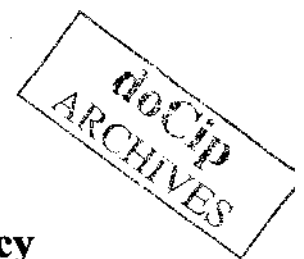


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Statement

By Mr. Obang O. Metho

**Representative of the Gambella Development Agency
And Anywaa Survival Organization in Canada
United Nations Third Session of the Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues**

Item 4D: Human Rights

**New York,
May 14, 2004**

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to inform you of horrendous human rights crimes taking place in the Gambella region of Ethiopia.

I speak to you today as a member of the endangered, forgotten and indigenous Anuak people of the world and as a justice seeker devoted to the principles of a peace based on love and compassion. Above all, I am here as a human being who is destined to share this planet with you and all others as brothers and sisters. As the world grows smaller, we need each other more than in the past. This is true in all parts of the world, including Africa.

At present in Ethiopia, as elsewhere, tensions are high. There are open conflicts in all regions of Ethiopia. In order to resolve regional conflicts, an approach is required that takes into account the interests of all relevant peoples, large and small. Unless comprehensive solutions are formulated, piecemeal or merely expedient measures will only create new problems.

I will address some key issues in my remarks. The Anuak, estimated to number around 100,000, have been subjected to systematic violence under different Ethiopian regimes for several decades. As early as 1984, Cultural Survival Quarterly stated that 'The Anuaks in Ethiopia ... must be regarded as an endangered people.' They have been subjected throughout the 1980s to dispossession of their lands, forcible conscription to the military, disarmament, the confiscation of their domestic animals and the destruction of their traditional way of life.

The Anuak people are eager to contribute to regional and world peace and I believe they are in a unique position to do so. Traditionally, Anuaks are a peace loving and non-violent people. Anuak have practiced non-violence with respect to all forms of life.

Ethiopia

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Since December 2003, the level of violence against the Anuak has increased dramatically. Between December 13 and 16, 2003, over 424 Anuak were massacred in Gambella town by Government troops and local militia. US based human rights organizations, Genocide Watch and Survival Rights' International note the overwhelming evidence of genocide, arbitrary detentions, torture, rape, forced displacement, destruction of property and extrajudicial killings being used to control the Anuak.

The situation in Gambella continues to be grave and in urgent need of international attention. Just as of yesterday, May 13, four Anuak were killed; including a 17 year old girl and a 65 year old man. There is a new wave of arrests going on in Gambella. The Government of Ethiopia cannot be allowed to carry out genocide and other crimes against the Anuak minority with impunity. It is estimated that 1,400 persons have been murdered and many more will die due to associated causes. There are 20,000 internally displaced people living in intolerable and dangerous conditions. We fear that now as the rainy season has come, tens of thousands may perish. This could become a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions if we fail to act.

We call upon this Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to actively utilize every mechanism at its disposal and within its mandate to address this international crime against humanity and the Anuak People. The well-documented facts of this case point towards the Ethiopian Government's use of falsified extradition documents, coerced testimony, falsified ballistics reports and suppressed evidence, to cover up the situation.

We call upon the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to contribute to such effort by:

1. Holding a Special Session to discuss the current violent events and issue a Special Statement, which calls upon Ethiopia to halt immediately all military operations against the Anuak people and condemns crimes leading to injury and the loss of life, through the excessive and indiscriminate use of military against the Anuak people in their ancestral territory.
2. Making use of the commissioners' mandate to prepare a resolution, based on the Genocide Watch Report and Survival Rights International report, resulting in an **INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY** of the serious human rights violations and war crimes against the Anuak. Such an inquiry must be truly independent, its members not appointed by states but comprising, among others, international lawyers well-versed in human rights and humanitarian law. The Commission must be established as soon as possible, before information and evidence disappears, and **IT MUST BE EMPOWERED TO ESTABLISH A TRIBUNAL FOR WAR CRIMES.**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

To view the Genocide Watch and Survivors' Rights International joint report please visit:

http://www.genocidewatch.org/Today_is_the_Day_of_Killing_Anuaks.htm

To view the list of names of 424 people killed in December 2003, please see:

www.genocidewatch.org/EthiopiaANUAKSMASSACREDGAMBELLAREGIONDEC13-15.htm

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