



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL
Justice, Peace and Freedom

**Testimony to the House Subcommittee on Africa,
Global Human Rights and International Operations**

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**“The Anuak Massacre of 2003: The Ethiopian Government Attacks an ethnic
group listed by Cultural Survival in 1984 as endangered! ”**

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Mr. Chairman Smith, Chairman Leach, members of the subcommittees,

Thank you for inviting me to testify on Ethiopia today. I would also like to thank you for organizing this hearing and your work over the years to bring a just, lasting peace in Ethiopia. I request that my statement be submitted into the record in its entirety.

My remarks will focus on the massacred of 424 educated Anuak men and gross human rights abuses and repressive measures Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, and his ruling EPDRF have initiated in recent years, the considerable progress made by Ethiopia’s opposition despite these abuses, and on the positive potential impact of increased United States support for a democratic future for Ethiopia. Ethiopia’s May 2005 elections highlight how far that country is from being a free and open multi-party democracy.

My name is Obang Metho. I am an Anuak. I grew up in Gambella. I am not here as part of a political party. I am not here as an expert. I am here as a witness and human rights defender to speak up for the 424 educated Anuak who were massacred on December 13, 2003 and who can no longer speak up for themselves. I am here for the children who lost their fathers on that day. I am here as the voice of the woman who lost her husband or son and for the grandparent who lost their grandchild. I am here to speak for the families whose husbands, sons and fathers have been in prison for years with little hope of release. I am here for the four thousand Anuak refugees in Pochalla, Southern Sudan who still cannot return home.

I am not here to speak about something I do not know, for I am one of these people. I grew up with it and it made me. They are my family members, my classmates, my friends and my people.

The first time I encountered injustice by the government was twenty-five years ago when I was in fourth grade and was at school. I witnessed an Ethiopian police officer beat up an Anuak student just because he looked at him in the wrong way. I saw his blood and wondered why a government who was supposed to protect its people could do this? This image stuck with me. I grew up with it and made me want to defend the right. I am doing this now because of my people. I am doing this now because if I had been there during the massacre of the Anuak on December 13, 2003,. I would have been one of the 424 killed. My



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name would have been on that list as I meet all the requirements. I am Anuak. I am educated and I would have been one of those to speak out.

But, I am not only here today for the Anuak. I am here for the Tigrayans who disagree with their own government. I am here for the Oromo, the Somali, the Afar and for any in other ethnic groups throughout Ethiopia who have been oppressed. I am here for the Ethiopian woman whose son or daughter was shot dead on the streets of Addis Ababa after the national elections. I am here for the CUD leaders and young student protesters who have been taken away from their families and put in prisons and detainment centers. I am here for those courageous prisoners of conscience, languishing in prisons throughout Ethiopia.

The voice you are hearing is not just my voice, but the voice of those crying for help. I hear their voices and am bringing them before you this day. The Prime Minister will deny what I am about to say. Who will you believe---these voices calling from the dark or his? I am speaking to each person on this committee. I ask you---please listen to these voices as if they were coming from your own sons or daughters, as if they were coming from your neighbors and friends who are calling for help from freedom and peace loving people like yourself. Take these words with you and nurture them, not only for the Anuak and other Ethiopians, but also for any human oppressed in this world. These people want you to know what they have gone through and for you to do something about it!

What's Troubling Ethiopia?

Ethiopia-----a democracy? Prime Minister Meles Zenawi----a prime example of a new breed of African leaders? The current ruling party of the Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Republic Front (EPDRF)----too strategic to America's War on Terror to chance anything different???

How about the charges of genocide against CUD party members? Or, what should one think about the tens of thousands of Ethiopians imprisoned for being anti-government? What should our response be to the May 15, 2005 national elections???

Was the current ruling party really elected? How about the violent aftermath of the elections, when student protesters and others were shot and killed by EPRDF troops----was this defensible?

What about the Ethiopian people? Are they so hopelessly divided in ethnic conflict that they "need to be controlled" or chaos and killing, reminiscent of the Rwandan genocide, will erupt and spin out of control? Why were Ethiopians able to live in greater harmony under Mengistu than under Meles? What explains such widespread poverty and hardship under Meles despite the billions of international dollars being poured into the country? What explains the human rights abuses being reported amongst almost every ethnic group?

Perhaps, the "golden glow" of progress and democratic governance in Ethiopia, along with the denial and repression of any information to the contrary, is simply a marketing strategy, adeptly and charmingly propelled in the public arena by the current chief broker, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. However, in order to know the truth, you might need to go elsewhere. Oftentimes, the larger truths can more easily be seen and understood in the microcosms of real life situations and people.



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The Case of the Anuak

Repression, arrests and violence are well known to the Anuak of the Gambella region of southwestern Ethiopia. However, when this violence occurred openly in the national capital, it awakened the world to the real nature of this regime. It was a shocking indication of what had been going on in the rural areas of Ethiopia, beyond the penetrating eyes of the international observers. The killing of peaceful student protesters in Addis Ababa following the national election as well as the imprisonment of CUD opposition leaders on trumped up charges, have been methods of suppression and control used for years against the Anuak.

The EPDRF government of Prime Minister Meles and its regionally controlled implementers at the district level, have brutally repressed the Anuak using violence, imprisonment, loss of property, loss of government jobs and other such means of control as a way to silence Anuak who protested against the federal control over regional affairs or against blatant violations by the government of the basic human rights of the Anuak. Additionally, any Anuak who called for regional involvement in the decisions involving the extraction of the vast oil reserves in the area, were seen as “anti-government elements” needing to be punished.

This ongoing undercurrent of oppression finally culminated in the December 2003 massacre of 424 educated Anuak leaders. These ethnic atrocities were witnessed by countless others and the facts provide incontrovertible evidence of an ethnically based massacre by agents of the Zenawi regime. Acts of this scale, were previously unknown in Ethiopian culture.

This genocide against the Anuak was incited and carried out by none other than the EPDRF Defense Force, Gambella Regional Police and the decision makers behind the scenes. Human Rights investigators have uncovered information indicating that members of the EPDRF cabinet were aware of and involved in this massacre. In fact, witnesses have revealed information about secret high level meetings in Addis Ababa, beginning in September of 2003, where the shameful plan was laid out for the removal of those Anuak who were standing in the way of the government’s plan to exploit the area of its vast natural resources, in particular, its oil.

