



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

As Anuak Mark the 7th Anniversary of the Anuak Genocide, Anuak Justice Council (AJC) Announces Plans to Restructure into New Phase



For immediate release: December 13, 2010

December 13, 2010 will mark the seven-year anniversary of the brutal massacre of Anuak in Gambella, Ethiopia, where in a three-day rampage of terror, 424 unarmed civilians were killed by Ethiopian National Defense Forces armed with guns and militias groups armed with machetes and axes. Genocide Watch president, Dr. Greg Stanton, an expert on genocide and human rights crimes, has classified these acts and those that followed over the next two years, as genocide and crimes against humanity.

Five human rights investigations have been conducted, including two completed by Human Rights Watch. The full case is now in the hands of the International Criminal Court. Although no one yet has been held accountable, there is no doubt that the evidence is ready for that inevitable time when Meles and others responsible for these crimes will face justice.

For now, during this time of remembrance, Anuak and their friends will gather together—in Gambella, in Addis Ababa, in southern Sudan, Kenya, Minnesota, Canada, Europe and Australia—or wherever they are found, to commemorate these victims. Many of the genocide survivors are still displaced in refugee camps in Sudan or Kenya where they fled following the massacre. However, this year, Anuak are faced with new crises that further jeopardize the future of their families back home in Gambella and across the border in the Sudan.

In Ethiopia, the same barbaric government that planned and executed this attack now wants Anuak land. They have told three quarters of the Anuak and other people of Gambella that they must move into resettlement camps; giving up land they and their families have occupied for generations. This move is being ordered so as to make way for foreign companies and private investors who seek to take over control of their land and resources.

There is no doubt in the minds of the Anuak that this was all part of the long-range plan of this regime to exploit the resources of the Anuak and other Gambellans. They see the people as being “discardable,” but covet their land. Certainly, this regime that is so well known for its greed and corruption, is well aware of the extreme fertility of the land in this undeveloped region of Ethiopia as well as of the availability of abundant water from the five rivers that flow through Gambella.

A just government that cared about its citizens and the rule of law would have involved the local people in the decision making and included them in some of the benefits, but this has not been the case. Instead, the people are simply seen as obstacles in the way of profiting from this region; a region that also can boast of large deposits of oil, forests, gold and other minerals. The case is the same in many other parts of Ethiopia.

Seeing all of this grabbing of land and resources in 2010 adds more meaning to the slogans yelled out by the killing squads as they marched through Gambella town in 2003—“Today is the day for killing Anuak” and “Now there will be no more Anuak land.” As they raped the women, they taunted, “Now there will be no more Anuak babies.” Undoubtedly, there was a long-term plan to confiscate this land; not only for the drilling of oil in 2003, but also for what we see going on today.

It is simply the next phase of their master plan to take the land and resources and to eliminate the people; however, the people are resisting. The Anuak Justice Council supports them in refusing to be forcibly evicted from land to resettlement camps that have nothing to offer them. They have to destroy the homes they have now and go to the new location and build a new home using local construction materials—like trees, mud and grass—without any financial compensation. The land will be inferior to what they have now.

Unfortunately, Anuak and other vulnerable people are also at greater risk than ever in Southern Sudan, where half of the Anuak live, due to the upcoming vote on the referendum, scheduled for January 11, 2011, at which time Southerners will vote to either stay part of Sudan or to separate. Most believe that Southerners will vote to separate; however, many expect that the vote will be rigged in favor of the North, something that might not be easily accepted by Southerners. However, the North stands to lose their grip on the vast resources in the south. Due to the opposing interests and the large stakes involved, many fear that the situation could easily explode into violence or even civil war. If this happens, it could cause great suffering; destabilizing not only the Sudan, but also Ethiopia as refugees would stream into Ethiopia through Gambella like they did during the last civil war, just at a time when the Meles regime is trying to “de-populate” the region.

Anuak and others from this region are in jeopardy on both sides of the border. Because of this, they must build more cohesion, examine the issues, advocate for the rights of the people and strategically plan for the future while at the same time, cooperate with larger and more regionally or nationally focused organizations that can assist them. Both levels of organization are important.

Due to this, we are restructuring the leadership of the Anuak Justice Council; hoping to empower Anuak or others in their regional areas, in either Sudan or Ethiopia, in order to more effectively and thoroughly address these issues. The AJC recently elected new leadership with the new chairperson; Mr. Ochala Abulla and the Vice Chair; Mr. Ojullu Lero. These leaders, and other people of Gambella, will be the ones to come up with a vision to address these volatile issues that those in the region are facing; particularly the land grabs and problems resulting from the vote on the referendum. This leadership will pick up from where the previous leadership left off.

Meles may have thought the Anuak genocide would have been forgotten, but instead, it is producing the foundation for a movement of the people that may continue to impact these two countries for many years. Remember, God knows the people by name and none of them are forgotten! He is in charge and let none of us forget it!

People who want to contact the AJC should email the new leadership. The chairman, Mr. Ochala Abulla at: ochala@anuakjustice.org or AJC Vice Chair, Mr. Ojullu Lero at: Ojullu@anuakjustice.org. For more information, you may see the website at: www.anuakjustice.org.

Ethio Quest News

For the Latest Ethiopian News, Views and Reviews

www.ethioquestnews.com

Ethio **Q**uest News

For the Latest Ethiopian News, Views and Reviews

www.ethioquestnews.com