



## Genocide Watch

The International Campaign to End Genocide

### Letter to Justice Navanathem Pillay, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights

March 3, 2010

**“Let us kill them all! From today forward there will be no Anuak! There will be no more Anuak land! No one will arrest us! Erase the trouble makers!”**

(Slogans shouted by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Defense Front Forces [EPRDF] and Highlander militias during the killing of Anuak in Gambella, Ethiopia, December 13-16, 2003 from eye-witness testimonies of survivors)

Petitions Team  
Office of the United Nations  
High Commissioner for Human Rights  
UNOG-OHCHR  
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

**Dear Madam High Commissioner,**

No one has ever been brought to justice in Ethiopia for the massacre of 424 Anuak in Gambella, Ethiopia on December 13-16, 2003, and genocidal massacres that killed one thousand more Anuak in 2004. Investigations by Genocide Watch in early 2004 revealed the Ethiopian government’s planning, execution and cover-up of these massacres. Since then, the Ethiopian government, under Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, has continued to commit more crimes against humanity throughout Ethiopia and in Somalia. The killings in the Ogaden are genocidal. A culture of impunity exists. Investigation by the High Commissioner for Human Rights is critical.

This letter is a follow up to Genocide Watch’s March 2009 letter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, asking for a full investigation into the Ethiopian government’s complicity in widespread crimes against humanity. **We have never received a reply to that letter.**

We are particularly concerned with the use of starvation and the blocking of food and other humanitarian aid to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia that is now inaccessible to anyone but the Ethiopian Defense Forces. Human rights investigators and journalists indicate that the Ethiopian government is using indiscriminate terror against civilians in response to an insurgency movement in the Ogaden.

We believe these past violations and ongoing concerns provide justification for swift investigation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. No legal investigations are being pursued within Ethiopia. Exacerbating the risk of widespread abuses is the passage of new repressive laws in Ethiopia that criminalize the work of human rights defenders.

We recommend specific investigation of persons named as planners of the Gambella massacres in a secret 16-page memo in Amharic obtained in the week following the 2003 massacre from the office of Omot Obang Olom, current Governor of Gambella Province:

*“...meeting on September 24, 2003 in Addis Ababa in the office of **Prime Minister Meles Zenawi**. **The Prime Minister was there, along with the Vice Prime Minister; Addisu Legesse, the architect of Meles Zenawi’s ascent to power in pre- and post-1991, Sebhat Nega, Information minister; Bereket Simon; Chief of Gambella Security; Omot Obang Olom, Head of Federal Security; Alemayheu or Almeu Almeru, Minister of Federal Affairs; Abay Tsehaye, Chief of Staff of the Ethiopian Armed Forces; Samora (Mohamed) Yunis; Chief of Military Intelligence; Brigadier General; Yohannes Gebre Meskel and Minister of Defense; Abadula Gameda.** They met to discuss security issues in Gambella.... It was at this meeting that plans began for the massacre of December 13, 2003... It was in the third week of November that a list was compiled by **Omot Obang Olom** of those Anuak to be targeted. The first list*

*contained five hundred and twelve Anuak names, which probably was longer by December 13<sup>th</sup>. Some of the Anuak in prison in Addis and some of those in prison in Gambella were on the list.”*

According to testimony obtained in Genocide Watch’s two human rights investigations in 2004, the targeting of the Anuak was ordered by the **High Commander in Chief of the Ethiopian army in Gambella, Tsegaye Beyene**, with the direct authorization of **Dr. Gebre-ab Barnabas, an official of the Ethiopian government’s Ministry of Federal Affairs. The Chief of Police, Tadesse Haile Selassie**, was also involved in carrying out the orders.

At the time of the 2003 Anuak massacres, the obvious motivation for displacement of the Anuak was exploration for oil by Chinese petroleum companies. There is now evidence that the Ethiopian government’s plan for expropriation of Anuak and other groups’ land is much larger.

Since the 1974 takeover of Ethiopia by the Marxist-Leninist Mengistu regime, all land has been the property of the state. Land ownership has never been returned to the people who have farmed it for many generations.

In the past month, contracts have been signed granting 99-year leases to huge tracts of Anuak land to Chinese, Indian, and Japanese companies for agricultural production. The leases are being granted for as little as one dollar per hectare, with all the money going directly to officials of the Meles Zenawi government. Signing ceremonies for these leases have included no Anuak. Meles Zenawi has become one of the richest dictators in the world.

Gambella province, the Anuak peoples’ homeland, has very fertile soil and abundant rainfall. The Anuak are being moved off their land. Similar “land-grabs” are also being executed in many other areas of the Ethiopia.

Deportation or forcible transfer of a population and persecution of any group on political, racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious grounds are crimes against humanity outlawed by Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We call on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to take action to protect Ethiopians from a government which has not only violated its responsibility to protect, but is terrorizing its own people.

As one Anuak woman concluded in her testimony regarding the brutal murder of her husband by Ethiopian defense forces: **“Why are the other human beings in this world not doing anything to stop these people and bring them to justice?”**

Will the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights investigate Ethiopian officials for crimes against humanity? Will the leasing of vast swaths of Ethiopian land to foreign corporations and forced displacement of Ethiopia’s farmers be stopped? Above all, will Ethiopia’s most powerful politicians ever be brought to justice for their crimes?

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

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