The oil rights to the area had already been given to Petronas of Malaysia who contracted with the subsidiary, the Chinese firm, Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (ZPAEB) who was ready to set up the sites for drilling. At the same time of the massacre, Ethiopian government troops moved into Gambella to protect the oil company workers from any local resistance. It has been learned that part of the agreement with the oil company was that the government would have to pay \$25,000,000 (US) should any oil worker be killed; thus requiring high levels of security so as to ensure that the Chinese and Malaysian workers would stay. When these workers travel outside their compound, no wonder why 20 to 30 EPDRF troops accompany one Chinese or Malaysian.

Who are the Anuak?

The Anuak are part of a small indigenous ethnic group numbering about 100,000 worldwide, including me who is before you today. We have lived in the Upper Nile region of southwestern Ethiopia and southeastern Sudan for hundreds of years. Our name means, “people who share.”



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The Anuak were not originally an Ethiopian tribe, but in 1902, the British “accidentally” cut Anuak country into two or three parts, now dividing them between Sudan and Ethiopia. The Anuak from either side of the border, have had to flee to the other side in order to find safety as outside threats from the west, the civil war in Sudan, and now from the east, the current government of Ethiopia, have threatened their survival.

In a January 2006 report by a branch of the UN, yet unreleased, it has been indicated that the Anuak people and their culture are threatened with the possibility of completely disappearing and may likely disappear from the Gambella region in the next 10-15 years unless immediate and substantive intervention is made on their behalf by the international community. Even twenty years ago, in 1984, a US based organization called Cultural Survival, identified the Anuak as being an endangered people group. The continuing atrocities and manmade humanitarian crisis over the last two years, severely worsens their prospects for survival.

The Anuak and others, who live in the area, are considered different from other Ethiopians. They are black Africans as opposed to most other Ethiopians, called “highlanders”, who were of lighter color. The Anuak are ethnically, culturally, linguistically, historically and religiously different from most other Ethiopians. Their indigenous land is totally different from anywhere else in the country in both climate and geography. The Gambella region is hot and tropical with rich, fertile, well-watered soil coming from the rivers originating in the mountains of the highlands where there is a much cooler, dryer climate. The difference in geography has separated Ethiopians into distinctive categories of “lowlanders”, such as the Anuak and other indigenous groups in the area, as opposed to the “highlanders” who comprise the vast majority of the population of Ethiopia, such as Amharas, Oromos, Tigrayans and others.

It is believed that the central government does not consider the Anuaks to be “true Ethiopians”, but does value the vast resources that exist in the area. As a result, the Anuak and other indigenous people from this area have significantly less access to basic services such as clean water, health care and education. However, until more recently, the Anuak have lived in harmony with highlanders who have resettled in this area, even intermarrying with them.

Historically, this area has always been marginalized since the British leased this area to Ethiopia on October 15, 1956. During the time of Mengistu, the Anuak were mainly valued as fighters, resulting in hundreds of young men, as young as fourteen or fifteen, being forcibly taken from their school classrooms in order to fight in a war against Eritrea. Most never returned. Others returned without legs and with other severe injuries, but were never compensated. Meles repeated this during the war with Eritrea in 1998. The Anuak became convinced that their only value to this government was to be exploited as a commodity of war. Now the ruling government has taken it further. They are killing Anuak in order to gain access to their land, oil and untapped resources.

The Anuak Massacre of December 13, 2003

Over two years ago, on the morning of December 13, 2003, unknown assailants ambushed a vehicle 20 K away from Gambella town, killing nine persons, including an Anuak driver. Without investigation, the Anuak were immediately blamed for the killings. Testimony from a highlander police officer, present at the site, revealed that offers to pursue possible assailants into the bush were rejected. Instead, Tadessa



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Selassie, Chief of the Gambella Police and Major Tsegaye Beyene, the EPDRF Defense Force Commander, ordered them to mutilate the bodies.

Okello Ochalla, the former governor of Gambella at the time, reported that Major Tsegaye Beyene and Tadessa Haile Selassie then brought the dead bodies of the ambushed refugee workers to the regional government office, looking for Governor Okello. When Okello was not there, they waited about twenty-five minutes until in apparent frustration; Selassie shot three bullets into the wall of the regional government cafeteria. Witnesses reported that Selassie then told them that Governor Okello was going to have to bring these highlander corpses back to life. He then went to the police station where he left the bodies in the car while he met with other highlander police who would later be involved in the massacre.

The mutilated bodies, with the exception of the Anuak driver, were then displayed in front of the regional hospital. Within a very short time, many converged on the location; federal troops in their vehicles, including the federal commander of the forces, as well as highlanders, prepared with machetes and other weapons in their hands. Nearly 250 people came. One highlander businessman brought two bags full of machetes to the scene. As highlander women cried for the dead, witnesses report that Chief Selassie and Major Beyene were openly and loudly laughing. Finally, the commander shot into the air and said, "That's it! Go!" At this point, the people dispersed to various areas of Gambella town and the massacre began.

Tadessa Selassie, the defense forces, other police officers and some highlander civilians choosing to join, went to the Omininga area of Gambella where most Anuak lived. These Ethiopian Defense troops, police and highlander militia groups then went home to home in Gambella town, pulling out Anuak men from their homes.

One of the first on the list was a devout middle-aged pastor, Okwier Oletho, whose church was growing in the community and also the father of my sister-in-law who I have known since I was a child. His wife was returning from visiting a sick relative when soldiers and highlander militia came to his home during a prayer meeting. After they set his hut on fire, he jumped out a window. As he ran he was hacked and mutilated with the highlander's machetes before being shot in the back by Ethiopian soldiers in uniform. His wife witnessed his death along with the death of other male relatives and attendees of the prayer meeting. Choir members at the church were also killed that day. Human Rights Watch gives further details of his death in their report. Please see <http://hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0305/> .

