders who are not yet arrested are fearful of massive arrests of anyone who could be conceived to be any kind of threat.

Fifthly, the people are fearful of the unknown. They believe this man is capable of the unthinkable, that he could use the defense forces for a genocide of worse proportions than the one of December 13, 2003. As a result, they are outraged by his appointment. However, on September 29, 2005, Omot Obang Olom was unanimously elected governor of the Gambella region in a “pseudo-election”. Alamiru had told the people of Gambella that the only person who could do for them in Gambella, what Meles had done for them in Ethiopia, was Omot Obang Olom. Now, that is a chilling thought!

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