



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

Remembering December 13th: A Day For All of Us!

Anuak Justice Council Press Release

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The anniversary of the December 13, 2003 Anuak massacre is here again. Four years have now passed since the Anuak witnessed a horrific slaughter of their loved ones by Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's military forces and some other pro-EPRDF government militia groups. The painful wounds from those losses will be reopened as many Anuak throughout Ethiopia and in the Diaspora observe the fourth memorial of this genocide that took place in Gambella.

Many of the Anuak families of these victims still do not know where the bodies of their family members are buried. As of today, no one has been brought to justice for committing these crimes. Refugees are still in camps in other countries. The remaining widows, children and orphans in Gambella have daily struggles made worse due to the absence of many men from their families, villages and communities. They live with traumatic memories that can be replayed like an old movie by simply closing their eyes. Yet, life must go on for the living.

As they try to cope, we ask that other caring people remember them in their thoughts and prayers as they face this reminder of this darkest of all days for the Anuak people. Yet, what we have learned during these four years is that the Anuak are not alone in their suffering; their fellow Ethiopians are being subjected to harassment, intimidation, oppression and gross human rights abuses, including death, all over the country and into our neighboring country of Somalia as any opposition is met with harsh responses from Meles and the EPRDF government of Ethiopia.

We suggest that this date might provide a time when all of us—Ethiopians, Africans, and other human beings—can not only grieve for our past losses, but also one when we can face up to what human beings have done to other human beings, resolving to do our part, with God's help, to create a different world around us that promotes love, peace and respect between people.

Such atrocities can only happen when people turn away from God. When we think, as people, that we can defy God and His principles—believing we are above the law and above others—we can become like animals or worse yet, like soulless mechanical beings. Look at how the Ethiopian National Defense troops, and those with them, under the national leadership of Meles, mowed down human beings like they were crops, valuing the resources in the area that could make them rich, but not human life that God created in His image.

When a father is picked out from among his family and is axed or shot to death in front of his wife and children, we must wonder what kind of person could do such a thing? When a child is raped, we must wonder what has happened to this person committing this crime that they have so lost their sense of their own humanity? It can only come from a lack of knowing and fearing God. This is the reason the world is where it is today.

All over Ethiopia and the Horn, life is being destroyed by military or security agents of Meles and the EPRDF government. None are being brought to justice. Meles and others in the government are denying what is happening, but the families of the victims know who is responsible and also know that there will be a day when finally those to blame will come before a court of law to face not only human justice, but eventually to also face God's judgment.

The people who needlessly lost their lives for merely speaking up for their rights will form a trail of blood from from Addis Ababa to Abobo, from Arba Minch to Adwa, from Asosa to Awasa, from Babilie to Bonga, from Debre Dawa to Dessie, from Debre Tabor to Dimma, from Dembidolo to Debre Berhan, from Gambella to Gondar, from Gorgora to Gog, from Harar to Humera, from Jimma to Jijiga, from Kombolcha to Kulubi, from Mek'ele to Mizan Teferi, from Metu to Moyale, from Negele Boran to Nekemte, from Sodore to Sodu Welmal, from Tullu Milki to Turmi, from Woldia to Wolleka, from Yabelo to Yeha; and above all; from the north to the south, to the east and to the west of Ethiopia.

Tragically, countless killings are now going on in the Ogaden and in Somalia at the hands of Meles' troops. As soldiers in uniform, many, but not all, have exploited their power by participating in reckless and unjustifiable killings, rapes and acts of destruction. Their superiors, all the way up to Meles, have not held them accountable.

Others in the military have been forced to serve. They may abhor the crimes being committed by some, but are caught on the inside, not knowing how to get out. We know about their difficulties because we have heard the stories of some who have found a way out. We should pray for courage, wisdom, strength, protection and God's help for those stuck within this inhumane killing machine of Meles'.

However, as we remember this day of tragedy for the Anuak, let us not be silent or inactive in our protest of what is happening right now to Ogadenis, Somalians and others as Meles and the EPRDF kills by proxy, using Ethiopian National Defense troops to do their dirty work; albeit, some do it willingly.

Today, there is nothing we can do to bring back the lives of those murdered, but what we can do is to be God-fearing people who see others as equally precious as ourselves and stand up for them. This is based on the fact that we are all created in God's image—regardless of ethnicity, status, gender, age, religion or culture.

Instead, what we have seen is the lack of love, outright hatred, the lack of the fear of God and the lack of obedience to His principles. What can we learn from what happened to our fellow Ethiopians so such inhumane and evil acts stop? What will it take for us Ethiopians to become people who take care of our neighbors and then pass this value on to the next generation?

As Jesus said, we must “love God with all our heart, soul and mind” and “love others as we love ourselves.” Without caring and nurturing for each other, we would never survive. It is only minutes after we are born that we are in the hands of another person who begins to nurture and care for us, laying the foundation for us to do the same to others.

This Memorial Day of December 13th, should not only be a day to remember the Anuak, but to also remember all those who have similarly lost their lives, taken at the hands of someone who does not fear God. When you remember this day, remind yourself of your responsibility to care and protect others like those who cared and protected you (the reader) when you first came from the womb. We are created to both give and to receive such love. It is simple, but can cause tremendous change to our society if many of us do this.

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God has brought each of us into a world where He has given us the task to reduce the pain and misery of others around us. Let December 13th become a day when we renew our commitment to do so. May it be a day when relationships are healed. If you have hated or wronged someone, ask for forgiveness. If someone inflicted pain, do not think that hatred or revenge will take you anywhere but right back into the same misery we have been overcome by for so many years.

December 13th can be a day of giving love, peace, respect and hope for the future while we recall the shame of the past. Let us grieve with the Anuak and all other Ethiopians who have so greatly suffered. Let us remember our responsibility in making an Ethiopia where people live in harmony, with love, rather than with hatred towards others. Let us work hard to bring about peace.

When that day of peace comes, when a new government finally replaces that of Meles', **let us build an Ethiopian Memorial Wall of Shame that will have the names of all those Ethiopians who have died under Meles' regime, engraved in stone.** Ethiopians then can go to this wall to be ashamed of what has been done by their own government.

As we regret our history, we will pave the way for a different future. As we make a national statement of **"Never Again,"** we will be less likely to tolerate deviations that would lead us to what we have now. We can become people who value our fellow Ethiopians or Africans because we and they are fully created in God's image, nothing less.

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