When she was told this past week about the opportunity to present the case of the Anuak genocide at this congressional hearing, she could not speak. She finally explained :

I'm crying. This is the beginning of a long journey to justice. My people and I who have lost our husbands and loved ones on December 13 and after, have been weeping in the dark with no one seeming to hear. Someone has finally heard our voices coming from the dark and will now know how my husband was axed with machetes and clubbed into pieces in front of me. Now that they have heard it, they will make sure it will not happen to another woman's husband. My husband was a pastor who knew and loved God. This is what he would want---to teach people to not do this kind of cruel thing to another human being ---to love each other ---to be one of the people to stop this kind of thing!



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As the killing went on in an orgy of violence, Ethiopian soldiers stood by, cheering and laughing with members of the highlander militias, as these civilian militias brutally hacked the Anuak victims with machetes in front of their mothers, wives and children. As the victims attempted to run, the troops then shot and killed them in their backs.

Mary, a young mother with a baby, witnessed her husband's death. She reports:

On December 13, 2003, my husband, who worked for the regional government was killed. He was one of first men to be killed. He was a well-educated man and openly opposed the Ethiopian government's policy of taking over control of the local government from the local people. He had brought attention to the fact that the government was not following the Ethiopian Constitution in this matter.

I remember first hearing the sounds of gunfire starting about 12:45 in the afternoon, when the shooting started in front of the regional hospital in Gambella town. My husband and I heard from others that they were killing Anuak men so my husband and I quickly went inside our house. Almost immediately, I heard the sounds of approaching Ethiopian defense soldiers walking towards our house yelling, 'Kill them!' 'Whenever you find an Anuak man, kill him.' 'Today is the day for killing Anuak.' All of us heard it. My husband wanted to get out of the house and face them, but I pushed him back and blocked the door so he could not leave.

The troops came inside our fence...and set the house on fire. They began to repeatedly shoot at the house. My six-month-old baby started choking on the smoke because it was so thick we could not breathe. I held my baby as I crawled down low through the door to the outside of the house.

The troops started shooting inside the smoke filled open door and my husband was shot in the stomach, chest and right arm, but he did not die. He kept telling me, 'Mary, go!' 'Go with the baby!' 'Let them kill me!' After my husband was injured, I jumped on top of him to protect him while I was still holding the baby with my other arm. I begged them to please not kill my husband. A highlander then grabbed me and pulled me off of him and made my husband stand up. I heard my husband say, 'Just kill me!' I was screaming and the baby was crying. They started beating me with the barrel of their guns on my back and on my head. One of defense forces said, 'You say this is your land? After today, there will not be any more Anuak or Anuak land!' He pointed his finger at me and demanded, 'Shut up! Just wait and see! Today we will do to you what was done to the Jews during the holocaust!'

Eight soldiers were around my husband--repeatedly hitting him. He kept saying, 'Please shoot me.' The soldiers stopped for a minute and then highlander militia started hitting him on the head with machetes and clubs. As he tried to defend himself with his hands, three militiamen then slashed him with machetes on his head, neck and face. They repeatedly hit him with a large club on his forehead and face until his face was smashed. He finally fell down, face forward towards me. Another highlander then hit him on his temple. He opened his eyes a bit and closed them again before his body started jumping. I stopped crying because I could not believe what was happening. I was numb. Then they all left me, alone with my husband and baby.

I went to my husband. As I was holding him and my baby, an older Anuak woman came to me along with two boys, one nine and the other twelve. My husband was opening and closing his mouth. I could hardly recognize him as his face was so bloody and his nose was missing. My husband's body started jumping. When the soldiers saw the Anuak boys and woman come, they came running back shouting, 'Kill them! Kill them!' The old woman grabbed my baby and my hand and started running with us. My only comfort is my husband died before I ran away. I never saw him again. I don't know where his body is. The Ethiopian army did something I will never forget. How could a human being do this to another?

Women and young girls were raped, at times in front of the men before they were killed, while the perpetrators taunted them with the slogan, 'Today is the day for killing Anuak,' and telling the victims of



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rape, 'Now you won't have Anuak babies.' They then set their homes and crops on fire, leaving countless widows, children and elders with almost no means of support.

One Anuak woman told the AJC that when she recently saw Saddam Hussein in Court on CNN, that it strangely gave her hope. Two years ago, she witnessed her husband killed in front of her on December 13, 2003 by Ethiopian defense troops and highlander militia. Several days later, she was raped by seven Ethiopian defense troops, carrying their uniforms on their arms. They took turns with her, raping her for four hours.

She states, "They ripped me apart. I will never be the same. When I look at myself, I think of myself as 'dirty.' I feel helpless. I am not going to forget these people. What the Ethiopian troops have done to me is what some people call 'crimes against humanity'. They say these people could be brought to court, not today, but in some years. Now when I see Saddam on TV, someone who was at the top of the government, being held responsible for what his government did, it gives me hope.

Meles was the one who gave these men the authority to do this. He is not less accountable than those men who did it. Those men may disappear, but their leader will never disappear. He will be tracked down and found wherever he goes, like the African snake that leaves its trail of dirt for you to follow. There may be many holes nearby, but as long as there is dirt on the ground, the trail of the vicious snake will identify which hole he is in. We, the Anuak, who have survived this unthinkable evil attack, will be like the dust that shows the trail of the snake through Anuakland. There will always be one of us who will be able to tell the tale of those who did not make it, to those who will carry on.

The highlander militias, police and Ethiopian Defense troops roamed the streets, looking for any men, young or old, which they then viciously attacked. Between two and three thousand Anuak took refuge in the Mekane Yesu Church compound and the Catholic Church compound that was run by westerners. Many highlanders, Nuer and other ethnic groups did not participate. Some were real heroes, warning Anuak, hiding them in their homes and standing up for them as friends or fellow human beings. A Tigrayan highlander was recently interviewed by the AJC. He and his Tigrayan neighbors were some distance away where the killing took place, but for hours, they could hear the gunshots, the screams from the victims and see the smoke from the burning Anuak huts. He reports:

About four hours after it started, we saw two Anuak men in their late twenties running into the Tigrayan area, being chased by highlander civilians with machetes and clubs. I ran to them, telling them to quickly come to my house. I then looked for something sharp with which to defend myself and found an axe. My neighbors joined me, backing me up. When the civilians arrived, I said I would not allow them to kill any human being! I told them, 'Leave, or you will have to kill me first.' They stood there until the police came with guns and asked where the Anuak were. I said they were in my house with my wife and my children and that they would have to kill me first! I told them, 'I was a Tigrayan during the time of Mengistu. My family members were taken away and never seen again. I was taken away from my land and was displaced in Gambella. Now this is my home. Because of this treatment done to me and to my family, I will never allow it to be done to anyone else. I was oppressed because of people like you! Being a Tigrayan, we were singled out as a government enemy by our own government. We were stopped for no reason, interrogated, beaten up or killed. I know what it is like and I will not allow it even if Tigrayans are in charge. I would rather choose to be killed than to be part of it or it will never end.' I was ready for the police to kill me, but they did not. They left.

In less than three days, at least four hundred and twenty four persons were slaughtered in a well-calculated plan utilizing a prepared list of the names of educated Anuak men and leaders. As the killing subsided, men from other indigenous ethnic groups were forced to collect the bodies. A Nuer man gave the following testimony to the AJC. He reported:

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Some of us Nuer were forced to collect bodies of the dead Anuak. In front of the Gambella Secondary School, we picked up the bodies four or five Anuak men. One man's whole face was smashed, his right arm was broken in about five places. I knew he tried to defend himself. His face, nose and upper and lower jaw were missing. My body started shaking. Another man had fallen on his back and I could see his face. He was still talking, quietly asking me, 'Please help me—please help me.' I didn't know what to do.

One of the defense troops asked me what was wrong. I told him that this one was still alive. He told me to put him in the truck. I couldn't look in the face of the dying man. As I carried him, he opened his eyes and said, 'Please help me or kill me.' He then closed his eyes and died.

That minute, my body stopped feeling. I had no more emotion. I felt like I was collecting rocks—not human beings. I stopped feeling like I was one myself. My hands worked like a machine, but it was like I was not there. There were about twenty bodies piled on top of each other and we were told to take two more bodies into the truck before unloading it outside the town. I took a breath and saw blood pouring down from the truck as it started to move. I looked in the back of the truck and the bodies were going in all directions. I realized these Anuak had been alive four or five hours before and now looked like fish in the back of a canoe. With all the human blood on me, I smelled like one of those fish. I could hear gunshots and knew more Anuak were being killed. I will never be the same person anymore. I cannot go on like this.

We, the Anuak and Nuer, have been fighting for many years, but we never have killed each other in this way. Now, like it or not, I have become part of it. I cried for some time before going to the river to wash off the blood. I then went back to my family. I have never told them what I did. You are the first person I have ever told. I do not want to remember. Sometimes I wish I were one of those guys in the truck. Why? Because those guys will never remember, but I am here and I am dying every day. I don't know why human beings do these things. Thank you for wanting to know. If others want to know so they can help stop this from happening to others, it gives me the reason why I remained behind instead of being one of those guys in the truck who can no longer speak.

Many bodies were never identified and were buried in one of three mass graves. The exact locations are unknown although it is known that the bodies were subsequently moved from one of these mass graves and burned on February 4, 2004. Most of the bodies have never been returned to their families for a proper burial. Although the government alleges that only 65 persons were killed, we have the names, ages and pictures of most every one of the 424 victims.

Similar actions were taken by Ethiopian troops in many of the rural towns in the Gambella district, causing many more victims and much more destruction of homes, crops, property and granaries. In addition to those killed in Gambella town, it is estimated that over fifteen hundred more people have been killed since that time.

Preceding and following the incident, over a thousand other Anuak were arrested, imprisoned without charges and tortured. The sick have been denied medical treatment. Two years later, thousands of Anuak men and some women still remain in crowded and unhealthy conditions in prison, many still subject to torture. Their court cases are continually delayed for "another six months" despite most never being charged a crime and essentially being innocent prisoners of conscience. The Ethiopian government reports 111 Anuak as being incarcerated; however, the AJC has obtained only a partial list of names and that list includes well over 800 persons.

Nearly ten thousand Anuak fled to Sudan for refuge. Approximately four thousand remain today, afraid to go back home, as it is still unsafe. Many who have returned, have been arrested or killed. Therefore, they remain in the refugee camp where they are living in horrible conditions, without clean water, adequate



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food, education for their children and any health services. Others have been internally displaced and as they have slowly returned home, they face hardship and conditions they had not seen for fifty years.

Anuak men and some women continue to be subject to harassment, arbitrary arrests, beatings, detentions and extra judicial killings. Rape of Anuak women remains widespread, and while it is greatly unquantifiable, human rights investigators have concluded that Anuak women throughout the region have almost universally suffered from this crime against their person by Ethiopian Defense Troops.

During the last two years, human rights violations were committed against the Anuak by the same government who was supposed to defend them. It is the worst kind of betrayal—like a child who is killed by his own father. As typical in a culture where citizens are terrorized, some Anuak colluded with the central government, gaining access to power, protection and privilege. Others became increasingly passive, losing hope of a better future. Some escaped, leaving for Sudan and Kenya, until stability returns to the area. Understandably, as political expression led to intimidation, imprisonment and death, some Anuak decided to join resistance movements, attempting to defend themselves, their families and their endangered fellow Anuak.

The extent of the genocide probably could have been reduced had the Anuak not been disarmed by the government, leaving them unable to defend themselves. The goal of most of these resisters is in reaction to this and has been an attempt to bring a halt to the continuing extra judicial killings, beatings and rape.

However, unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, some scattered rogue groups of Anuak have gone beyond defending themselves, retaliating in pent up anger against some innocent highlander citizens and fellow Anuak who have collaborated with the government. In response, Ethiopian Defense Troops have arrested, beaten or killed Anuak farmers or other easily found, but innocent Anuak targets. In fact, even before the massacre, it had been common practice for the government controlled police or military to go into villages where suspected assailants were thought to be hiding, and for them to randomly kill uninvolved Anuak men, women and children.

Other Anuak are trusting that God will ultimately provide justice for their loved ones. An elder woman reported to the AJC:

“It is God who is giving me hope and strength to remain here and watch over the graves of my two sons, my grandson, my son-in-law- and my nephew. We have nothing left. I am an elder and I am not going to run from death anymore, but will be a witness to those who want to ask about them. I have no hope in finding justice for them except that I have a very strong hope in God. It is He who is giving me the assurance that justice will be done. This is what allows me to carry on despite this unthinkable thing that the Ethiopian government has done to me and to my people. Like a person who plants a crop in their yard, they will not forget to water it. Like a mother who gives birth to a child, she will not fail to nurture, protect and raise their child to be a respectful human being. But there is someone who is far more loving and powerful than any of these and who will never forget to nurture the Anuak and that is God.”

The Ethiopian Government’s Plan: “Operation Sunny Mountain”

Almost simultaneously with the beginning of the human rights abuses, an oil company from China, Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (ZPAEB) began working in the Gambella area to set up extraction of oil reserves that are purported to be of major size, perhaps even exceeding those in southern



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Sudan. The Ethiopian government gave the Gambella oil rights to Petronas of Malaysia. Petronas then sub-contracted with ZPAEB. It is in this backdrop that these human rights atrocities began and continue today.

Information uncovered by human rights investigators indicate that these crimes were part of a government-instigated plan with an actual name, **Operation Sunny Mountain**, with the objective of eliminating any resistance to federal government control over the vast natural resources found on the indigenous tribal land of the Anuak, particularly the oil.

Since the initial genocide, the Ethiopian military has continued to perpetrate these crimes against the Anuak with impunity. Human Rights Watch released a report on March 24, 2005 that documents systematic and widespread atrocities committed against the Anuak by Ethiopian Defense Forces, Gambella Regional Police and some highlander militia groups. In their report, HRW indicates that these acts meet the stringent definition of crimes against humanity. (Please see <http://www.anuakjustice.org>).

Oil Development in the Gambella Area

The Chinese Petroleum Company, Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (ZPAEB), contracted by Petronas, the Malaysian company, will start drilling the first exploratory well in the Gambella concession in February 2006 now that the major operation has been set up. The Ethiopian government signed an agreement to explore and develop the oil reserves in Gambella. Reports indicate that they are on or ahead of schedule and should complete the first well within the dry season ending in May. As donor countries threaten to withdraw their funding to Ethiopia, profits from the oil could supplement what is lost, weakening the effect of this financial pressure.

Ethiopian defense troops are returning to the Gambella area in order to “ensure stability” during this process. With the return of the troops, Anuak fear the return of the daily killings, rape, harassment, torture and disappearances of Anuak who simply are involved in the basic chores of their lives, but are found by troops in the wrong place and at the wrong time.

The government and the oil company have essentially pushed the Anuak aside and moved onto land previously considered to be the indigenous tribal land of the Anuak. Ethiopian troops have turned local Anuak farmers into “slave-laborers” as they are forced to build and to set up their military camps to protect the Chinese and Malaysian workers. The Anuak farmers receive no remuneration despite the fact that this is the time of year when the farmers would have been preparing their land for the planting their crops. These camps have amenities such as electricity and clean water, while a parallel economy exists in nearby Anuak villages, where there are no such advantages.

As Anuak see the central government in Addis working directly with the oil company, making all the decisions regarding the oil without any consultation with regional authorities, in violation of international and Ethiopian law, they are realizing that they will never have a share in any of the benefits of this resource unless substantive action is taken.

Aftermath of the Genocide:

The Ethiopian Defense Troops left a trail of destruction that has wreaked havoc on the already limited infrastructure of the Anuak community. Many Anuak say it is as if the progress made over the past years by community members, development organizations, churches and other contributors, has essentially disappeared. They are forced to live under conditions reminiscent of life under Emperor Haile Selassie. In



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addition, in most Anuak districts, freedom of movement is restricted by the Ethiopian government to two days per week, on Mondays and Fridays.

A primary loss was access to clean water. Before December 2003, there were 119 water wells in Anuak areas. Currently only five wells are in working condition.

Previously, there were 136 schools in operation in Anuak areas, now there are 27. The Anuak rates of school attendance in the Gambella region show that fewer than 8% of Anuak boys and 4% of Anuak girls are attending school in two Anuak districts. The attendance rate of children from other ethnic groups in the area is much greater, being 50% for boys and 30% for girls. The same report previously mentioned that was completed but not released by a UN entity, warns that an entire generation of Anuak children are going without an education.

A recent visitor to the area viewed some of the vacated Anuak schools. In plain view inside these schools were piles of charred hardware from the desks, tables and chairs that had been used as firewood by Ethiopian troops who had occupied the schools, using them for barracks. Nothing of any value was left in these schools, including books and supplies.

Due to ongoing human rights abuses in the rural areas, many of the schools in operation have few or poorly trained teachers, as many of the teachers were targets of the massacre. Of those who lived, a majority either escaped to Sudan following the genocide or since that time, have moved to Gambella town where they are safer and not subject to arbitrary killings and arrests. Gambella, as the largest town in the region, is in the public eye and therefore is safer. The government has deceptively used the relatively better conditions and stability in Gambella as their proof to outsiders of the stability in the area.

Ethiopian troops also took over health clinics, again using them as barracks. Previously, 22 health clinics were functioning, now there are only 7 left. Most of the clinics have no supplies, medication or equipment left.

Malnutrition is a continuing major crisis. Anuak in one of the three refugee camps in the region have suffered disproportionately in comparison with other refugee populations. Within the internally displaced Anuak population in the refugee camp, the rate of acute malnutrition earlier in the year has been estimated to be 36.5% and continuing to rise. (Acute malnutrition in children under five years of age is 11% in Ethiopia.) This is astonishing considering that the Anuak have most always been able to support themselves due to their fertile land.

The rates of malnutrition outside the camps, in the rural communities, may be even higher due to Ethiopian Defense force interference with farmers. Rates of disease, malnutrition and susceptibility to disease, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are extremely serious. According to one medical official, the prevalence of TB amongst the Anuak is eight times what is considered to be an epidemic.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst the Anuak of the Gambella region is over 19%, whereas the rate in Ethiopia is much lower. Due to the widespread incidence of rape of Anuak women, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS will certainly increase. In addition, many of the women have untreated sexually transmitted diseases due to the lack of health services in the area.



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Anuak Justice Council

The Anuak realized that they had to take action to protect their small and endangered ethnic group. As a result, the Anuak Justice Council (AJC) was formed for this purpose. It is an umbrella organization for Anuak that formed following the genocide and crimes against humanity. The AJC's goal is to find a non-violent solution to the widespread human rights crimes being perpetrated against the Anuak in the Gambella region of Ethiopia by Ethiopian Defense Forces. The AJC's approach to restoring peace, justice and the rule of law to this area is by means of international advocacy. The AJC is a non-profit, non-political organization representing Anuaks in Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya and in the Diaspora.

The AJC cannot protect the Anuak and save them from extinction without help from the international community and policy makers such as you. Please join with the AJC to work towards procuring justice and peace for the Anuak so they can live in harmony with the rest of Ethiopia and the global community.

Reasons why justice for the Anuak of Ethiopia cannot be found

Those who were involved in the planning of the massacre of the Anuak and the continued repression of the Anuaks in Gambella are currently in high-level positions within the federal government of the EPDRF. In the Gambella region, these federal leaders continue to exert nearly total control over regional matters through the use of handpicked pro-government sympathizers from the various ethnic groups, including the Anuak. Omot Obang Olom was one of these who collaborated with the Minister of Federal Affairs, Abay Tsehaye, the Minister of Federal Security, Barnabas Gebre-ab and the Head of Security for the Gambella Regional State, Almaw Alemeraw in planning the massacre. It is well known that it was he who provided the list of educated Anuak leaders who disagreed with the ruling party's plans for the region prior to the incident. He was just recently (September 2005), in a reportedly rigged election, given the position of governor of the Gambella region.

Human rights investigations and local witnesses indicate that Barnabas Gebre-ab and Almaw Alemeraw were so heavily involved in the massacre and cover up that they are referred to by some as the "Ministers of Genocide." Alemeraw continues to be the power behind the current regional government in the Gambella region. He actually ran the region from the time of the massacre until September of 2005.

Gebre-ab was transferred to another position within the government, possibly due to being repeatedly mentioned by witnesses in the human rights investigations. These men were also allegedly repeatedly involved as the two masterminds in fomenting ethnic conflict between the Anuak, the Nuer, the Majenger and the highlanders. They reportedly justified the assumption of increasing levels of power in the region as they instigated the instability.

On January 28, 2004, the US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Aurelia Brazeal, held a special private meeting in Gambella with some Anuak, Nuer and highlanders where they felt empowered to speak the truth. Ambassador Brazeal later issued a public statement urging the Ethiopian government to "bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice, wherever they are found, even from the highest offices." She called the Gambella region, with its vast natural resources, "the conscience of Ethiopia" after she learned that the Ethiopian government had realized that the fastest route to economic prosperity was from the untapped natural resources in the area.



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Following the Ambassador's public statement, Tadessa Selassie, the Chief of Police in Gambella, and an active organizer of the massacre was arrested since witnesses repeatedly mentioned him in the meetings. However, shortly thereafter, he was released and has now resumed his job as the current chief of police of the entire Gambella region..

It was also then that six innocent men from within the ranks of the Ethiopian Defense Force, were arrested. However, information has been received that they were not even stationed in Gambella until months after the massacre.

Over two years later, not even one of the perpetrators of these "Crimes Against Humanity" has been held accountable. A Gambella police officer, from another ethnic group, was asked how many people had been arrested from the many who had been involved in the killing of the Anuak. He said, "None, one hundred percent were never arrested. The only people arrested are the people who had nothing to do with the killings!"

Anuak have been threatened and intimidated to not reveal the identity of the real perpetrators even though some are living nearby or even next door to the perpetrators of these crimes. Some highlanders are taunting the Anuak saying, 'We killed you like dogs! It's been two years now. What have you done?' In other words, you thought you would find justice, but the government is still here and so are we!

The Ethiopian government's investigation---a whitewashed report!

When an Ethiopian parliamentarian presented a bill to Parliament asking for a government inquiry into the massacre of December 13, the Speaker of the House rejected it before it was heard, indicating it was senseless to vote on it because the Ethiopian defense forces were not involved and instead, it was another incident of ethnic conflict between the Anuak and Nuer over the land.

However, when the Ethiopian government continued to receive significant pressure from the international community and when foreign aid was linked to completing an independent investigation, the executive branch of the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, finally appointed their own commission, without ever bringing it before the Parliament. The head of this commission was the head of the Supreme Court, Kemal Bedri. It is not surprising that he was also appointed to be the Chairman of the Electoral Board during the May 2005 national election.

The report is full of flaws, inconsistencies and lacks detail. In addition, reports from participants and witnesses to the interviews indicate that the commission closely controlled and suppressed information from eyewitnesses of the massacre. A full international investigation is necessary, as this report is so biased that it is useless in establishing the facts and in holding anyone accountable for the crimes.

The Commission's report bases the cause of the massacre as ethnic violence between the Anuak and the Nuer, accusing them of vying for political power and resources in the region. It then refers back to ethnic incidents in 1995 and 1996. It does not address on what basis they purport that the massacre was ethnic violence when all of the victims were Anuak, not Nuer.



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Ethnic conflicts have occurred between the Anuak and the Nuer. These conflicts usually occurred as the pastoral Nuer moved into the traditional land of the Anuak, looking for more land for their cattle from the Anuak who are mainly farmers. However, these conflicts were usually settled according to their cultural traditional ways until the EPDRF government became adept at fomenting conflict between them. They perfected this approach through utilizing preferential treatment in services and opportunities, through resettlement practices that encroached on established Anuak land, by ignoring or punishing legitimate complainants and by disarming the Anuak and conversely, supplying guns to the Nuer or others that were ultimately used against the Anuak with impunity.

As the Anuak stood up for their constitutional rights, they were intimidated, arrested or oppressed. The government usually found indirect means and trumped up reasons to justify this repression of legitimate self-determination. In fact, we purport that the Ethiopian government was the main contributor to the ongoing strife in the region prior to December 13, 2003, which then gave them an excuse for taking increasing control of the region.

It is appalling that even though the report does admit that some police, highlander militias and defense troops were involved, none of these have been held accountable. Instead, in their list of perpetrators being held on charges, most all of them are Anuak even though none of the witnesses in their own report ever accuses an Anuak in their statements. In the conclusion of their report, they indicate that the cause of the Anuak massacre are the Anuak and that the heroes of the incident were the defense forces, with the exclusion of the few who they report killed thirteen persons. This report from the Commission of Inquiry does not meet even minimum international standards for investigative practice.

Has Ethiopia become a “Vampire State?”

Manmade destruction can tear down years of work towards the development of the area. We can see the poverty and hardship amongst people who usually can provide for themselves through their own hard work. We can see how denying food, health care, clean water and education has and is being used to oppress these people and further jeopardize their lives—in a passive form of genocide. Under this backdrop, providing humanitarian need becomes a huge black hole unless the manmade source of the problem is confronted.

George Ayittey, a highly respected African economist from American University in Washington DC, convincingly points out that the corruption by governmental leaders of what he calls “vampire states”, has created a climate where investment and development cannot take place because their leaders’ own objectives, of exploiting the people and resources for their own power and gain, lead to taking over and subverting every key institution of government in order to serve their own interests.

He states in his article, “Down and Out! Who Broke Africa?” that they have their hands so steeped in blood and their pockets so full of booty that they are afraid that all their past gory misdeeds will be exposed if they are removed from office, so they cling to power at all costs, implementing only the barest minimum cosmetic reforms that would ensure continued flow of Western aid.”

Ethiopian Justice System: A Judge’s Testimony

A judge interviewed by the AJC gave the following testimony:

Testimony Mr. Obang Metho to the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations



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“You ask if there is justice in Ethiopia and my answer to you is, none. Even in the wild jungle there is more justice than what we have here! There is no name for what we have! The bylaws and articles we have in the Constitution are meaningless. We have been ordered like dogs, to go do one thing, and then we are ordered to do the opposite---all the time. The federal system interferes all the way, even to the district level.”

“I am giving this testimony because I am sick of living with this kind of justice. I breathe it each morning and day and it is haunting me down! Maybe by getting this out today, if I die tomorrow, I will feel I have contributed to bringing justice to these people who are not guilty of anything but being an Anuak.”

“I went to law school as a young man, thinking I would try to stand up for those people who have no voice---to fairly judge based on my conscience that my family taught me; to live on a good moral base that respects humanity! What I am now instructed to do now, is not what I was instructed to do when I began!”

“Justice for those who were massacred on December 13th will not prevail unless an independent body investigates who ordered the killing, who participated in the decision and who carried out the actual killing of the people! It must be handed over to an independent justice system who will carefully analyze it, bring it to court and in a fair trial, let them who did these crimes, be found guilty and put it all to an end!”

“It is only then that people can heal from their pain and reconcile with each other. This is not possible in Ethiopia as long as this government is here. What is happening in Gambella is happening all over Ethiopia! Having hope in finding justice in Ethiopia is useless! Justice only applies to those who have a political position.”

“Since December 13th, every day I have been feeling what Socrates said, ‘that a life not examined is not worth living.’ Since that, I have examined my own life and realized what is wrong, but I have had no way of correcting or changing it. I am doing what I am doing to support my family and sometimes when I think about it, it is no different than stealing money to support my family. This is what I deal with—even my own wife does not know!”

“I am giving this information because it may bring justice beyond my bench and court. I have been a prisoner of this bench and of my own thoughts! My own mind is a prison! This will release me! What I am saying may cost me my own life, but it will enrich other people’s lives who will not be haunted by their own thoughts as I am.”

“I hope it will do justice wherever it reaches. If I speak up or refuse to do what I am instructed, I will end up behind bars like those imprisoned across the country. I will leave it to God! My only hope is that the end is not far away and that justice will come to Ethiopia!”

Why is it imperative that the US take immediate action?

The current government of the EPDRF has been in power for more than 14 years. During much of this time, they have been actively involved in violations of the human rights of its subjects, particularly in the rural areas, such as in Gambella, where disempowered and silenced people are on land endowed with natural resources. Since May 2005, the repressive nature of this regime intensified not only in the rural areas, but also in the capital city of Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian people are now being exposed to barbaric and arbitrary killings, torture and mass incarceration on an incredible scale.

US military aid is being used against Ethiopian citizens as a means of prolonging the life of this regime. Consequently, the suffering of the intended beneficiaries of the aid is also being prolonged. American taxpayers should protest having paid for the US military aid to Ethiopia that funded the purchase of American made weapons used in the killing of innocent Anuak in the genocide of December 2003. Evidence of that was found in the area. Despite Prime Minister Meles’ public statement calling the large scale genocide “fiction,” US Marines saw evidence to the contrary.



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Three days after the massacre began; they rescued US citizens from Gambella. They could see smoldering huts, still burning after being set on fire. They could see bloodstains on the streets of Gambella. They heard the testimony from US citizens who had directly witnessed the killings.

Ethiopia is considered to be strategic to the US in its fight against terrorism, but our “partner” may not be whom we expected. The government of the EPDRF can be best known by their actions. Instead of being partners in stabilizing the Horn of Africa, they are a government deeply entrenched in the use of terroristic tactics of oppression against their own citizens, accomplished in manipulating the truth to cover up for it and in hanging on to power lest they ever be held accountable. The question is, how long will the Ethiopian people put up with this before a full-blown crisis results? Ethiopia, as a potentially failing state, needs substantive diplomatic and economic intervention in order to avert such a national crisis and to protect its citizens from additional suffering and the loss of life. An imploded Ethiopia can certainly be more dangerous to the US than exerting pressure for diplomatic solutions at this time!

For years, the Ethiopian people have looked to the US as allies and friends, but have recently been disappointed and disillusioned with the lack of attention and action directed towards the continent of Africa. Criticism is increasing that US rhetoric does not apply to Ethiopia. Ethiopians are reaching out for help, but are not being heard.

The US has a large Ethiopian population of US citizens who are calling for action. It is not in times of prosperity that one finds out who is really your friend, but in times of crisis where significant engagement is needed. This is such a time for the Anuak and the people of Ethiopia. The US is in a desirable position that could allow the US to assist in shaping a better future for generations of Ethiopians to come. If we fail now, new friends may immerge for the Ethiopians, some with whom we may not share common values and vision. Some of these new economic or political partners may actually further exploit the Anuak and other Ethiopians. They may also further undermine our strategic relationship with this “partner against terror.” In this strategic area of the world, where stability is already in delicate balance, the impact of meaningful action may have far and long reaching benefits. Can we afford to ignore this opportunity?

Objectives of the AJC:

1. The Ethiopian Government should cease all human rights violations against the Anuak and any other oppressed Ethiopian citizens as obligated by international treaties and the Ethiopian Constitution.
2. The Ethiopian Government should hold the perpetrators of crimes against humanity accountable and bring them to justice.
3. The Ethiopian Government should respect Anuak’s and other Ethiopian’s human rights and fundamental freedoms.
4. The Ethiopian Government should release Anuak and all other Ethiopian political prisoners, including those in the CUD and others being held for years in the government’s custody as prisoners of conscience.
5. The Ethiopian Government should allow local jurisdiction over regional affairs in Gambella and other areas of Ethiopia, including over its people and land, over the education, health, economic affairs, over the development of natural resources and equitable distribution of profits from such resources and over the internal defense and security.



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6. The Ethiopian Government should provide access to mass and other gravesites by international forensic experts to exhume bodies, identify those bodies where possible and to give those bodies back to families and loved ones for a proper Anuak burial.
7. The Ethiopian Government should provide economic assistance to support services to address emotional, physical, and psychological trauma to Anuak and to non-Anuak within the Gambella region.
8. The Ethiopian Government should provide for fair and equitable distribution of power and resources.
9. The Ethiopian Government should provide reparations to the Anuak for emotional and physical injuries, loss of life and destruction of property.

Recommendations to the US Government and international donor community

1. That the US government authorities condemn the atrocities and bring diplomatic (financial) pressure to bear on the Ethiopian regime, calling on them to refrain from the gross violations of human rights that it is committing against any of its citizens.
2. That the US government would live up to their commitment to safeguard and defend human rights in Ethiopia as a member of the global community, where arbitrary killings and incarceration have become the order of the day under the current regime.
3. That the US government put pressure on the Ethiopian government to immediately and unconditionally, release all Anuak political prisoners, the entire elected CUD leadership and other prisoners of conscience; dropping all the absurd charges of treason and genocide.
4. Denounce the current regime for illegally and unjustly derailing the vibrant democratic environment, identifying it as the true engineer of a national crisis that aims to divide ethnic groups and spread confusion, mistrust and suspicion across the nation and instead call on them to promote good governance, personal freedoms and respect for the rule of law as laid out in the Ethiopian Constitution.
5. Fully support an international inquiry into the Anuak massacre of December 13, 2003 and the killings in Addis Ababa following the derailment of the democratic election that began so well, but ended in an unfortunate post-election crisis.
6. That the US government intercede with immediate action so as to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.
7. That the US Government express their solidarity with the oppressed and suffering people of Ethiopia by clearly speaking out against the tyrannical tactics used by this regime to repress political expression and basic freedoms.
8. That the US reconsider, examine and reassess all its bilateral agreements with the current dictatorial regime of Ethiopia.
9. That the US encourage the process of a dialogue with Ethiopian communities both at home and abroad with the objective of promoting democratic freedoms in Ethiopia.

A Call to Join Voices with those in Dark Places

An Anuak woman speaks out:

I believe that one day God will give me the years to live to be able to tell what happened to me and to my people; when no one was there as a witness, when no international community was there to protect us and when no camera lens was there to bring this injustice to worldwide view. I, and those others who survived, will be able to be the missing lens that never before reached to Anuakland.

Testimony Mr. Obang Metho to the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations



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I am no longer concerned that my husband's body was never found or that he has never had a proper burial, instead I am looking forward to sharing the last minutes of his life as he was hacked to death by machetes as he struggled to breathe. I have an obligation to pass this on to the next generation; not only to Anuak, but to human kind who want to leave the world behind the lens of suffering, pain, death and sadness to a world more filled with hope, joy and happiness.

I hope that my voice from the darkness travels a distance to a far away land where I have never been. This voice of mine that I want them to hear is this, 'The world does not have to be this way. Take action. Every time you hear a voice of a desperate person in the darkness, do not ignore it. Please do something. Take the first step. Courage starts with one person, like a song that someone will start and others will join in to sing.'"

The Anuak Justice Council calls on those in the global community to join voices with this Anuak woman and with those other voices from Ethiopia where there is such widespread suffering. Even though the horrendous actions of the current regime of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi have been uncovered, the international community has not done enough to support the Ethiopian people in their fight for democracy and the rule of law.

Action is critical before frustration reaches to the point of inciting some to violence, resulting in more death and chaos. The stakes are high, yet each voice added to the chorus adds to the power of its reverberation throughout the global community of those who value human kind.

No longer are there remote places in this world where brutal dictators can hide. We must not only listen but also be willing to take action if we want our world to be a better place for our children.

If many join together in harmony; crossing national, ethnic, cultural and religious lines; defending the persecuted and oppressed in our world---it will indeed be a beautiful song!

A few brief words in summary about how the U.S. government should proceed from here. The United States has always played an important role in trying to bring the two sides together and reach a political settlement in the world. Therefore, I would like each of our witnesses to address what, in their view, are the main obstacles to the full implementation of justice, peace, freedom, democracy and secondly, what specific action or role should the U.S. play in helping to achieve a long-lasting peace.

Lastly, I would like to commend the work of Chairman Smith, as well as full Committee Chairman Hyde, Congressman King and Congressman Walsh for their efforts on behalf of peace, justice and economic development in Ethiopia. I would also like to personally thank each of them for working with the Anuak and other Ethiopian to try to come up with a resolution that we can all agree upon that articulates the support of the House of Representatives for the peace process in Ethiopia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.